

One Child at a Time: The Global Fight to Rescue Children from Online Predators

Julian Sher



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One Child at a Time: The Global Fight to Rescue Children from Online Predators Julian Sher From a renowned investigative reporter, the true story behind a horrifying Internet abuse epidemic – and the heroes who are out to stop it.

The Internet has helped make child abuse terrifyingly common – it is the new face of crime in the 21st century. There are tens, probably hundreds of thousands of children whose sexual abuse has been electronically recorded and distributed on the Internet. As Julian Sher reveals, the men perpetrating these crimes include lawyers, priests, doctors and politicians. They pick their victims from the streets of Bangkok to Boy Scout troops in England, while the police – from a crack image analyst with the Toronto police to an FBI agent who poses as a thirteen-year-old girl online – work desperately to nab the predators.

One Child at a Time goes behind the headlines to show how law officers are fighting back against this tide of abuse, from daring rescues in homes to the seizures of millions of dollars in the offshore bank accounts of the porn merchants. In riveting detail, Julian Sher shows how clue by clue, and image by image, investigators are using cutting edge tools, turning the technology of the Internet against the perpetrators as they race to find and rescue the victims – children who otherwise have no voice.

This important book explores the ramifications of a worldwide struggle, from the need for updated legal powers to the unexpected effects the Internet has had on our social fabric. It also includes a full list of resources for concerned parents. Though sometimes harrowing, **One Child at a Time** is also inspiring – and never less than absolutely relevant.

In their efforts to rescue the child victims of one of today's most pervasive and insidious crimes, police must be creative, dogged and go well beyond the borders drawn on any map...

Canadian cop Paul Gillespie changed the way that police around the world tackle Internet porn. He decided that if the system was broken, he was going to send an email to Bill Gates and ask for help. Gates not only answered, but Microsoft ended up kicking in millions of dollars, working with Gillespie's team to develop the Child Exploitation Tracking System, a searchable database to track and investigate Web predators and their victims. It soon spread across Canada, and then to the UK, Australia and the U.S.

Older men pretend to be young and caring, luring lonely young girls in chat rooms. But when they show up to meet their victim, they discover the FBI is waiting to arrest them. Emily Vacher, one of the FBI's top Internet undercover operatives, specializes in trapping the predators at their own game of deception.

The photos of the child's abuse were everywhere on the Net, but no one knew who or where she was. In a frantic 36-hour hunt, using CSI-type sleuthing to find clues in the pictures, Canadian, American and European police rescued a girl from North Carolina.

Jim Gamble, one of the most senior police officers in the UK, has spearheaded the creation of a Virtual Global Taskforce to patrol the web 24/7. It was time for a sheriff to tame the wild, wild Web, Gamble decided. Now children have a red "report abuse" button on chat room software and browsers they can click any time they feel threatened.

It is time for the children's stories—too often hidden in the dark corners of the Web—to be told. Their torment has been etched in their memories—and the memories of the police officers dedicated to rescuing them. It is what scars them. But it is also what spurs them on.

Because they know behind every picture or video lies a little, frightened child. Detective Sergeant Paul Gillespie of the Toronto Police's Exploited Child Unit can't shake the lingering echoes of some of the worst videos he has seen of shackled children:

"Sometimes," he says, "you can hear the children cry." —from **One Child at a Time**

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