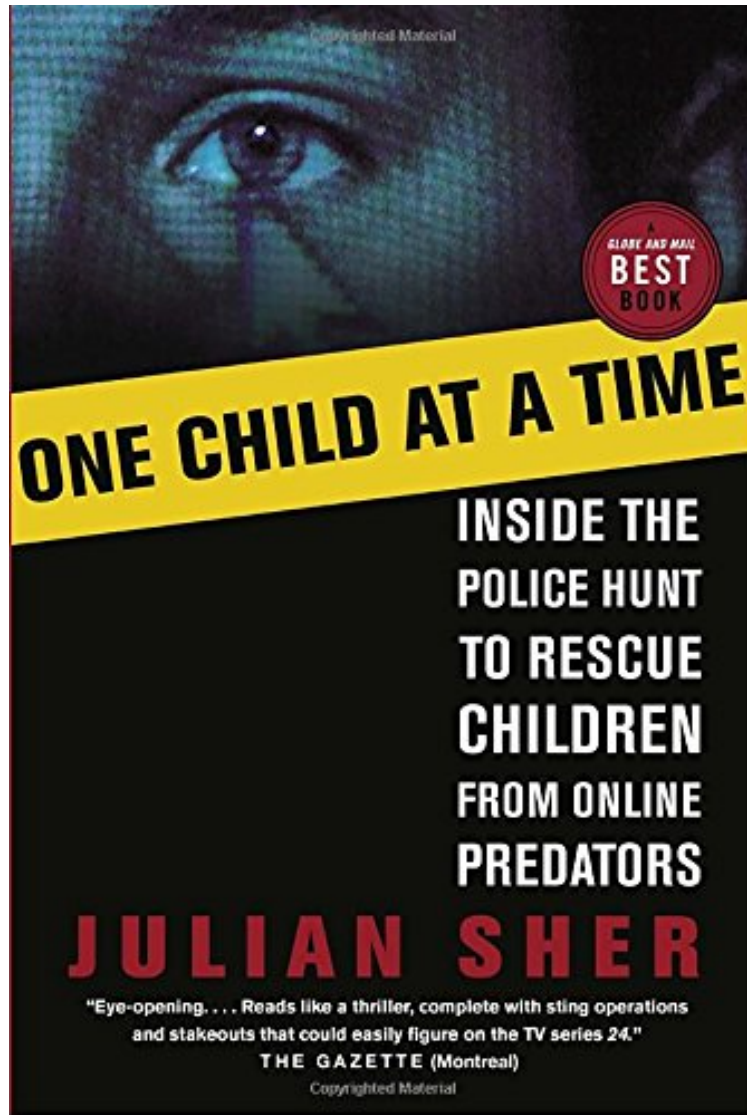


One Child at a Time: Inside the Police Hunt to Rescue Children from Online Predators

Julian Sher

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Julian Sher : One Child at a Time: Inside the Police Hunt to Rescue Children from Online Predators before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised One Child at a Time: Inside the Police Hunt to Rescue Children from Online Predators:

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 From the Hardcover edition.

Eye-opening . . . it reads like a thriller, complete with sting operations and stakeouts that could easily figure on the TV series 24. The Gazette (Montreal) Julian Sher does a superb job of attacking the almost unbearable subject of child sexual abuse, by giving a voice to the victims and investigators who can't turn a blind eye. One Child at a Time gives readers hope, a renewed sense of direction and purpose. The Globe and Mail Fine and gripping . . . an important book that ultimately calls on us to do what we can. Toronto Star About the Author Julian Sher is the author of several bestselling books, including Until You Are Dead: Steven Truscott's Long Ride into History. He has worked on investigative projects for the CBC, the Globe and Mail, the Toronto Star and the New York Times. His website, JournalismNet, is ranked by Google among the world's top ten journalism portals. From the Hardcover edition. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Prologue HEAR THE CHILDREN CRY The cage was not big, even if it had been for a dog. For a small six-year-old, it was cramped. The little girl, though, was used to it. Shivering more from fear than from cold she crouched in her pen. She was naked, except for a small orange wristband on her right arm. Her soft brown hair fell over her shoulders. On her face, no tears ran down her cheeks. The man did unspeakable things to her, hurting her, touching her, penetrating her private parts. And then took digital pictures, movies. All the time. Click. The camera catches her peering through the bars. Click. Another shot shows her sprawled on a bed, naked. Click. She grasps a hunting knife far too large for her tiny hand, its blade touching her skin. Scrawled across her chest, the words scream out: Cut me. Hurt me. There are tens of thousands of children around the world trapped like the girl right now, but we know the names of only a handful. In 2002, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) outside Washington, D.C. the central clearing house in the United States for victims of online abuse had identified about two hundred children, meaning that their full identities were known and they had been rescued. By the end of 2005, the number was five hundred; by 2006, it had climbed to more than eight hundred children from around the world. Still, those numbers represent only the proverbial drop of water in the online ocean. No one knows precisely how many children are victims of Internet porn the crime is amorphous, often anonymous and always hard to pin down. The National Child Exploitation Coordination Centre in Ottawa, run by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), cited one study that estimates there are fourteen million websites displaying child abuse

images, and more than twenty thousand new or recycled images posted on the Web each week. Five years ago, the CyberTipline run by NCMEC was receiving reports of child pornography at the rate of more than 24,000 a year; by 2006, that number had increased more than fourteen times to over 340,000. Behind each of those pictures is a child's solitary nightmare. Children like Shy Keenan, who was abused for years in England and saw her abuse pictures widely circulated on the Web before she became one of the country's leading children's rights advocates as an adult. When I was a kid, I used to try to send Help me messages with my eyes, she says. It didn't take too long to figure out that no one good was looking at these pictures. And no one was looking at my eyes. Even as a child, Keenan realized that, ultimately, it was not about the pictures. The visual images are, in effect, crime scene photos: crimes of humiliation and torture of the most vulnerable members of society. Crimes committed not just by those who took the pictures. It made no difference to me whether the abuser was under the covers or behind the lens or behind the computer, says Keenan. I was there because they wanted to be amused by the corruption and degradation of me. In fact, those who are downloading, viewing and trading the pictures are all too often much more than just voyeurs—they are active hands-on abusers themselves. Far from being down-and-out loners and isolated computer geeks, the creators and consumers of such images are teachers, priests, doctors, politicians, police and Boy Scout leaders. They are your relatives, your neighbors and your civic leaders. In just the first six months of 2006, the roster of Americans arrested on child porn charges included the former publisher of the New York newspaper Newsday, who also served on the city's education policy board; the mayor of Green Oaks, Illinois, who had been in office for more than a decade and served for two years as chairman of the local Republican Party; a police chief in North Carolina; and the deputy press secretary for the Department of Homeland Security, who pleaded guilty to using the Internet to seduce someone he thought was a teenage girl. Mark Foley, the Republican congressman who was forced to resign in the fall of 2006 after revelations of sexually explicit e-mail messages he'd sent to teenage male Congressional pages, was co-chairman of the Congressional Missing and Exploited Children's Caucus. He had been fond of telling cable TV talk shows that sex offenders were animals who would persist unless stopped. They come from all walks of life, says Emily Vacher, an agent with the FBI's Innocent Images program. From all socio-economic backgrounds, educational backgrounds, sexual orientation—it doesn't matter. And that's what makes it even more difficult for law enforcement to catch them and for people to protect their kids. It's not hard to find images of abuse on that computer sitting on your desk or in your child's bedroom. One in seven young Web surfers has encountered unwanted sexual material or online harassment, according to the latest Online Victimization of Youth study commissioned by the U.S. Department of Justice. Only one in three American families protect their children's Internet surfing with filters or blocking software. Even among those parents who do monitor their youngsters' Web activities, 71 percent stop after the children turn fourteen. Few people will ever witness a cocaine deal or a murder. But online child abuse is a crime that can reach out and touch anyone. This book tracks the efforts of police and prosecutors around the world to find and save children being exploited by sexual predators—often at tremendous personal cost to themselves. It tells the harrowing tales of children rescued and those still being abused online; it reveals the courage of some who have spoken out and the crippling trauma for some who will never recover. It follows the money trail of the shrewd entrepreneurs who have made millions by peddling child pornography and it looks at how the banks and credit card companies for too long have neglected how their financial institutions are entangled in this Web of exploitation. Because the crime is global, so is this book. Instead of focusing on a single country, I concentrate on the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada where the predators and their pursuers are the most active along with recounting forays into Europe, Australia and Asia. From the Hardcover edition.