



## **STATEMENT ON THE ARREST OF JOSH DUGGAR:**

The arrest of Joshua Duggar has sparked a long-needed conversation around the effects of abuse within Adverse Religious Environments. While all survivors are justifiably outraged by the crimes Josh Duggar is accused of committing, many are equally concerned about the future of his wife and children.

The Vashti Initiative is an organization dedicated to survivors of religious and spiritual abuse. We have seen the effects of religious abuse on individuals of various faiths and backgrounds. This includes followers of the Independent Baptists and the Quiverfull movement, both of which are embraced and adhered to by the Duggar family. Individuals within these environments, especially those assigned a female role, are forced to submit to their Godly authorities. They are conditioned to deny their own needs, isolate themselves from outside influences, and silently endure a range of harms that often include physical, emotional, and sexual violence.

The most devastating part of stories like Anna Duggar and her children's is the lack of options for those wanting to leave these environments. There are few organizations in the United States with any training around religious trauma or spiritual abuse, and even fewer specifically geared towards those from Adverse Religious Environments.

Individuals from these backgrounds are so sheltered from the outside world that they either cannot access their local resources, or they are conditioned to believe that doing so would bring great spiritual harm. Victims are groomed to believe that their abuse is a gift and therefore cannot relate to terms such as "domestic violence", "sexual assault", or even recognize their abuse as being abnormal or unhealthy.

We understand events like this are triggering for those still recovering from religious trauma or who have experienced spiritual abuse. The Vashti Initiative provides a weekly support group for survivors of religious/spiritual abuse. We also provide resource navigators, career development coaching, and a 7 day a week hotline for those needing immediate support. If you need help, please call 1-833-4VASHTI or email us at [thevashtiinitiative@gmail.com](mailto:thevashtiinitiative@gmail.com) or visit [vashtiinitiative.org](http://vashtiinitiative.org) for more information. You are not alone.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "E. Jones", written in a cursive style.

Evan Jones  
Executive Director