

INFORM•ENCOURAGE•EMPOWER

APRIL 2020

MAGAZINE

VOSAS

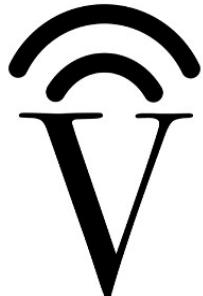
VOICES OF SEXUAL ABUSE SURVIVORS

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**CELEBRATING
SURVIVORS**

**SPECIAL
COUNSELOR'S
CORNER**

TAKING YOUR LIFE BACK



SPOTLIGHT

**APRIL IS SEXUAL
ASSAULT
AWARENESS MONTH**



*Pastor Monty
Weatherall*



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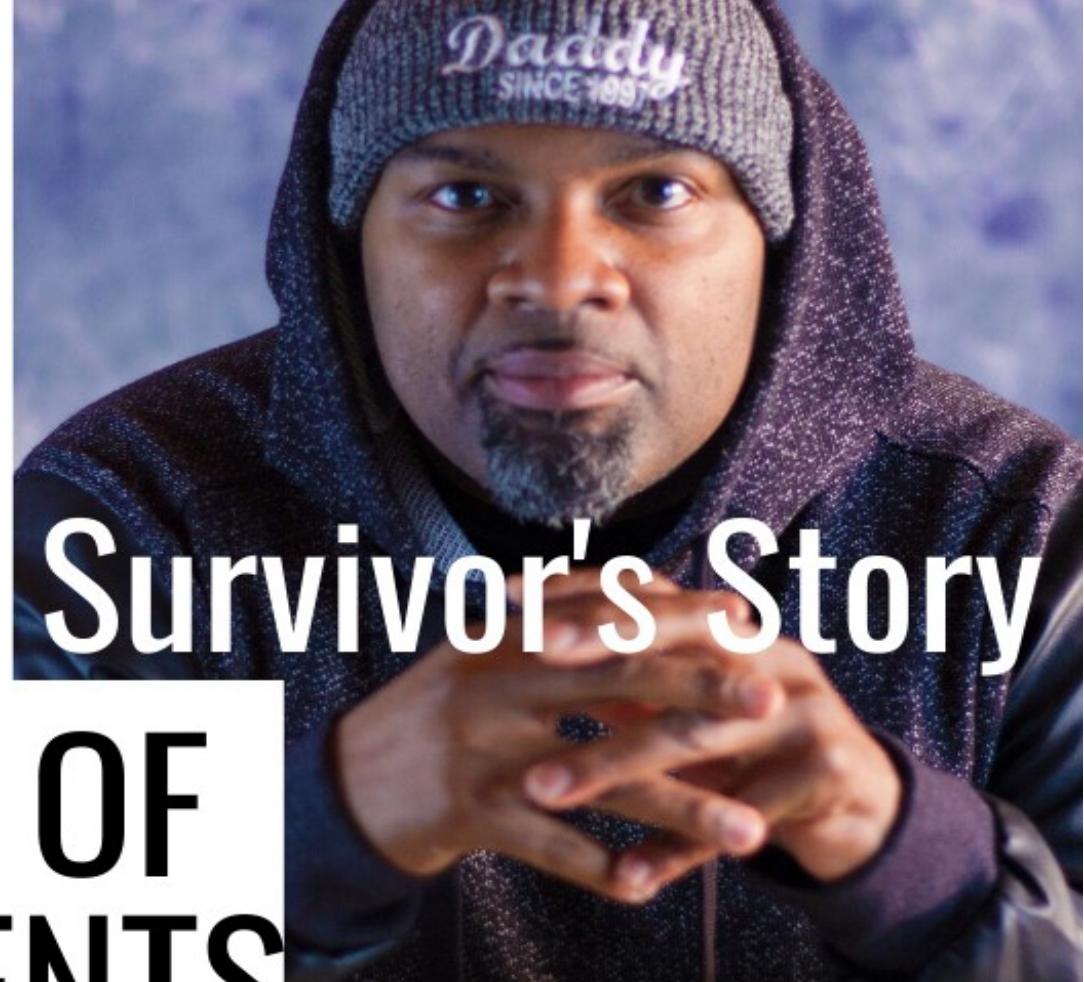


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LIVE FREELY

When I finally made the decision to disclose the fact that I was a survivor of sexual abuse, I was told that you don't even know you're bound until you are free. That statement resonated with me and I began reflecting over my life. At that moment I realized that I had been living my life in bondage. I sabotaged relationships, didn't like getting too close to people, allowed others to treat me less than I deserved, cared too much about the opinion of people, and didn't understand my self worth. As I went through my healing journey and allowed God to do the work in me, I began to walk in purpose. God showed me who I am in Him, which made me see myself fully as the beautiful woman He created. I am now living a new level of freedom I didn't know was possible.

I admonish you to allow God to do the same for you. Unfortunately life dealt us a hand we did not deserve, but the good news is, you can heal, discover your gifts, walk in purpose, and live freely. It's up to you to take the first step. It won't be easy, and the journey is a process, but in the end you win. I'm so excited for your future. It starts right now!

Letter from...

The Editor

Dee Marie

Editor-n-Chief
Founder/CEO

April is National Sexual Assault Awareness Month.
Spread the word. Help us put an end to sexual assault.



Saturday
April 11th 10:00am - 10:30
Live on ZOOM!

8th

ANNUAL

STROLL TO HEAL THE SOUL
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MINISTRIES

April is National Sexual Assault Awareness Month.
Spread the word. Help us put an end to sexual assault.



Pastor Monty Weatherall and First Lady Kim Weatherall of Love Church located in Swansea, IL.

Survivor's Story



Montonio S. Weatherall is a pastor and a relationship coach. Pastor Monty (as he is affectionately called) has had one desire: to see healing manifest in all of God's children. He believes that evidence of manifested healing is shown when each person walks in their God-given gift.

His name escapes me. But, let me tell you about a young man I met in 2017 who gave me all the confirmation I needed to know I was doing the right thing by traveling the country telling my story of being sexually abuse from the ages of 4 to 7 by two male relatives.

It was August of 2017 and very early into the tour for my newly released book "Taking My Life Back — Thriving after the trauma of childhood sexual abuse." I wasn't sure if going on tour, being so vulnerable, upsetting many family members, in fact, losing some relationships with blood relatives, and being away from my church for weeks on end, was all worth it. Until I met this young man.

I was making my presentation about why an important step to taking your life back, after you have been sexually abused —is forgiveness. I was talking to the audience about why I had to forgive those two male relatives who sexually abused me so that I could finally be free of the life sentence of excruciating emotional pain I was in. I first noticed this young man because he sat in the back of the auditorium emotionless, as if he was a zombie or drugged up on some substance. Now, I am pretty good at reading audiences. I have been speaking publicly since I was fifteen years old. However, I could not get a beat on this gentleman. As many men, women, boys, and girls were

crying, sometimes laughing, and even expressing anger at times, he sat there stone-faced.

When I had finished my presentation, I was escorted to a green room where the pastor who was hosting the event was to meet me. As the pastor entered the room, he was accompanied by two men on his security detail and guess who one of the men were? That's right. The young emotionless, zombie looking stoned-faced, brother.

He never said a word while the pastor and the other man on security detail was in the office. The pastor had to excuse himself in order to take care of a few housekeeping things. He asked one of the men to go with him and one to stay back with me. The stone-faced man agreed to stay back with me. This is exactly what he said to indicate he wanted to stay behind, "I got right here." When I heard his word and his tone, I thought, okay I hope me and dude are gonna be okay back here alone. At this point, I don't know if he was offended by me and my presentation. I was even scanning my brain to see if this guy and I had a social media run in or something. I knew there was no way he could know me—know me because I wasn't from that region of the country.

But, everything changed just seconds after the pastor and the other security guard left the room. As soon as the door closed, this hardened man, quickly melted.

It was as if he couldn't hold his hidden emotions in another moment. He burst into tears and said, "Pastor you were telling my life story up there. I was sexually abused too, by an uncle, and it has ruined my life." What he said next explained what I was seeing while making my presentation. He said, "Man, people be saying I look hard and rough. But sir, this is so I keep my guard up because I made up my mind I will never let anyone in." He told me how he has blown up relationships when they have gotten too serious. He had no relationship with his parents. As I listened to him, I could discern, as the stone melted away from his face and heart, he's waited a lifetime to unload this story. I could also tell he would only do it with someone he trusted and someone he knew would understand. At that moment, I knew he needed me there and God certainly wanted me on this tour telling my story.

Here is my story. My name is Monty Weatherall and I am among the 1 in 6. Now, I don't normally acknowledge any kind of statistical attachment associated with me, my identity, or my experiences. However, this one is just too important, especially in the times we're living. Not only am I among the 1 in 6 men who were sexually abused as a child, but as I mentioned in the introductory story, the abuse also came at the hands of two male relatives.

From the ages of four to seven, I was escorted into dark, cold, mouse filled rooms of horror. I confided in the second male relative and told him what the other relative was doing to me, hoping he'd rescue me. But, he became an even worse predator terrorizing me for approximately another two years.

As with all of us who have been sexually abused, a demonic companion was assigned to me. Some people struggle with sexual promiscuity. Others numb themselves with legal or illegal substances. Some people struggle with their sexual identity. And many others fall in the category I was in — I turned on myself, became my own enemy and was tormented by years of anger, chronic depression, and self-hatred. Emotional eating became my vice and at its peak, I had ballooned up to 325 lbs. I have contemplated suicide so many times I've lost count. In fact, on Friday October 9, 2015, I made the decision that weekend would be my last on earth.

I called my wife while she was at work and told her I wanted to speak with her that evening and I asked could she come straight home. She agreed and knew by the tone in my voice that something serious was going to be discussed. I wanted my wife to know that I was going to terminate my own life that weekend. The reason why I made the decision to

tell her was because my wife (Kim) is the greatest human being I have ever met and I did not want her to come home and find my lifeless body in our home. In addition, I wanted to answer any questions she may have had concerning my decision; I wanted to make sure she knew exactly why I had taken my own life.

My wife knows me better than anyone. So, she knew this was not a grab at attention from me. She knew I didn't do things like that. So, in wisdom, she took me very seriously. We spent hours that weekend crying, talking, she pleading with me not to do it, and also making funeral arrangements. We talked about who she'd call and even which funeral home to use. My wife's a praying woman however, and she wasn't going to let me go without a (spiritual) fight. In between her wailing and pleading for me not to end my life, she prayed and that Sunday around 4:00 pm, I broke away from the emotional stupor, and began to cry out to the Lord for help.

Following that weekend, I vowed to never put my wife in that kind of position again and I was determined to do all I could to heal, to take my life back, to reclaim the pieces of my identity that was still bound in those dark rooms where the sexual abuse occurred. The first step I took was to get professional counseling. Professional counseling helped me

tremendously. It was one of the greatest decisions I have ever made. I want to use this term a third time in this paragraph — professional counseling. For those of you reading this who are Christians, I mean no dishonor towards your pastor by stating this. After all, I am a pastor.

However, what you must realize is he/she is not equipped, educated, and in most cases, nor trained to deal with the type of trauma associated with those who have been sexually abused. They (we) are spiritual professionals not clinical professionals. Counseling was a game changer for me.

Another thing which helped me tremendously was me opening up and talking about the sexual abuse publicly. It was cathartic. The more I talked about it the more strength I gained to walk in complete healing. With the few moments we have left together as you are near the end of reading this piece, I want to give you 5 reasons why I think it is time for you to open up and talk about the sexual abuse you suffered.

1. It helps relieve a lot of the inner pain you're going through. I am certain as it was with me, you talking about your experience will give you emotional and psychological relief.

2. It will explain a lot of other personality hang ups and possible disorders you may be struggling with. It wasn't until I unpacked and dealt with the sexual abuse that I begin to understand things about myself like why I was so withdrawn from both sides of my family. How I had never really felt at home on either side. After all, the first abuser was on my paternal side and the other maternal.

3. You expose the sexual predator to the rest of the family. This is an important point because too often the sexual abuser is allowed to operate underground for decades harming many children along the way.

4. You help your family and friends, the ones who are committed to being healthy, understand you better and have a new level of compassion for you.

Some family members will resent the fact that you are exposing the spiritual and natural demons in your family. However, keep pressing. Remember, you are helping you and potentially others who have suffered at the hands of the familial predator.

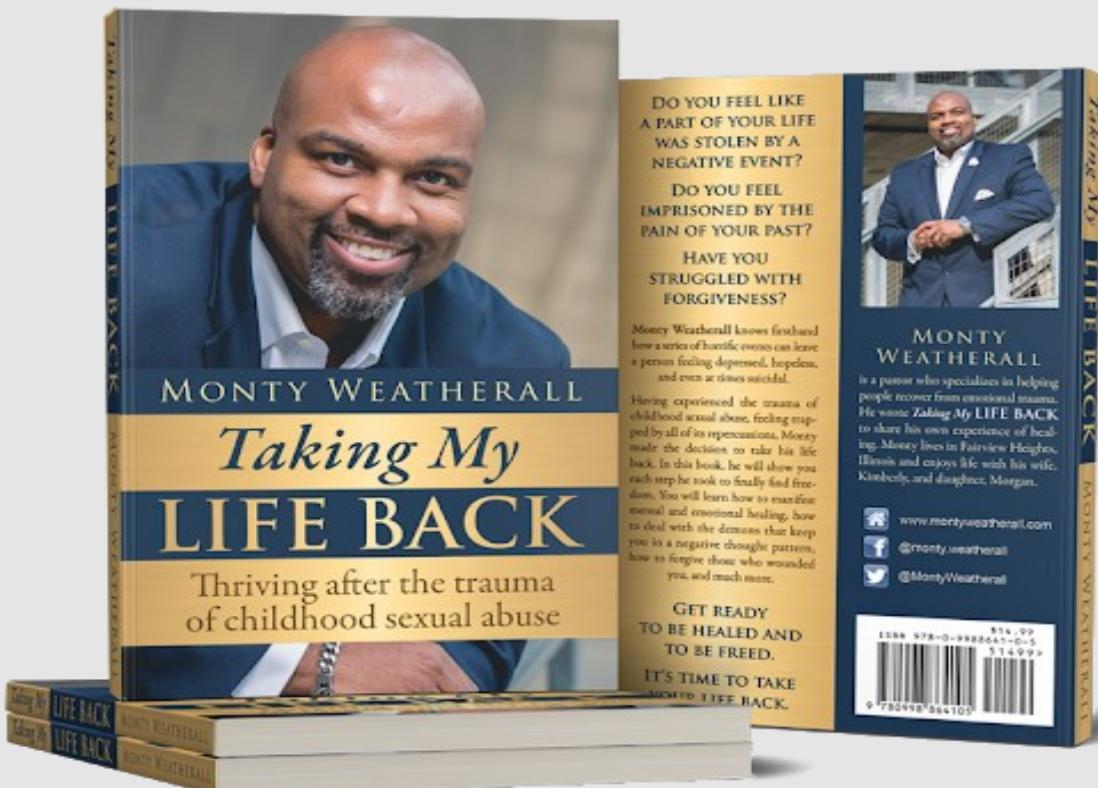
5. Your story will help countless of others come out of the shadows, admit they too were sexually abused, and get the help they desperately need in order to heal and be free.

Finally, I want to speak to those of you who (like me) are among the 1 in 6. To the men who were sexually abused as children, my brother, I know it is downright frightening. Just the thought of you being so vulnerable and telling others about the nightmare you lived as a child. I know you are concerned with how you are going to be viewed after you reveal that

you too were among the 1 in 6. I assure you great brother, those who love you will applaud your courage. You will also help the stranger who will hear your story and they will consider you heroic.

That is what happened to me that evening in the green room as the man who was once stone-faced began telling me his story. He said something else that night I will never forget. He said, "God is using you to tell your story the way you tell it to change the world." Today, I am not sure if I am even making a dent in helping to change the world. However, I do pray, after you've read this article, I have in some way, changed you.

Monty Weatherall
Pastor, Relationship Coach, and
Award Winning Author



THE COUNSELOR'S CORNER



YOU GOOD BRUH?

Greetings! My name is Etoya R. White, M.Ed., PLPC., and I am excited to be here as a contributor to this groundbreaking project. VOSAS Magazine provides a much-needed healing space, and I am grateful to have been asked to participate.

In addition to my work as a clinical therapist, I serve in school district leadership, corporate speaker/trainer, I am a business owner and, most importantly, father to three amazing children. I also host an internet radio show, which addresses issues of mental wellness for men and boys in and from Black and Brown spaces. I bring an array of experiences to the field of mental health, which will be present in the articles I submit; many of which will be

psychoeducational in nature. I believe it is critically important to not just talk about the issues that plague us in our individual, professional and relational spaces, but we must have tools we can use in order to help us to process and progress toward healing and change. A myriad of topics will be covered, which will hopefully lead to conversation in your personal spaces. I am absolutely looking forward to us healing together.

In Wellness

Etoya R. White, M.Ed., PLPC

Etoya R. White Therapy & Coaching

<http://www.etoyawhite.com>
Coaching@etoyawhite.com

Life is happening.....and anxiety is real

The past 30 days have absolutely reshaped the world, as we know it. What began as and was unfortunately minimized as an offshoot of the flu, has turned into something that has taken the lives of tens of thousands of people, with tens of thousands more potentially to follow. Schools have been shut down. Jobs and income streams have been lost. The economy has been obliterated. Graduations have been cancelled. I could go on and on. Along with these changes has come an overwhelming increase in anxiety, which ultimately leads to substance abuse, which ultimately leads to domestic and other forms of abuse.

Anxiety is our body's natural response to various types of stressors. When we encounter a stressor or threat, our body shifts into a "fight, flight, or freeze" response. Often, these responses can become overwhelming, which often leads to changes in behavior. Anxiety can manifest as somatic or physical symptoms, like stomach-ache, headache or dizziness. I even have clients who experience night terrors.

In diagnosing anxiety and helping clients to chart their own path to healing, it's important to understand the root cause of the symptoms, whether present day or the result of unresolved childhood or abuse trauma.

Once uncovered, developing a personal self-care plan, for proactive treatment, and effective coping strategies for reactive treatment, are part of a broader treatment plan.

Guess what? Anxiety may never completely go away. However, we can examine the thoughts, emotions and experiences connected to the responses, so you can create a new normal.

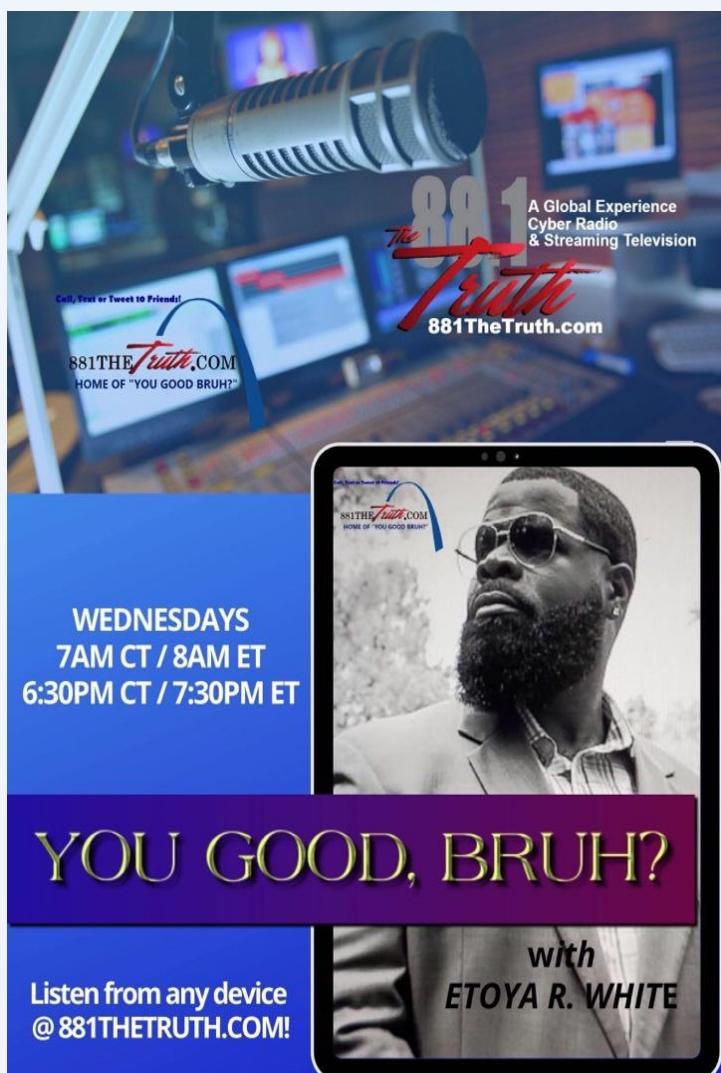
Anxiety does not have to be a prison sentence. There's nothing wrong with you. Some things have just happened to you. Thousands of therapists across the country are offering virtual services. Do not hesitate to contact your EAP (Employee Assistance Program) or you can contact me to get referrals.

Etoya R. White, M.Ed., PLPC

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DID YOU KNOW?



**ONE IN 10 CHILDREN
WILL BE SEXUALLY ABUSED
BEFORE AGE 18.**



90%

OF VICTIMS
KNOW
THEIR
ABUSER.



**2/3 OF TEACHERS
ARE NOT TRAINED**



**TO PREVENT,
RECOGNIZE, OR
RESPOND TO CHILD
SEXUAL ABUSE.**

CHILDREN ARE
MOST VULNERABLE
TO SEXUAL ABUSE
BETWEEN THE
AGES OF
7 AND 13



60%

OF CHILD SEXUAL
ABUSE VICTIMS



NEVER TELL ANYONE.

SHARE

WITH YOUR FRIENDS
& SPREAD THE WORD



DARKNESS TO LIGHT
www.D2L.org



Darkness to Light is working to end child sexual abuse through empowering adults to prevent it.

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Mental Health Hotline
866-677-5924

Center Against Sexual Assault
866-373-8300

National Alliance on Mental
Illness
800-950-6264

National Sexual Assault
800-656-4673

HEALTHY LIVING



Practicing self-care is one of the most important aspects of healing. Most of the time when we hear the term self-care, we immediately think of activities such as getting a massage or pampering ourselves. In actuality, self-care should begin with how we treat our bodies. Some of the side effects of experiencing trauma can result in developing poor eating habits and becoming overweight. We can win that battle by making better food choices, and beginning a workout regimen. Start out small, then before you know it, you will be well on your way to a complete healthy lifestyle.

“Eating well is a form of self-care.”

“Meal prepping is a great place to begin your new healthy lifestyle. It promotes and creates new habits, and keeps you on a healthy eating schedule.”

MONDAY



TUESDAY



WEDNESDAY



THURSDAY



Behind the Smile

Behind the smile I've suffered so much hurt and pain. Didn't you hear me screaming as I cried and called your name? Help never came.

Behind the smile I couldn't believe how you took pleasure in fondling and touching me. Can't you see that I'm a child that only wanted to play freely? But that plan was destroyed by the hand of the enemy!

Behind the smile I tucked my head in my knees, sobbing and wished away; hoping it was just a nightmare that would soon be over the very next day. But lo and behold it was my reality, how do I live with this and who can I trust to tell? Will they believe me?

Behind the smile I put my feelings on the shelf, kept my mouth closed, lived with guilt and blamed myself. After all it was my fault, at least for years is what I thought.

Behind the smile no one could really see that inside I was dying from all the guilt and shame. All I ever wanted was to live a normal life, but at this point things would never be the same. My youth and beauty were being held hostage and I had no more strength to fight. Would anyone miss me if I wasn't here? Mere thoughts of suicide, BUT something happened that very night.

I heard a soft voice say so clear. I AM here! You shall live and not die – I heard your inner cry. I came that you may have life more abundantly. Rise UP my child and live freely. I created you in my image and I have plans for you to fulfill. Your VOICE will be heard and YOU are healed! Healed from the tactics of the enemy, guilt, shame, and false accusations spoken against you. Behold daughter you are made new.

The journey was long and rough, but God's peace and strength comforted me. Counseling and speaking my truth became more than enough. It was not easy to let go and forgive, but it was necessary for me to continue to live.

Behind the smile I voiced my truth that cause me pain, but the pain pushed me to in purpose and is now part of my testimony. How I am free in deed to walk as an OVERCOMER, thriving in VICTORY – and for that I give God all the honor and glory!

My truth.

Katie M. Haney



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SPOTLIGHT

April is
**Sexual Assault
Awareness Month**



***April 2020 marks the official 19th anniversary of
Sexual Assault Awareness Month***

The month of April has been recognized as National Sexual Assault Awareness Month by the National Sexual Violence Resource Center. During this month people all over the country, survivors, advocates, and supporters all take time to bring awareness to this cause. The color is teal and the symbol is a teal ribbon. We must continue having the conversation in order to make a difference.



Sexual Assault Awareness Month



CELEBRATING SURVIVORS



“We delight in the beauty of the *butterfly*, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty.” – Maya Angelou.

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