

SUMMARY STATEMENT

from the

CAJ Abuse Survivors Support Group

BACKGROUND

Since Autumn 2017, concerned alumni of the Christian Academy in Japan (CAJ) have endeavored to shed light on abuses – sexual, physical, emotional and spiritual – that have occurred since the school’s beginning in 1950. Heartbreaking reports surfaced on alumni Facebook sites, through class reunions and other alumni relationships.

Abuse by Commission was perpetrated by adults and students. **Abuse by Omission** was committed by adults failing in their responsibility to protect vulnerable children placed in their care and failing to report abuses to parents and proper authorities. Abuse happened in classrooms, the infirmary, playgrounds, the gym, dormitories and mission hostels. Crimes against the humanity of children were committed. Lives have been forever impacted by the damage. Addictions, suicides, homelessness, imprisonment have all left a trail of sorrow. A high number of premature deaths due to illnesses and accidents have broken hearts of families left behind. Seventeen missionary families have lost two children and at least one family has lost three. Sadly too, as a result of their trauma, some siblings have become so estranged they have no clue how to contact one another.

On February 6, 2019, a concerned group of alumni sent a letter to the CAJ Head of School and Board of Directors representing the six founding missions¹, listing 66 credible allegations and calling for resolution and justice regarding this history of abuse. They asked for an investigation via a reputable, independent and mutually agreed-upon agency. The letter was signed by 81 alumni including abuse survivors, siblings, and supporting peers. This formal request was the culmination of more than a year of communication with the CAJ Head of School and Board of Directors, including submission of six signed first-hand accounts from courageous survivors.

Anda Foxwell, Head of School, and four of the six founding mission boards responded quickly and contracted with Telios Law, a firm with prior investigative experience in schools for missionary kids (MKs). SEND (formerly Far Eastern Gospel Crusade) chose to do a separate investigation of allegations against FEGC staff during the 1960’s and 1970’s. Alumni are very disappointed to have no explanation from OMS as to why it has not participated.

Alumni representatives chose to fully engage with the investigations and active participation with Telios began almost immediately. At the invitation of Theresa Sidebotham (independent counsel, Telios Law), they designated Deborah Rhoads (Class of 1972) to represent survivors throughout the investigation. By August 2019, screening and in-person interviews with alumni were set up by both the Telios and SEND investigations. Led by Deborah, the alumni group has worked in good faith with Telios investigators and Theresa Sidebotham. Alumni especially appreciate the latter’s willingness to incorporate a new strategy - alumni representation at key steps in the investigation².

¹ Resonate Global Missions, Serve Globally, The Evangelical Alliance Mission, WorldVenture, SEND, OMS

² At first Investigators’ meeting, June 2019; May 2021 Review Panel meeting; inclusion of this Summary Statement in the final report.

Deborah and other alumni reached out to encourage participation from known abuse survivors, as well as classmates, dormmates and former CAJ staff who could corroborate their experiences. Alumni insisted that survivor privacy be maintained, and additional trauma minimized throughout the process.

Brenda Seat (Class of 1976), co-presenter with Deborah Rhoads at the Telios Review Panel meeting in May 2021, described survivor angst during investigator interviews.

This was a costly and self-sacrificing choice that many of us made. For many, myself included, we had dealt with, buried or covered over these painful stories and had lived our lives. When we approached CAJ and the founding mission boards early on in this process, we wanted to have our concerns and stories acknowledged, to work with these self-professed Christian institutions to create safe places for children to thrive and grow. Instead, we were ignored and our stories dismissed as “something that happened decades ago” and therefore irrelevant.

To then have to push to be heard and ultimately dredge all that pain up again, creating a raw wound where there were scars, is not something we did lightly or thoughtlessly. As one participant said, “I feel like none of the ‘adults’ in this saga got hurt at all and the victims had to relive the atrocities that happened to them, even after our grievances were heard and ignored...I feel like we are a bunch of children told to jump into the feather bin and fluff it all up, only to find that the feathers turned out to be little razor blades of our past opening up the scars we carry today.”

NOTE: See additional alumni reactions in *Addendum*.

LOST CHILDREN

At meetings with investigators and then Review panelists, the alumni representatives clarified CAJ’s unique background:

- Missionaries who responded to both God’s call and Gen. Douglas MacArthur’s plea for a WWII conquered nation, necessitating formation of a school for their children.
- A campus on the rural outskirts of Tokyo in what was the emperor’s old dairy, where cow barns became classrooms.
- A school for MKs founded within the Japanese host culture that strangely mirrored the missionary community itself. Retrospectively, CAJ alumni now realize both were cultures in which obedience, sacrifice, silence and endurance were expected of women and especially children.
- A student body composed of:
 - Fulltime boarders who often spent months at the school without seeing their families.
 - Five-day boarders who traveled long distances home on weekends, sometimes unaccompanied, even at the age of six.
 - Day students, many commuting two-plus hours each way on Japan’s jammed mass transit system, infamously known for its sexual gropers. (Today there are “Women Only” train cars during peak rush hours to deal with this problem.)
 - Ever **obedient** and **silent**, understanding that theirs was a role of **sacrifice**, many children never told parents of their harrowing abuse and frightening travel experiences.

As with MK survivors from similar schools worldwide, concerned CAJ alumni now recognize that missionary parents' focus on "the Lord's work" was often to the detriment of their children, a **tragic underbelly of mission life**.

As noted previously, there was the failure of responsible adults entrusted with precious lives of children who were not their own. There was failure to take appropriate action when abuses by both adults and students were reported. In one case, this was justified by school administrators who speculated that the family didn't want their child labeled the victim of abuse, as if shame for the abuse lay with the latter. At the same time, **abusers silenced victims** by threatening the mission work of their parents.

What irony that while parents spent their lives preaching the gospel, a significant number of CAJ alumni - their children - have rejected that gospel and left the church! The phrase "in a Christ-like manner" is a painful trigger for many abuse survivors.

"It is critical that CAJ and the founding missions understand the spiritual struggle that adult survivors of childhood abuse at CAJ and in the larger missionary community experience. We are not faithless, weak, apostate, hostile people. We had our childhood faith stolen from us before it could grow into a mature expression of belief. And that was done by some of the very people tasked to nurture, train and care for us." – *CAJ survivor*

Most living alumni who experienced abuse at CAJ are adamant they want to be recognized as Survivors, not Victims. Yet there are victims who did not survive - those deaths due to suicide (at least ten), addictions and many chronic illnesses. Some of these were clearly linked to childhood abuses at CAJ.

JUSTICE AND HEALING – DESIRED OUTCOMES

The early call from alumni was for Justice and Healing. That hope remains. But **Justice** is difficult when most identified abusers and responsible parties are dead and when acts of child maltreatment were committed in Japan, outside US legal jurisdiction and before the Child Protection Act of 2003.

Healing remains a nebulous goal, not something to be gratuitously bestowed upon survivors by the school and mission boards. Rather, alumni hope that the latter look within their organizations and cultures to accept culpability and see the necessity for change. At its heart, **Justice** seeks for restoration of both offender and victim. This is a **healing path** forward for all those impacted by historical abuses at CAJ.

In one of the earliest first-person letters to the CAJ board, an alumnus wrote:

"Having been the Executive VP of a large international and interdenominational mission organization, I understand on some level the difficult position you all are in. I also understand that this abuse did not happen under your watch. However, I firmly believe that the biblical notion of corporate repentance, that is modeled in Scripture by Nehemiah and Daniel (Nehemiah 1 and Daniel 9), and that God honored, requires that we acknowledge the sins of previous generations as our own. To do less is to compromise the integrity of the institutions we lead.

I know that in a culture like Japan, shame and honor are very big. But, when the God of Israel wrote, through his servants, the history of his own people (who also lived in a shame and honor

culture) he had them write an unvarnished history with the failures of the greatest of them like David. Can we as servants of God do any less today?

Jesus took this kind of abuse very seriously when he said that if anyone harms the faith of a little child it would be better that a mill stone be hung around their neck and be cast into the sea. You know that the children of my generation will never get justice. But you could give them some peace that the Board of the school they attended deeply regrets what happened.”

The late Paul Rhoads, Abuse Survivor, Class of 1970

To solicit input for **desired outcomes** from the investigations, the alumni group used a variety of methods, including two surveys on the closed Facebook page, CAJ Abuse Survivors Support Group (ASSG). High on the response list was the **desire to have survivor voices heard**. That has been partially accomplished through the investigative interviews. But without an appropriate response and action by the school and mission boards, those voices will have been in vain.

True repentance for past failures at CAJ was also requested by alumni. This was described as more than expressing regret or an apology. True repentance should be demonstrated by concrete and public actions which are described in the RECOMMENDATIONS below.

Furthermore, concerned alumni **do not want history repeated**. There will always be predators seeking out the vulnerable, but alumni want assurance that CAJ has truly learned how to be vigilant, proactively responding to reports of child maltreatment, properly reporting to law enforcement when crimes are committed and to intervene, support and bring all necessary clinical and support resources as quickly as possible to children who are abused.

CAJ and the founding missions still form a very insular community, which history and current reports of abuse within the evangelical community have shown to be fertile ground for child maltreatment. Even with a Child Safety Protection program in place, CAJ needs to open its systems, create opportunity for third party evaluation of its practices, regularly review protocols and talk with the entire student body about mechanisms for reporting abuse. School Board members also need to be well educated on child safety protocols. Looking back, concerned alumni and staff recognize that no such guidelines were in place when many abuses took place. Many alumni are also discomfited to realize a parent of theirs was serving on the Board when these abuses happened.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Public and fulsome acknowledgement of wrongdoing.

CAJ alumni survivors have been very clear. General apology statements and letters of regret are not enough. Too often Christian organizations say, “We’re terribly sorry it happened, but this was before our time, and we’re quite sure it won’t happen again.” Alumni request that statements of repentance be made on school and mission websites, statements that acknowledge and accept responsibility for historical abuses, as well as more recent incidences. Similar press statements should also be sent to public media in Japan and home newspapers of all involved mission headquarter communities. A *Religion News Service* correspondent contacted CAJ, Telios, involved missions and the alumni representative to prepare a story on the CAJ situation in 2019. The article was picked up by *Christianity Today* and other religious media. *Religion News* will undoubtedly want to hear from all parties at the close of this investigation. **Public**

repentance will go far in bringing a measure of healing to survivors and encourage the school and founding missions to be proactive when abuse happens again. It is entirely possible for CAJ and the founding missions to create a new paradigm in which survivors will be respected and treated as human beings created in the image of God, rather than problems that need to be hidden to protect the Christian witness of CAJ and the missions.

Establishment of an independent fund/foundation for healing.

“Why dig up the past?” ask some, to which survivors respond, “The pain was never buried. It has been a festering wound since the school’s earliest days.” Other survivors have finally experienced affirmation from family members who now, because of this investigation, believe their reports of abuse. The investigation stirred up painful memories for survivors and family alike, and release of the final report will add more. But for many, acknowledgement of the past has been cathartic and from the catharsis they have hope of healing. (See *Addendum*)

Some survivors need urgent and specialized care today for injuries suffered long ago, as well as a broad spectrum of support and care for those who appear to function well but continue to unwittingly pass on the effects of trauma to their children and grandchildren.

Medical and mental health care for survivors is now most critical, especially with release of the public report. Re-traumatization is a concern both for those who participated in the investigation and those who were abused but have chosen to remain silent for a variety of reasons.

Some survivors have tried to access reimbursement for therapy put in place by Telios Law for those who participated in the interview process. But having to contact and deal with their parents’ mission organizations to obtain treatment can become another trauma trigger. A centralized, independent process provided through a separate case manager is more appropriate.

As concerned alumni communicated with survivors during the investigation, they found it impossible to simply stand by awaiting action from the school and missions. Models of healing are being proactively researched and tested. Alumni are in discussions with renowned experts in the unique MK experience and proven therapy intervention for childhood trauma survivors. Equally valuable is expertise within the entire alumni group - mental health professionals, pastors, lawyers, educators, health care communicators and advocates.

Through these efforts, it has become clear that a significant fund, administered by an independent case manager, needs to be established to facilitate best practice models for a broad spectrum of survivor needs. This would include highly trained therapists who understand trauma and victimology, as well as the unique MK/Third Culture Kid experience; suitably trained retreat leaders, group moderators and organizers for in-person and online therapy groups; resource guides to providers and tools (books, websites etc.); and significant funding for therapy and possible institutionalization for some members who still suffer from extraordinary trauma.

Also abundantly clear is recognition that healing approaches must include both evangelical Christian and secular models of care. For many alumni survivors, responses based solely on a “Christian” perspective have no relevance and in fact *add* to their trauma.

“During the past two years being closely involved with survivors, I have loosely identified four basic spiritual journeys. Some continue to cling to the faith of their childhood, finding solace and

security in not questioning the past and familial beliefs. Others have served God faithfully, experiencing crises of faith and more than one dark night of the soul. They have walked into a mature faith through much study and hard work. There are those who had to leave evangelical Christianity in order to gain a new perspective. For them, the search is ongoing, every step towards a semblance of belief conditioned by the reality that spiritual leaders can't necessarily be trusted. And others have walked away completely into different belief systems in which they find a measure of peace and comfort." - *Alumni Survivor*

Campus Memorial to say 'Never Again'

A commemorative monument on school property in memory of those who suffered abuse at CAJ would be a clear statement to everyone that the child/victim is more important than the school or mission reputation. It would serve as a profound reminder to staff of what can happen and move them towards **listening and giving credibility to a child's report of abuse**. Dedication of this monument could include encouragement and a message to students about the importance of speaking up and speaking out; that their safety is paramount. And it would be a tangible acknowledgement for survivors that their suffering is no longer ignored and relegated to the shadows of history but carries meaning.

CONCLUSION

Alumni remain hopeful that all of the above and more will be achieved through the actions of CAJ and the founding missions that supported the investigation. Alumni also encourage and are hopeful that SEND and OMS will participate as well. Deborah Rhoads and Brenda Seat, alumni representatives at the Review Panel meeting in May 2021, closed their presentation with the following message:

We want CAJ and the missions to focus on students' needs. We want children to be heard right away, listened to and protected so that they do not suffer needlessly. We want systems and structures where children are valued and supported, rather than systems the institutions create to make things easier, less messy or to be economical and efficient. We want structures in place so that children can get the help they need right away and healing can begin even before the scars form. We want Christian institutions to understand and act out the true meaning of Jesus saying, "Suffer the children to come unto me."

ADDENDUM

IN THEIR OWN WORDS - Alumni Comments

Despite bitter experiences and memories, most alumni have expressed appreciation for the excellent education received at CAJ. Many attribute their ability to clearly and passionately express themselves in writing to lessons learned in the old milk barns. This is evidenced in just a few samples of the many reflections written over the past four years.

“For years I did not have a good sense of myself, a healthy self-image at all, and I believe that’s a direct result of both feeling abandoned and being abused as a child at CAJ. For years I did not stand up for myself, or demand that my parents or others stand up for me. It led to my allowing more bad things to happen to me, to my body, my soul, my heart, again and again and again. Further damage for me, was the loss of an intrinsic belief in the comfort and goodness and power of God. When I was little, I believed in Jesus with all my little girl heart until the day a man of God put his hand up under my skirt and down my underpants. I stopped trusting in Jesus; I lost my faith in God. A deep tragedy, for sure, in an ocean of them. It has taken many, many years to be able to reconcile the unbelievable hypocrisy of people doing unchristian things in the names of God and Jesus, with the concept of a benevolent, guiding, accessible Power that is greater than myself. Children have a perfect bullshit compass, a friend recently pointed out, and to be abused by well-regarded Christians is hypocrisy at its worst. Author Christa Brown who exposed abuse in Southern Baptist communities says, ‘Those abused in faith communities face an extra dimension of spiritual harm...it’s a **soul-murdering kind of abuse.**’ I could not have said it better.”

"Abuse and neglect destroy a child's soul, their Self. They leave their parents, their siblings, their church, and their spiritual being in order to stop the pain, even if it means leaving some sources of love."

“How do we heal? We don't - not completely. It's like the loss of a loved one; over time it doesn't hurt as much, but it's always there. If I am hurting, I mentally and emotionally go to my "safe place" and stay there for a while (I learned this during my studies for accreditation as a Clinical Hypnotherapist). Healing is an ongoing process; it's a chronic process.

Telios interviews? For me they were a catharsis. But I also found several of my classmates reached out to me after I uploaded my experiences to the survivor group page. People who hadn't come forward, yet told me things that I didn't know about them. Mutually sharing such horrors with them brought on the catharsis. For them as well.”

“Yes, the whole knowing you weren't alone part of it. The more we realize our shared pain/sorrow/horrors, the better able we are to carry them. When I read the *"Sent"*³ book I realized that there were hundreds of little MKs all over the world crying themselves to sleep in dorms every night, not just me. Somehow it brought comfort to the little child in me. I don't have the vocabulary to describe in psychological terms what I'm trying to say - but yeah, somehow knowing you weren't alone, even if it happened 50+ years ago, is comforting. . . . I would like to see (in addition to everything else) missions take a more active role in

³ *SENT: Reflections on Missions, Boarding School and Childhood* – Chefoo Reconsidered Book Committee, CIM/OMF schools

providing support to the missionaries. Maybe they're doing a better job of it now . . . but back when this was happening in the 50's it seems missionaries were just sent off and then left to fend for themselves. For everything!"

"When it would be expected that a child's view of the world would mature as they grow older, it doesn't. Their social and emotional development is arrested at the age when the abuse occurred. They may learn appropriate social skills to interact with people in positions of authority and respect, but the core feelings created by abuse linger deep inside--sometimes even unconsciously. You can't say to someone who was abused as a child to "grow up" or "get over it" or "forgive your abuser" and your life will be better. Rarely does this happen. Instead, children grow into adults who carry that pain, doubt, anger, and lack of trust and faith with them into every life event. They often hide those feelings well. They begin to live life through a veil and have real difficulty with sincerity, with intimacy, and with grace: especially God's grace. It isn't really meant for them."

"More than once I've heard it said that children are **resilient**. According to Webster's dictionary, resilient means 'recovering readily from adversity, buoyant, springing back'. I don't think children bounce back from being harmed to their undamaged state readily if at all. I would use the term **adaptable**. Again, Webster's defines adaptable as 'able to adjust oneself to different conditions'. The harm is still done. Because in so many cases the harm was done in early childhood when the effects can influence one's entire life, every effort should be made to avoid harming children in the first place. **I am 68 years old and still processing and recovering from the harm done to me starting when I was 6 years old.**

For me it has been lifelong and encompassed many approaches. One of the most important aids for me has been discovering that I was far from alone in my experience. For years I thought my experience was almost unique. . . . There will be a range of what survivors want from the organizations. . . . The survivor should be offered options but not feel forced or compelled to participate. Much of the harm done was due to us not feeling any control over our situations. So, in supporting healing, the organizations should respect that the individual survivor is the one in control."

"In addition to the physical abuse and harm that was done to us there was and continues to be another harm that is just as devastating and harmful. I want to name it as the 'silencing' which occurred every time abuse was covered up, went unresolved or was ignored. Whether it was done by those in power when they were told of abuse and hushed it up or by ourselves because we did not think anyone would listen or when we told but no one listened, the silencing was an equally grave violation and harm that occurred.

Silencing is corrosive and eats away at a child's ability to feel agency, to feel that they matter and that they are empowered to protect themselves from others. The silencing of children either directly by saying their abuse did not happen, or excusing it by saying it was a mistake or misunderstanding, exacerbates and enlarges the initial injury by causing children to be unable to trust themselves or believe that they know when they have been abused, harmed or injured. Silencing makes suspect their very ability to judge right and wrong and to believe that they can determine the difference. . . . This is why so many of us have experienced such a catharsis when we realized we were not alone, that the abuse did occur, that it was violent and horrible and wrong. Until we found others who shared their own stories, we did not know if we could fully trust our own selves and trust that what happened to us was wrong. The silencing had taken that away as well."

“This morning, I started to read the very long and detailed Mamou Final Report [posted on Facebook regarding abuses at other mission schools] . . . In particular, one paragraph describing “general practices which were harmful to a majority of students” caught my sudden attention. It was written by an MK describing mandatory separation from parents at the beginning of each school year:

‘The abandonment that we felt was profound. And it was made more so because it didn’t occur just once in our childhood. Year after year we felt the ripping away of that tender cord. There was a progression of emotions that became familiar by its repetition year after year. We went from grieving the fresh loss at the beginning of the school year . . .’

And that was as far as I got before I began to sob. I am 67 years old and consider myself a reasonably stable professional individual. But that paragraph brought back a flood of bittersweet memories of every August: sweet for the end of summer and bitter for preparations to return to CAJ as a boarder.

As the CAJ board weighs the accounts of former students who incurred deep wounds at the hands of faculty members, it may be tempting to justify retreat from those stories as old news disconnected from the current administration. While it truly is old news, I know that the scars are still very fresh. . . . I humbly suggest that the victims of that behavior deserve an honest moral accounting for the past and assurances that CAJ will never provide a haven for that behavior in the future. . . . In that spirit, I’m enclosing a brief article from the March 10, 1982, issue of the New York Times⁴. It describes an accident where a Japan Air Lines passenger jet crashed into Tokyo Bay as the result of a deliberate act by a suicidal pilot. Twenty-four people lost their lives. What struck me most was the account of JAL President Yasumoto Takagi ‘visiting the families of most of the crash victims, apologizing profusely and paying homage on his knees before the Buddhist funeral altars in the homes of the bereaved.’

The article further describes how Japanese corporations are seen to bear moral as well as legal responsibility for calamities. This situation with CAJ arose on Japanese soil, primarily involving faculty members who were sent or volunteered to go to Japan to teach and minister to the kids of missionaries to Japan. It is my earnest hope that the CAJ board is willing to humbly learn and apply the lessons from JAL.”

“So, I can't help but wonder if in her October article addressing CAJ's response to racism⁵, Head of School Anda Foxwell would be just as willing to write those same words replacing the word ‘racism’ with the word ‘abuse’, as in their sin of abuse? . . . *‘We value truth at CAJ, even when telling the truth means exposing the evil that lies within us and within our history. The truth is that abuse is evil, and we denounce it. [Then quoting another source, Redeemer Church:] ‘We repent of the ways that we as Christians have far too often failed to adequately stand against the evil of abuse and violence: diminishing its severity, averting our gazes, and even perpetuating such injustice deliberately or complicity.’* [This] would be an adequate opening to a thorough and heartfelt apology response from the school to CAJ Abuse Survivors. Perhaps it is that abuse, as with racism, began with precisely the same dehumanizing of a particular demographic (in this case innocent children). . . . Perhaps seeing it through the same lens as they are now ascribing racism, would be just as eye-opening to both faculty and mission boards?”

⁴ [TOKYO AIR CRASH: WHY JAPANESE DO NOT SUE - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/1982/03/10/tokyo-air-crash-why-japanese-do-not-sue)

⁵ <https://caj.or.jp/news/rw/blog/files/fd6a3e3301fbabd9b4b4d3e875a5cc26-28.php>