



## To My Brothers Living in Silence

*Andre Bisquera*

*B*efore coming to the Sex Abuse Treatment Center, I had dabbled in therapy and self-medication in dealing with anger management, identity issues, and addiction. I was sexually abused from age 8-12 by an older half-brother who came from the Philippines to live with my family in Vancouver, WA. Mine was a typical Filipino family where we respected our elders, and communication was one-way and limited to being told what to do. I was left to share a room and be "supervised" by my half-brother. Subsequently, I was at his mercy without a voice to express what was happening to me. Like many victims of sexual abuse, I was scared, ashamed, and afraid no one would believe me. I didn't have the proper environment or words to express the acts committed against me.

Fortunately, my nightmare ended when my half-brother left for the Navy and I was free to live a "normal" life. I tried being the good son, and earned straight A's, ran track, and played piano. But underneath this façade, I was boiling with anger and full of shame of what happened to me. I couldn't wait to go to college and start a new life. The freedom I experienced was cathartic. But this newfound freedom wasn't the panacea that would heal me and make me whole again. I spent many years partying and trying to numb the pain of my sexual abuse. I had some great friends, a long-term girlfriend, a good job, but I still felt empty. My soul searching led to traveling around SE Asia, and a three year stint



*"Now it's time to pay it forward and help other survivors take their first steps to recovery."*

in Lake Tahoe snowboarding and rock climbing. It was in Tahoe that I was finally able to tell a friend about my abuse. The release of being able to share this deep, dark secret was incredible. But this was just one step in my long journey to recovery.

From Tahoe, I moved to the Bay Area. Here I was able to confront my identity issues. It was helpful to be in a much more diverse place than my home town and speak with a professional. I started practicing yoga and meditation to try and calm my deep-seated anger. I went to couples therapy to help with communication issues. But I always danced around the real source of my personal issues.

In 2009, I moved to Hawaii and found the Sex Abuse Treatment Center. Through their help and the support of my loving and caring wife, I have been able to see the connection between the symptoms and the root cause of my issues. I have been able to tell my family and close friends about the abuse, and most importantly, have forgiven myself. The hate and anger that I carried has been replaced with hope and happiness. The biggest thing I have learned is that my recovery is a process. Each time I confront an issue and take the next step, there is always something else to be tackled. Now it's time to pay it forward and help other survivors take their first steps to recovery.

To my brothers living in silence... I understand your suffering. You are not alone.