

**Testimony submitted by
Masha Allen
to the
House Energy and Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations**

**“ Sexual Exploitation of Children over the Internet: What
Parents, Kids and Congress Need to Know about Child
Predators”**

**May 3, 2006
Washington, DC**

My name is Masha Allen. I am 13 years old and live near Atlanta, Georgia with my mother, Faith Allen. When I was five years old Matthew Mancuso, a Pittsburgh businessman who was a pedophile, adopted me. I was rescued almost three years ago when the FBI raided his home in a child pornography sting. After I was rescued I learned that during the five years I lived with Matthew he took hundreds of pornographic pictures of me and traded them over the Internet. Thank you for conducting this hearing. Also, thank you for letting me have Nancy Grace here. Nancy is really special to my family and me. She has been an advocate for me and lots of other kids. The Internet is everywhere in my story. You need to do something about it right away.

I was born on August 25, 1992 in Novochakhtinsk, Russia. For the first three years of my life I lived at home with my mother and siblings. My mother was an alcoholic. When I was three years old she tried to kill me. She stabbed me in the neck and I almost died. The government took me away from her and I went to live in an orphanage near my family's home in Russia.

Living in the orphanage was scary and dangerous. There was constant noise and the older children abused the younger ones. I was afraid all the time. I kept all of my belongings under my pillow because I was afraid they would be stolen. After living in the orphanage for two years I found out that I was going to be adopted.

Matthew visited the orphanage a couple of times. He seemed nice. He gave me presents. I asked him if he was married and if I would have a mother but he said no. He adopted me in Russia in July 1998. After that we left Russia and traveled to his house outside of Pittsburgh. The abuse started the night I got there.

Matthew didn't have a bedroom for me. He made me sleep in his bed from the very beginning. He molested me all the time. He made me dress up in adult's clothes and

even pretended to marry me. Sometimes he kept me chained in the basement. Because he didn't want me to grow up, he only let me eat a little bit of food – plain pasta, raw vegetables, no meat. Five years after I went to live with him I had only gained a little bit of weight. When I was rescued I was 10 years old but I only wore a size 6X.

Matthew let me go to school and sometimes play with friends. But he told me if I ever told anyone what was happening that something bad would happen to me. Even though I was the size of a five year old when I was ten, no one at my school ever said anything to anyone. No one from the adoption agency ever came to check on me to make sure I was OK. I never told anyone about the abuse because I was afraid and I thought no one cared.

A lot of people ask me how any could let a pedophile adopt a little girl. I didn't know very much about my adoption until my lawyer investigated everything. Now I know there were three adoption agencies involved in my adoption by Matthew. The first was Families Thru International Adoption in Indiana. I think Matthew found them on the Internet. He went to an office they had in New Jersey. The state of New Jersey found out that they were operating without a license and closed them down. The same people who worked for that agency just started a new agency in the same office in New Jersey that they called Reaching Out Thru International Adoption.

The two agencies are fighting over who was really responsible for Matthew adopting me. But the name of Families Thru International Adoption is on the home study, the immigration paperwork and the Russian government documents. I think Matthew also paid Families Thru International Adoption. Reaching Out Thru International Adoption was really just the same agency and the same people with a different name. A third agency did Matthew's home study to adopt me. They were in Pittsburgh and were called the Family Health Council. But they just changed their name too, to Adagio Health.

I found out after I was safe that none of these agencies asked Matthew many questions. They never really checked him out. They showed him pictures of me, probably on the Internet, before he had a home study to adopt me. In some of the pictures they showed him of me from the orphanage I was naked. He told them he was divorced and had a daughter that he wasn't close to. I found out later that the reason his daughter didn't talk to him is that he molested her too. While I lived with Matthew no one from any of the adoption agencies ever came to check on me even though the Russian government requires it. Since my story came out we found out that two other kids – a boy from Romania and a girl from Russia – were adopted by pedophiles too. Just so you'll know, fourteen other Russian kids have actually been murdered by their adoptive parents in America. I'm sure there are other kids in trouble. But no one seems to care about any of this. When I told my story in public for the first time all the adoption agencies, not just Matthew's tried to cover up my story.

I lived with Matthew for five years. The whole time he starved and molested me. The whole time he took a lot of pictures of me. I didn't know until later that he was putting my pictures on the Internet to trade and maybe sell to other pedophiles. I was rescued

when the FBI discovered that Matthew had a lot of child pornography on his computer. They came to raid his house. They didn't know I would be there.

When the FBI arrested Matthew I was taken to the hospital, examined and then put in foster care. My foster mother was Faith Allen. She understood what I was going through because she was sexually abused when she was little. She was a foster child in Georgia when she was growing up. As soon as I went to live with her I felt safe. She adopted me on May 14, 2004.

Matthew was prosecuted by the US Attorney's office in Pittsburgh and on September 25, 2003 he was convicted on child pornography charges for all the pictures he had on his computer. He was only sentenced to fifteen years in prison for that. I was afraid he would get out of jail too soon. He was convicted again in Pennsylvania state court on August 23, 2005 of eleven criminal acts for some of the things he did to me. He was sentenced last November to 35 years in prison. I was really upset that he didn't receive a harder sentence. I was even more upset that he was sent to a hospital in Massachusetts so he could be rehabilitated. A person like Matthew can never be rehabilitated. Plus in this hospital prison he has free health care, free mental health services and he can read magazines, play ping-pong and have hobbies. No one cared about rehabilitating me. I just lost my Medicaid and my mom has to work double hard to pay for the things I need while Matthew lays around the hospital playing games.

I was really mad that Matthew didn't get harder sentences and that he went to an easy prison. But I got much more upset when I found out about the pictures of me that he put on the Internet. I had no idea he had done that. When I found out about it I asked our lawyer to get them back. He told me we couldn't do that. Then I found out that they would be there forever. That's when I got mad and decided to go public with my story.

Usually, when a kid is hurt and the abuser goes to prison, the abuse is over. But because Matthew put my pictures on the Internet the abuse is still going on. Anyone can see them. People are still downloading them – we get notices from the FBI every time someone is arrested for it. I want every single one of them to go to jail and really be punished. But that's a problem too.

I found out last summer that if someone downloads a song off the Internet the penalty is three times worse than if someone downs child pornography. I couldn't believe it! How can this be? That's when I decided that we had to change the laws about downloading child porn. Senator Kerry and Senator Isakson and Congressman Gingery and Congressman Tierney introduced bills in Congress that make the penalty the same as downloading songs. That was a few months ago. There hasn't been a vote on it. I want every single member of Congress to sponsor these bills and I want the Congress to pass them right away.

There are a lot of cases of people who downloaded my pictures and I want every single one of them to be punished as much as possible. There might be more pictures of me on the Internet than any other real child. The police told my lawyer that a lot of child

pornographers – more than half even – have my picture on their computers. And there are a lot of other kids like me too. The people who are doing this should be afraid. We know who they are. A lot of the people downloading these pictures are professionals. They are doctors and teachers and ministers. We're going to put THEIR pictures on the Internet and tell people what they are doing. People stopped downloading songs when they found out they could be sued. We're going to sue these guys too – every single one we find out about. I want to tell them, "You're not doing this in secret anymore. Everyone can find out who you are!"

I'm more upset about the pictures on the Internet than I am about what Matthew did to me physically. A lot of people are surprised that I wanted to go public with my story. But I've been on the Internet since I was five years old. Going on a television show wasn't going to hurt me. I did it because I didn't think anyone was doing enough about the things that happened to me and to a lot of other kids. Talking to John Quinones and Nancy Grace has helped me. They were my champions. I feel in charge of my story because of them. I know they will help me to help other kids like me. People need to know about this stuff. The adults who let this happen have just tried to cover it up.

You have to do something about the Internet. Matthew found the adoption agency on the Internet. They let him look at my pictures from Russia on the Internet even though they didn't really know anything about him. Other kids have been adopted by pedophiles the same way. Matthew put my pictures on the Internet after he got me. People are still downloading them even though he has been in prison for two years. We don't even know whether he still makes money for them even though he's in jail. Even now that I'm safe the Internet is still a dangerous place for me to go. The police detective who found Matthew's house for the FBI said I should never go to chat rooms even for fun things because they almost always have predators.

Ten years ago I was a scared little girl in a Russian orphanage. For five years I was held hostage by a monster. But in the last two years a lot of amazing things have happened. John Quinones and Nancy listened to me and told my story to the whole world. I called my Congressman, Dr. Gingery, who didn't even know me. He introduced a bill in Congress right away to help me and other kids like me. Because of all these things, I believe I can do something for other kids so they don't have to go through what I did.

Some people say we can't control what's on the Internet but that's ridiculous. If we can put a man on the moon, we can make the Internet safe for kids. That's just common sense. I'm going to work hard to protect other kids and make sure people who hurt them are punished. I hope you will help me. You can start by passing Masha's Law right away! That would be a good start!

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