

Jessie was a beautiful baby. I can remember when she was about one year old, and she would laugh at me and give me kisses and hugs and pick the raisens out of my cereal as we sat at the kitchen counter.

I remember when she was about 4 and she would run through the house telling on her older sister Elizabeth and her brother Gerald, all the time. They're about 10 years older or more than Jessie. They learned to give her what she wanted. I got more hugs and kisses and I love you's.

I can remember how she missed her brother and sister when they got older and moved out, I got more hugs and kisses, she got nephews and a niece. She was about 7 then.

She could drive the bratz through the house in their bratz car. She can operate a D-9 Dozer and a rubber tire loader from her fathers knee. From bumps to bruises, from bandaids to bicycles, she was a tomboy with her daddy and a very nice young lady for her grandma.

I could go on and on but the best way to describe Jessie is for you to think about the small child in your life. You know the one, the one you would change the world for.

We were more than father and daughter, we were best friends. As a single father i learned alot of things about my children that only a single parent could understand. Me and Jessie would argue about who loved each other the most. (description of how we would show each that we loved one another).

One day we left North Carolina to see her two nephews and one niece in Ohio. That is where my older children moved to. We spent two weeks with them that was the first time the met and the last time they would ever play together. We then ended our trip in Florida where my parents lived.

My mom and dad are good christian people. They sang gospel music all over Ohio. I can remember people like the Rambos and Bill Gaither and throwing rocks on top of the church. I learned to be a good father to my children by being raised by good parents.

Well it was February 2005, we had lived in Florida for a year now with my parents. Now we really had a house full of love.

On February 24 in the early morning hours about 2 or 3 a.m. she was taken from her bed from a stranger. For the first few days detectives told me my father knew where Jessie was, they even said they found her blood on his under clothes. They said he showed no remorse for Jessies disappearance. They asked me to go into the room I was broken hearted, angry and confused and I asked my father what he did with Jessie? My father looked at me and said, Marky honey I dont know where Jessie is and he began to cry.

My father told the detective that he had enough and he was going home. They grabbed him by his arms and put them behind his back and told him he was not going anywhere. A few days later, they told me they thought that my mom and dad gave Jessie to someone else to raise.

Then they said on national T.V. that my mom raised red flags on her polygraph.

Three weeks went by and they found her killer and he confessed and told them where to find her. She was repeatedly raped, tied with stereo wire and kept in a closet for 3 days. She was only 150 yards from her bedroom.

John Couey convicted sex offender arrested 23 times or more in his 46 year life took my little girl, put her in a trash bag and buried her alive at the back door of his home.

I'm sure that when she was dying she was crying for me. I still hear her cries.

As a parent i will never be able to get over the grief of knowing that she was only 150 yards away from me for at least 3 days, while i prayed for her to come home.

Her death was a result of a system that failed her and us. For if we had tougher laws for registration and good programs for notification this may have prevented her death. Although John Couey was on probation his probation officer didnt even know he was a convicted sex offender. The sheriff was advised by the AG office 3 months before the kidnapping to round up the absconded sex offenders, John Couey was on that list.

But there is more, much more. The day Jessie disappeared, the law enforcement went to John Couey's address and asked his housemates if they had seen him and they said no and they never asked to search the trailer.

My heart sank at the trial when another resident of John Couey's trailer admitted that had the police asked to search the trailer, she would have let them.

On the second day of Jessie's disappearance, one of the residents of the home was visibly shaking and openly nervous when the police came to the door. This was actually in the police report. But the never asked to search the trailer. Even worse on February 25, 26 and the 28, police received tips from people who said that John Couey was a sex offender who was living

across the street from Jessica. They even identified his address.

No crime victim, no individual or family, should ever have to go through what my family and I have been through. This has changed everything i ever knew. From the grass being green and the sky being blue.

My job now is to declare war on child sex offenders and predators and to get you to join me. Instead of them stalking our kids, we will stalk them. And instead of them being our worse nightmare we become theirs.

Jessie's law, was past in Florida and is tougher legislation to stop these kinds of crimes. Since the law first passed in Florida, I have been to many states to speak about Jessie's Law and at least 37 states have passed it in their jurisdiction.

I lobbied the halls of congress for the Adam Walsh Child Safety Act which the President signed in 2006. I've lobbied for I.C.A.C and the U.S. Marshalls funding.

You, the Federal Legislator appropriate the money that the Adam Walsh Child Safety Act needs now. Our childrens very lives depend on you to make that decision. I know Jessie did.

And know that these types of crime are just to heavy for mercy. It's more than mercy can do. It is an eye for an eye for a child.

On February 12, 2007 jury selection began for the murder trial of Jessica Marie Lunsford and it was followed by a 3 week trial.

The jury came back with 4 guilty verdicts and recommeded the death penalty. Judge Howard gave John Couey the death penalty.

Sitting through the trial was one of the hardest things I have ever done. I can't tell you how many times I wanted to kill him.

Remember people watch out for our children. The child you save could be your own.

Through sexual offender registration and tracking system, properly funded and enforced may have protected Jessie and will protect other children.

In Florida, the law is so slacked that the public is only notified of sexual offenders, and that is at the discretion of each sheriffs department. The public is not notified when a sexual predator moves, So we need better notification for the public. We must know where every John Couey is so that we can take the necessary steps to protect our children.

In addition to a strict registration system, Congress must empower law enforcement to go after these guys. If law enforcement is not empowered and funded to go after these predators the system fails all of us. Additionally if we are not going to empower law enforcement, as has been the case in failing to fund AWA then registration and notification became that much more important. So fathers and mothers have the information they need to protect their children.

It's simple, you as legislators and all organizations, whether you are surviving parents coalition or NCMEC or ACLU we are all for human rights and it's time we all realize our children need our help to protect their rights for a safe life.