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The Silent Voice Who Dies In The Night

We have laws in place for child abuse such as Shelby's law which was signed in 2007 by Gov. John Huntsman Jr. after Shelby Andrews was killed by her father and step-mother. This poor innocent child was abused for more than a year before her tragic and fateful death



occurred. Since the death of a child caused by child abuse couldn't be found intentional homicide, there was no law in place for capital punishment. Utah lawmakers were outraged, so they created a law. Many of the laws we have for child abuse come after tragic events take place that either ends the life of a child or they are severely beaten, neglected, or malnourished to the point of being placed in critical condition. Joann Loviglio, who is with the associated press, following the Sandusky scandal, the former Penn State assistant football coach, founded an organization for under privileged boys, and used the organization to sexually abuse these young boys. Stated in her report, "In Wake of Sandusky Scandal, Questions About Laws," she informs us that only forty-eight states have laws in place where all professionals such as coaches, teachers, counselors, etc. have to report the

suspicion of child abuse and of those states only eighteen have laws in place where all adults have to report child abuse. She goes on to state that even with these laws in place in most states they either aren't enforced, there are no penalties, or the penalties are very minimal and remain pointless.

Children often times don't have a voice of their own and their word isn't considered a liable source. Since children are young and most times ignorant to how the world operates they aren't taken seriously and aren't listened to. Something has to change their lives are put in our hands to keep them safe and protected. The state can and will take your children away from you if they feel that you are an unfit parent and you jeopardize the safety of the child. Warren Richey a writer for the Christian Writer Monitor said in an article he wrote in 2008 entitled Child-Abuse Claims vs. Parents' Rights "Agree to a safety plan or your children may be taken away." In most cases the state will work with you because they don't want children to be taken out of the home, but it's our responsibility as adults to keep them safe. The penalty for adults who don't report child abuse should not only be a law in all fifty states but highly enforced. In the past ten years we have heard many stories of child abuse with children's lives being lost and this is something that we can prevent.

The British Society wrote a position paper about child protection and they identify the responsibility of adults regarding keeping children safe. "As stated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989, Article 19), it is the responsibility of all adults to work to prevent abuse and neglect, to protect children from harm, and to identify and report concerns about child abuse." It is our right and responsibility to keep all children safe and the current laws

regarding child abuse reporting is far too lenient at this point in time and they really need to be enforced. There are signs of abuse that shouldn't be overlooked because you feel like it isn't your responsibility or you don't want to jump to conclusions. Richey stated in his article, "Parents are not given an opportunity to know the substance and source of an abuse allegation, nor are they given an opportunity to challenge the safety plan before a neutral decision maker," meaning if you report child abuse your identity will never be revealed. If parents refuse to follow the safety plan that the state has given parents the option to follow they can't fight it. All adults should be treated the same way, if you suspect child abuse report it before it's too late.

It is sickening to hear the stories of children who have no voice who suffer greater extremes than we could ever imagine and the adults around them have minimal penalties to protect them. On the other hand the definition of child abuse is broad and unclear to many so should we really be held accountable for not reporting what we don't understand or know parse? The British Society has a definition for what child abuse could be classified as, "There is no single agreed definition of what child abuse and neglect is and definitions have changed over time. Abuse can be physical, sexual or emotional. It may be acute or a long-term pattern of neglect. Often children are abused in more than one way." The idea of child abuse could also be stated as, children whose disabilities go unsupported, abuse can occur in different settings. A person may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. By using this definition you could argue that every child in America is being abused in some form, and being held responsible for all children who are "abused" daily is a criminal act that should be punished severely for not reporting it. I can see how this is an over dramatic approach to what child abuse could be classified as, however, there is an abundance of children whose lives are hanging by a thread on a daily basis, because third party adults around them don't report the abuse due to ignorance, selfishness, or even not wanting the hassle of being a part of a case. Maybe there could even be a compromise or middle ground, if the states laws could be seen as too harsh if they were changed we could treat each case differently and have a gray area instead of just black and white. Laws still need to be placed but the severity can differ so that people aren't afraid to report it as well.



The point I'm trying to make and my stance on the topic is these children who fear for their lives daily who go to school with bruises, scars, wearing the same outfits repeatedly that are dirty and tattered. Should be protected and it should be all adults responsibility to keep them safe. Every state should have laws that are heavily enforced for those who have the chance to report it but don't. Learn the signs of child abuse there is nothing more heartbreaking than the sorrow children of abuse have in their eyes. Sometimes children don't even know they are being abused they may be so used to it that they think that is how a normal life should be. Many times children of abuse don't have friends, their self-esteem is low, and they feel worthless and wish they were never born. No child should ever feel this way. It is our

responsibility to keep them safe and protected. How would you feel if you had the chance to save a child but lose that chance when you learn they died the night before because a parent couldn't stop themselves from hitting their child and they beat them to death? You would probably feel bad and regret not saying something. Don't let it get that far report it, speak up, and say something.