



October 11, 2018

The subject of the article is the sexual abuse case at More Than Me Academy that was discovered back in 2014. We anticipate the article will provide a critique of the organization both prior to the abuse and afterward.

More Than Me exists to support children with safety, health and education. We are horrified that the girls endured this abuse at the Academy and that Macintosh Johnson exploited girls from his own community and used his position in the organization for malicious and abusive purposes. More Than Me has openly discussed this case since 2014. We would like to share the details of the case, the allegations that are being made, where we have accepted responsibility and made changes, and how we have grown as an organization to ensure the protection of our students' safety and well-being.

More Than Me Academy opened its doors in 2013. Prior to this, the organization had been providing scholarships for students in West Point. Johnson was a staff member from October 2011 to June 2014. When Katie first met Johnson he was a well-known community leader, running sports programs for vulnerable children in West Point, and working for the Jesuit Refugee Commission. Among a number of other partners in the community including the West Point Women's Group, he referred children to attend our program. When we opened the school in 2013, he served as a program coordinator and community liaison.

In June of 2014 ten brave girls named Johnson as their abuser both at the Academy and in their community; we believe that More Than Me fostered an environment that encouraged these girls to report his abuse. As soon as the first case was reported to senior staff, we acted swiftly and decisively. We cooperated with the Liberian National Police and Liberian Sexual Gender Based Violence Crimes Unit ([see letter from Director](#)) at the Ministry of Justice to collect evidence to promptly put Johnson in prison. He was arrested just four days after senior staff was notified of his criminal acts.

We then engaged the International Rescue Committee to provide school-wide counseling and support to our students. **The sexual exploitation and abuse of our students is a horrific crime and above all else, our deepest regret is that we were not able to prevent this from ever happening at all.** We recognize there are things we could have done better to limit Johnson's power, and make uncovering abuse easier. We have reviewed our policies and protocols and have made significant changes since this incident.

While we do not yet know the full text of the ProPublica article or video, here is what we know so far:

We are deeply sorry: When we started this work, we believed that our energy and passion for improving girls' lives was enough to create lasting change. We were ambitious but also naïve.



- We are deeply saddened and regret that we were underprepared for the magnitude of the challenges we would face when we opened More Than Me Academy in 2013.
- We want to apologize to the brave girls who came forward, as well as those who potentially may not have, for the pain they have experienced from Johnson's heinous actions. We stand by the girls and young women affected and we are here for them. We continue to support them with scholarships to school, healthcare, counseling, and monthly stipends to pursue their dreams.
- Our enthusiasm for impact has not abated, but our recognition of how complex this work is now informs every decision we make.
- We acknowledge the importance of this conversation around sexual abuse in schools and do not claim to have all the answers. Respect for local context, community members, staff, and keeping the students at the center of our work must always be top priority. We must improve and work together to ensure that we are doing everything possible to protect and empower girls. We have bolstered our protection policies and undergone an independent review of our approach to safety to ensure we are continuously improving.

We believe we are a force for good: More Than Me has been and will continue to be a force for good in the world.

- Aside from approaching the problem with urgency and, at times, making mistakes as a result, we also have been uncompromising in fighting for girls.
- Scholarships led to an Academy, which led to fighting Ebola on the front lines to protect girls and their families.
- The experience of addressing sexual abuse by a staff member and Ebola taught us that partnership with Liberians - their government and communities - will be the only way to advance our mission.
- Ultimately, we helped catalyze a major education reform movement that is currently reaching over 50,000 children, and delivering unprecedented learning outcomes for them.
- We have a moral duty to learn from the past so we don't repeat it. Violence, abuse, and exploitation of girls is far too common and we are committed to learning, improving, and becoming a leader in our approach to safeguarding and empowering girls.
- We must learn from our mistakes and work together to end the abuse plaguing the country and indeed the world. We have a responsibility to continue this work in the face of extraordinary scrutiny.
- We believe wholeheartedly that we must get up after each fall and continue working in order to help empower our girls. We know our work has just begun and we plan to announce a set of improvements that we have made and will continue to make going forward.

Where we are today: More Than Me is a very different organization today than in 2014. Our team is bigger and stronger, and we are having much greater impact for children.



- Our team is now 72 people including 8 employees whose primary task is the safety, health, and wellness of our students. Our senior management has extensive educational expertise and highly trained Liberian educators now staff and monitor our schools.
- Our 7-member Board of Directors includes 6 members that joined after June 2014, adding additional expertise and fresh perspective. Our Liberian board includes content experts in girl's safety and empowerment, community leaders, and varying perspectives with deep knowledge of the country.
- We partner with the government and local communities to strengthen public schools, so that the 3,751 children across 18 schools now have access to quality education and 10 of those schools have health services.
- In the first year operating public schools, an external review found that children at our schools were 1.1 years ahead of their peers at other public schools, that teacher attendance and student attendance was over 85%, and that our schools had the highest gender parity.

We are an open book and welcome any questions you have. We need your honesty and support to continue on this difficult, but necessary, journey to a better world for every child.

Please direct questions to questions@morethanme.org and our team will respond as soon as possible.

Stronger together,

The More Than Me Team