

STATEMENT OF MELISSA BENEKE

My name is Melissa Beneke. I have been identified in the lawsuit that was filed today as Jane Doe 116. I make this statement and choose to make my name known because I have been silent about the truth, as painful as it is, for too long. I have now come to a place, through many struggles and dark times, where I have come to more fully realize and appreciate this serious harm done to me by the culture that existed and that I was exposed to as a youth at the Children's Theatre.

When I was a child and student at Children's Theatre, I was sexually abused by Jason McLean. He was an actor, mentor, and teacher at Children's Theatre. When he was at risk of being exposed and criminally prosecuted for his abuse of me, in order to protect himself, he coerced and manipulated me to lie. Jason McLean's abuse of me, therefore, was never exposed.

Since that time, I have carried the burden of deep sadness and guilt that the full scope of the culture at Children's Theatre was never exposed, Jason McLean was never prosecuted, and he continued to hurt children. I have also struggled to make peace with my actions, because at the time, I was unable to stand with those who were abused and who came forward.

I have struggled and suffered in silence and secrecy for too long. Because I have now found my voice, I speak with the hope that, by giving voice to my truth, others who are struggling will be helped, the full truth will be known, and children will be protected.