

Rise Up

Rise Up

**A THREE-STEP FREEDOM GUIDE TO: SCALE YOUR TRAUMA.
STRENGTHEN YOUR RESOLVE. SUMMIT TO TRIUMPH.**

Dr. Jessica L Vera Ph.D.

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Throughout the pages of **Rise Up** Jessica gives us an explicit and applicable formula to utilize to confront and to process difficult subject matters suffered in one's life. Through her three step process of reset, realign, and reconcile, we (I'm a survivor of many types of trauma in my life) are provided with insightful strategies and directions, as well as answers to questions that had plagued me for most of my adult life. Through reading through the pages, I learned that we must face our demons (pain) no matter how difficult or how much time may have passed; if we are to truly live a life of freedom. Now fully understanding my daughter's heart to share her message of hope and inspiration with the world, I want to be the first to acknowledge that her work depicted in **Rise Up** has positively influenced my life. God bless and be with you always my child.

Lina Sancho Davila
Mother/Parent

In Rise up, Dr. Vera's debut memoir about rising up from the adversity of sexual trauma, she outlines her 3 steps to resiliency and correlates her work in helping others to her own experiences gleaned through recovering from the trauma she experienced in her childhood. She identifies how that trauma not only shaped the woman and professional she is today but also as to how it has helped her identify a very deliberate and succinct method of helping others to not be a victim to the circumstances in their lives but utilizing what they have in themselves as well as being reliant in a higher power (God) to overcome and continue to embody freedom from the past and its undertones in their lives in order to be successful.

Dr. Vera spells out her mission in very easy readable sequence of logical steps as she delved into her most intimate and personal stories in an effort to bring attention to the fact that we do not have to live our lives as the victim to our surroundings or to our circumstances, but that we each have the power within us to **RISE UP** and climb the summit to success in whatever we choose to do both personally and professionally. Dr. Vera outlines how she herself a victim of trauma, was able to look deep into herself though the help of her savior GOD and those around her that she found trustworthy to overcome her obstacles and look to what her

successes truly were. Through her desire to be restored and her passion to help others she has devised a very commonsensical method of restoration.

She uses the three “R’s” as her three step process model that led to her restoration. Reset, Realign, and Reconcile. She has set out to live an authentic life of freedom, helping the reader in identifying the framework for anything needed to align their goals successfully. Whether that is personal or professional Dr. Vera guides you through the journey utilizing her clinically sound methods and experience from the fields of psychology, rehabilitation, personal development, and performance leadership.

She uses a healthy balance of her clinical expertise and personal experiences to use real world skills in resolving the blocks that occur to healing. She provides resources that solidify this on her interactive website helping the reader better understand their internal power to change.

You also see Dr. Vera using three distinct symbolic metaphors of getting the reader’s attention and providing examples of how her method works. 1) Her personal journey of surviving trauma and becoming successful 2) Her physical training for the summit climb and 3) Her clinical expertise, backing it all up with scriptures and her personal relationship with God.

I cried, I laughed, I nodded my head while reading but most importantly I fell in love with the women who poured her heart and soul out in an effort to reach those of us that have a passion to make a difference for ourselves and others but for whatever reason have not been able to find that internal “warrior” to make it all happen. Not just in ourselves but in others that come into our lives.

As Dr. Vera discussed her triumph over trauma, her methods of restoration are impactful in all genres. She herself, a very successful business woman had to overcome self-doubt and self-sabotage brought on by the trauma she experienced and the behaviors it ultimately manifested, but as I was reading this I could see similarities in my own experiences and

decisions that I have made while climbing the “corporate ladder” even though I had not experienced such trauma. Even so, **Rise Up** was able to hit upon several areas where I have felt victimized and allowed that to dictate my path. Utilizing her methods of identifying and clarifying the issues that abound is in itself extremely helpful in establishing your presence and “Claiming your Crown” in whatever endeavor you explore. A must read for anyone exploring their ability to be an Agent of Change. I am looking forward to being in Dr. Vera’s “inner circle of warriors” as she continues this journey.

Wendy L. Elliott, BS, MBA

Assistant Vice President

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Dr Vera provides practical strategies thru learning and utilizing the three R’s (Reset. Realign. Reconcile) for dealing with adversity. This strategy was developed as a coping mechanism from her own profound experiences. I found the tone of the book to be warm, engaging, and sensitive. The sharing of her own story and life experiences was very powerful and I believe will be a great help to others. The book is full of practical examples, wisdom, and sincerity. It proves that our experiences shape who we become. It is a self-help book that will be very helpful for victims of abuse or anyone who has experienced trauma or loss. I will definitely recommend it to my own clients as a tool for positive change.

Risa F. Schwartz, Psy.D., LCSW

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Thank you for the opportunity to review your book and to be among the first to take this reflective journey that led you to self-forgiveness, hope, spiritual surrender, and self-empowerment. Sharing your personal story of trauma provides the context for the core of your messages: to acknowledge the trauma, understand its effects and manifestations in life, permission to forgive one’s self and the perpetrator, and reclaiming one’s power and self-worthiness.

Your passion for and commitment to helping women to not be defined by their trauma, and to guide and empower them to find who they were created to be and reclaim their unique self is clearly evident throughout the book.

You captured my attention from the beginning and the conversational tone kept me reading and allowed me to connect with you and your messages. You provided substantiated social and scientific explanations for some phenomena, however left the door open to faith-based understandings. While the intended audience may be women who have experienced trauma, I found myself repeatedly identifying with the struggle even though my circumstances are different. It also raised to my consciousness an understanding of what I often see around me and in the people I encounter. The effects of sex trauma is both an individual and communal one.

You masterfully overlay throughout the book God and spirituality in both a subtle and powerful way. You're clear step-by-step delineation of the model and examples of its application, is a demonstration of how doable this process is once one makes a conscious decision to take steps towards repossessing one's place in the world and regaining one's sense of self and self-worth. The resources you make available asserts that one does not make this journey alone, rather, there are direct and indirect companions along with you on this journey.

The themes of choice, self-empowerment, and self-control are clear and recurrent. I see and hear the strength and courage of a woman who now seeks to help other women find their own strengths and courage to Rise Up.

In Christ's Peace and Love,

M. Sylvia Fernandez. Ph.D., LPC, NCC, ACS, NCSC
Professor and Associate Dean, Clinical Practice Division
ADSOE - Barry University

In her book, **Rise Up**, Jessica courageously, with vulnerability and transparency, shares her personal story combined with empirical scientific research on trauma. The journey will empower others to take bold steps to achieve their own healing and freedom. Her three-step guide to freedom provides a succinct, but powerful map of strategies and tools that can be used by those of us brave enough to tackle our own challenges from past trauma. Like climbing a mountain, the reader will be taken from the base to the summit -from victim to victor. As a fellow survivor of childhood sexual abuse and fighter against human trafficking - 2014, 2015 and 2016 Freedom Climbs - I was inspired by **Rise Up**.

Ginger Martin
President and CEO
American National Bank

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Dedication

To my fellow survivors and to those who live in secrecy, you have the power within you to be victorious.

Experience freedom from the bondage of your past. Live a life of triumph.



Before I formed you in the womb I knew [and] approved of you. I carefully planned who you would be. The color of your hair, eyes, and skin.

I gave you gifts, talents, and abilities to be used for my glory.

No matter whose approval you did not get on this earth, I love and approve of you. Despite the mistakes that you might have made, there is nothing that can separate us.

Receive my love and acceptance, it will empower and strengthen you.
All the days of your life. (Adapted from Jeremiah 1)

Foreword

Too often we get stuck, stalled, and sidelined. This is exactly what the enemy wants, for us to be knocked out or and least knocked off our path of deepest influence and impact.

Author Jessica Vera knows this tendency and she's not about to sit by in silence. In *Rise Up*, she provides a three- step freedom guide to help us scale our trauma, strengthen our resolve, and summit to triumph.

Jessica invites us to engage in some overdue introspection. She asks:

"Are you bound by the chains of your past? Are you lost, unable to see your unique significance? Do you feel that everything negative is a result of your own doing, perhaps even something you deserved?"

Much more than asking questions, Jessica also provides real answers. She shows us how we don't need a Ph.D. or years of psychotherapy to experience a breakthrough. Rather, we just need courage to regain the right focus and resolve to take effective action.

Rise Up reveals how to:

- Overcome limiting beliefs, emotions, and behavior that self-sabotage growth
- Implement bold steps to transform your personal story

- Reclaim your power position in all areas of your life
- Gain understanding that victims are made, not born; even when choice was eliminated
- And much more

Rise Up is a call to action for all who—because of experiencing trauma—struggle to find their unique purpose. Through her transparent storytelling and transformational process Jessica shares how each of us can Rise Up to the destiny inside us all.

Kary Oberbrunner

CEO of Redeem the Day and Igniting Souls. Co-creator of Author Academy Elite.

New York Bestseller Author of *Day Job to Dream Job*, *The Deeper Path*, and *Your Secret Name*

Prep For Your Freedom Challenge[®]

You were majestically and perfectly woven in the womb with a divine purpose; nothing that has happened to you can ever change that, unless you choose to believe the lie that you are a victim.

Rise Up was written for those ready to reclaim their power position in life to experience freedom and victory.

Introduction

***You may trod me in the very dirt.
But still, like dust, I'll rise.***

—MAYA ANGELOU

The dream of writing a book has been years in the making, since I was an adolescent. As a prolific reader, it was my escape to learn of heroic characters in a story who always seemed to arrive in the nick of time to save the day or the damsel in distress. I thought that one day, I'll write that type of story and some other little girl will read in astonishment at how chivalry still exists and that we can all live happily ever after.

Now almost 50, I still love a good romantic story. However, I have to be honest, this book is nothing like what I had ever anticipated. It is not a fairy tale children's book. Nor is it a research study or a scholastic paper, both of which I have written about through the years. This is my first published book, and it is in part, about me...my story.

Making the decision to write this book came through divine intervention where the right people were placed in my path at the right time. This is a story that needs to be told. I have been comfortable sharing bits and pieces of my story with a few chosen confidantes over the years. But the thought of putting my life story on paper for others to read--in essence, invite you into the private corners of my existence--was and is terrifying.

While my goals and plans are many, God now guides my steps, and I trust in his promises to complete the work that he started in me since before I was born.

Two years or so ago, I met a woman who was passionately seeking her purpose through ministry work with victims of the sex trade worldwide. We met in Israel during a pilgrimage of the Holy Land. She left an impression. Over the following year I would remain in touch with her and she would encourage me to become involved. Then in the summer of 2015, I was introduced to a dynamic man through a webinar, who was filled with a desire to help authors tell their story in order to increase the proliferation of spiritually based literature in our culture.

Over the years, I have met many people who have impacted my life, but for some reason the timing of these two chance encounters made all the difference. This would be confirmation to pursue not only the fulfillment of a personal dream to write a book, but also to provide a voice for so many who have grown up with the scars of trauma in secrecy.

Since at a young age, I've been committed to seek to learn all that I can about how and why we function the way that we do, and the role of our social context and trauma. I have often read and heard others say that knowledge is power.

My belief is that knowledge is acquired, but wisdom is a gift from God through experience.

My prayer and hope is to effectively impart the wisdom that I have gained through the personal experience of trauma, namely sexual abuse, exploitation, and loss, and the redemptive power of an unconditional love that surpasses human understanding.

You will read about my truth and join me on a journey that will increase your understanding through the information, strategies, and insights learned that I will share. However, only you can decide what you will do with it.

My story will show you what I have done over the last 30 years, and how I have climbed and summited to freedom and victory.



So many thoughts run through your mind when you make the decision to lean in and commit to the journey of writing. Will people clearly understand my reason for writing a tell-all? Especially with those involved. Is the timing right, or should I wait until all parties involved are deceased? Whenever I start doubting myself, I am reminded that I was created to be a voice for the voiceless and to be an Agent of Change.

So here we go.

Let me first share that unlike perhaps other books you might have read in the past, this book represents almost 50 years of life experience enmeshed with 30 years of learning all that is known about human sciences related to trauma. Therefore, at times, I break-out from the storytelling in order to highlight the knowledge that is known, which I believe is relevant to understanding trauma and how to overcome it. Concurrently, I also share my personal journaling of how experience, knowledge, and wisdom have impacted my personal passion to do something—in my case, I committed to a physical challenge to raise awareness and funds for human trafficking.

The Veil Removed

My personal history. I was born in Lima, Peru, a beautiful and vast country I would never get to know because we immigrated to Canada when I was two or three. I was the only girl of five children. Growing up, Latin subculture intertwined with my North American environment. If you are unfamiliar with the significance of the subculture, here is a quick peek. Latin culture is best known for its beautiful *caliente* women, *machismo*, subservience, defined roles, wonderful vast foods, Spanish-speaking people, and heritage rich in value of the familia. I am one of over sixty-four maternal first cousins. If that does not exemplify a love

for procreation to increase family, I don't know what does. But all humor aside, family is central to the Latin culture.

My family of origin was blended, initially comprising of three older brothers from my mother's first marital relationship. A younger brother and I would complete the five. My younger brother actually did not re-join our family in Canada until a few years after my immigration. He stayed with our grandmother in Peru while our parents attempted to find stability in a new country.

We were your typical immigrant two-parent family struggling in a new country. But one nuance was evident to me, even at a young age: there always seemed to be strife between my eldest maternal sibling and my father. Interestingly enough, they, along with another sibling from my mother's side, shared a love for music and played in a band together founded by my father, called Salsa 78. They spent hours rehearsing and playing gigs, and once opened for The Rolling Stones when the English band was just starting out.

My parents met when my eldest sibling was a young boy fast approaching adolescence. My father was in an orchestra and my mom dabbled as a back-up singer in Peru. Apparently, my father had success and notoriety in that realm back home. For my mom, it was just something to try out once or twice. They fell in love and my father immediately gained a ready-made family with three boys.

At age six or seven, my family life changed when my parents' marriage imploded. I would later learn of infidelity and other trust struggles that would undermine any relationship, let alone one between a husband and wife.

After my father left, there was just us five kids and a single mother, living with our basic needs met. But our mother, who always had a desire to want to give us more, worked endless hours, striving to achieve the American dream for herself and her kids. This left us with unsupervised time to find ways to keep ourselves occupied in her absence. What was

also absent during those years was the presence of a father figure. More than a decade would pass before my father would re-emerge in my life.

My mother vowed never to allow another man into her home for fear of the pain they might cause her or us. At least that is what I had thought were her reasons...She has kept this vow all these years, which means she has lived a life of personal solitude.

We kids, at that time, contented ourselves with playing spaceship made of cardboard boxes, community tag, and other simple games that didn't cost money. My eldest brother was always the captain and leader, in charge of directing the rest of us in what to do. Those were some of my fondest memories of childhood.

It was during these same years that I would learn of many dynamics that could exist amongst a blended sibling system. There was a gap of almost ten years between myself and my eldest brother, and four years between him and my two other older brothers that followed him. The changes that occurred within our relationships left scars in a young child, who at the time could not reconcile them.

When my eldest brother turned eighteen, he moved out with my other older brothers, leaving me, my mother, and the youngest in our own apartment. But my brothers didn't move far; they stayed in the same community, living in an apartment building adjacent from us. I must have been around nine.

It was here that I would go through an experience that would hugely affect the direction of my life.

A man, who was a relative though not by blood, would take interest in a girl so young and innocent, and provide her with unwanted and un solicited answers to one of life's mysteries. He befriended her, volunteering to teach her how to swim while her mother was at work, and all to satisfy his own predatory needs. She would quickly learn the impact of differential power and evil.

The abuse occurred behind closed doors, in my safe haven, my home. I sought out my brothers for help, but at the time of the abuse, they were nowhere to be found. I finally disclosed these deep shaming secrets to my mother long after the man was gone. She was in utter terror, not the reaction I expected. She told me he would never have access to me again, and we did not talk about it anymore.

Several years later, I would learn that she had her own deep secrets of sexual abuse. Her abuse took place at a time when she was innocent. She had never spoken of it, but she disclosed it to me a few years ago. Once her trauma memories were exposed to me, it became clear why it was that each of our memories of my experienced childhood trauma were so very different.

It has taken many years of living, at times painful and unbearable but also joy-filled, to learn that I am not a victim. We are not defined by our past, but it must be acknowledged, as it does in part impact how we behave. But an undeniable truth is that I was majestically and perfectly woven in my mother's womb, predestined for victory and significance, even before I was born; and so are you!



Like me, you have pain in your life. Negative experiences are part of our existence, but I have learned that although we will fall, it is not the falling that matters, but rather, how well we get back up.

The truth is that personal growth and maturity are processes that require refinement. I have learned more from my trauma and painful challenges in life than from any other experience. I wish it were different, but that is reality.

However, I also know that not everyone is well equipped to face their challenges. It's for this reason I'm sharing a knowledge-informed three-step process that will teach you how to affect change in your own life, so that you in turn can positively influence the lives of others.

I am not going to minimize the experience of trauma, but I'm also not going to glorify it by overly depicting details. I know that we all can relate, at some level, to emotional pain. The kind that no miracle pill can eradicate.

But rather than dwelling on the pain, I prefer to focus on the solutions to life's challenges. Towards accomplishing this objective, we will have to dredge through our past, if only to gain insight for our future. But once the needed wisdom is attained, we will let the past go, to have it remain as it should—just history, but non-defining.

My disclaimer to you is that embarking on this journey with me will require commitment, difficult work at times, and this may cause pain. But if you are willing, then I promise you that the journey will end with a life of significance and freedom to pursue your divine purpose.

For you are a victim to whatever controls you
—2 PETER 2:19

I also have a desire to empower you to take action not just for yourself, but for others. My heart's desire is to be an Agent of Change^o in the lives of others. Having worked in human services a great portion of my professional career, I've seen the aftermath of human atrocities first-hand. Amongst these, none has impacted me more than the heinous social pandemic of sex exploitation and trafficking. The criminal activity of human sex trafficking is now the second top form of organized crime due to an unexhausted supply and demand.

These modern-day sex slaves need warriors to advocate for their freedom.

Rise Up is your call to action. By dispelling your lens of victimization and claiming your crown, you will become free to be an Agent of Change^o in the lives of others.



One such example is of an ordinary retired school teacher who was touched by the social injustice of sex trafficking and decided to do something about it.

In 2012, Cathey Anderson founded a women's ministry called The Freedom Climb, as part of Operation Mobilization, to raise awareness, funds, and to rescue and train up modern-day slaves of human sex trafficking worldwide.

She combined her love of hiking with her divine passion and calling to be a voice for the oppressed by organizing climbs of some of the most notable mountains in the world. Initially, I'll admit that not being a hiker myself, I had a difficult time conceptualizing the premise of engaging in astronomical climbs of big mountains, such as Kilimanjaro, Everest, and the Alps—and its relationship to the growing social issue of sex trafficking.

But then I read about Cathey's personal challenge. She wrote, "The Freedom Climb has always been a symbolic gesture of the climb to freedom. Women climbing big mountains to raise awareness, prayers, and funding for women around the world who are oppressed, exploited, enslaved and trafficked. Mountains come in all shapes and sizes, and I've recently been faced with quite a surprising and large mountain to summit. On September 2, 2014, I was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. I've never climbed a mountain alone, and I've never climbed a mountain unless it was benefitting more than just me! So I invite you to consider symbolically climbing this mountain with me."

Cathey's words made the Freedom Climb personally relatable, especially as I have had several loved ones battle the same disease.

Despite my apprehensions, I signed up for a challenge in 2014. Around the same time, I was approached professionally to enhance my knowledge of victims of sex trafficking within the context of the dependency and juvenile delinquency systems in my jurisdiction in South Florida.

Within the year, the frequency of cases with alerts for human sex trafficking became domestically visible. Until now, most of the prevalence of known cases had primarily been international. For example, in India, children are born into the sex trade. It is a way of life, and although not condoned by the government, it still prevails.

Most people in North America do not believe that this criminal atrocity occurs in our own backyards. This is because sex trafficking was believed to typically originate in third world countries, and until recently, America had only represented the consumer part of the sex trade.

For reference, here is the statistical prevalence of human sex trafficking cases, which has limited collected data to date. It was reported by the Office of The Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health & Human services that in 2009 between 244,000 to 325,000 American children were considered at risk of exploitation in the sex trade. And that an estimated 200,000 incidents of sexual exploitation of minors occur each year in the U.S.

My commitment to climb the Colorado Ridge Mountains in July 2014 seemed all the more relevant. However, I was unprepared for the need for specialized training, equipment, and conditioning because of the altitudes that would be encountered. I thought, well, I'll invest in the equipment—ugly hiking shoes, outer clothing, and trekking poles—and go out a few times a week to walk daily. Of course neglecting the obvious that there is only flat terrain available in South Florida.

I reached out to my beautiful spiritual sister and before I could tell her of my challenges, she informed me that there was a function to raise local awareness, and the team from Florida would be hosting. She asked, "Will you join us?"

Of course I said I'll be there. I was feeling ill prepared for the climb, but organized gatherings? Now this I knew a great deal about.

A few weeks before we were to gather, I sustained a stress fracture and gained a substantial increase load of cases with the sex trafficking alert. I was overwhelmed, but I wasn't going to allow a few setbacks to derail the plan.

At the gathering, I ended up being a speaker where I shared my heart for the cause and bowed out of the physical challenge. Funds were raised, but another lovely woman went in my place. The experience left me with a sense of incompleteness.

Fast forward to late 2015, my beautiful spiritual sister called and invited me out to meet her for coffee. I found myself amongst twenty or so of her close friends. Over coffee, I learned that a new component was being considered: a co-laboring between two ministries with the same vision, to advocate and rescue. But the nuance was that the second ministry was devoted to working with sexual abuse victims and intimacy. The co-laboring between these ministries occurred because it had been recognized by the leadership that a great number of the women who were signing up for the Freedom Climb were themselves survivors.

A light bulb went off. Survivors were utilizing their gifts, despite personal trauma, to help others. Now that is my life's passion.

NOW here we go. Come to the edge. We might fall. Come to the edge. It's too high! COME TO THE EDGE! And they came, and He pushed, and they flew.

Christopher Logue