



Voices From The Heartland

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Human trafficking in Indiana

Human trafficking is a horrific crime against the basic dignity and rights of the human person. All efforts must be expended to end it. In the end, we must work together—Church, state, and community—to eliminate the root causes and markets that permit traffickers to flourish; to make whole the survivors of this crime; and to ensure that, one day soon, trafficking in human persons vanishes from the face of the earth.

In 1865, Congress passed the 13th amendment to the United States Constitution. It states, "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude...shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction." Today it has become necessary to reiterate the sentiment.

Many of the ideologies that sustained the slave trade, particularly the notion that there are levels of humanity and some individuals are simply devoid of value and thus unworthy of being treated humanely and with compassion, still persist.

Although many individuals think human trafficking, also referred to as modern-day slavery, is a foreign issue, it is prevalent in the United States. Trafficking is usually thought to be the exchange of money for sexual acts. However, human labor is also a form of trafficking.

Defining trafficking

The multitude of issues involved in trafficking makes it difficult to define. The lack of a consistent definition makes obtaining valid statistics problematic. Sometimes the definition is rather inclusive, providing information about both sex and labor trafficking. Other organizations separate the two types, providing two distinct definitions of human trafficking.

The U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) defines sex trafficking as, "the recruitment,

Bishops' Statement: On Human Trafficking, 2007

harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act, in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person forced to perform such an act is under the age of 18 years." Victims of sex trafficking are often held captive in

brothels and massage parlors and are forced to perform sexual acts against their will.

The TVPA defines labor trafficking as, "the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud or

coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery."

Victims of labor trafficking can often be found working long shifts for little pay in hotels and restaurants.

A domestic problem

Despite the varying definitions and sometimes unrepresentative statistics, we know the problem of human trafficking is an epidemic. In many countries, including the United States, there is a considerable lack of ownership of this problem. Many countries do not acknowledge the prevalence of trafficking. There is a serious lack of discussion, and action on behalf of the general public, that would prevent human trafficking victims from suffering abuse and neglect.

Trafficking is a thriving and lucrative business. It is the second most profitable criminal enterprise, generating over \$32 billion annually.

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The Restore and Rescue Campaign of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services encourages the public to “Look Beneath the Surface” and identify human trafficking victims.

Clues that may help identify possible trafficking victims—

- Accompanied by a controlling person or boss; not speaking on own behalf
- Lack of control over personal schedule, money, I.D., travel documents
- Transported to or from work; lives and works in the same place
- Debt owed to employer/crew leader; inability to leave job
- Bruises, depression, fear, overly submissive

Key questions to ask possible victims—

- What type of work do you do?
- Are you getting paid? Is anything taken out of your pay?
- Have you or your family been threatened?
- What are your working and living conditions like? How are you treated?
- Has your identification or documentation been taken from you?

Report possible victims of human trafficking to—
National Human Trafficking Resource Center
1-888-373-7888

More information—www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking

Extent of the problem

The U.S. State Department estimates that approximately 800,000 people are trafficked worldwide each year, with other estimates lying in the millions.¹ While this figure is daunting, it is estimated that there are currently 27 million slaves worldwide.² Unfortunately, neither government nor non-government organizations have a sufficient overview or a data source for extrapolation that allows for a national estimate. Even in the United States, State Department figures are merely estimates. To remedy this, many organizations are working to develop a methodology that supports reliable statistics.

From this lack of consistency in numbers, there are several problems: “Researchers cannot gain an overall picture of the scale and characteristics of the human trafficking trade into North America without a comprehensive analysis of routes and destinations. Without reliable data it is very difficult to combat human trafficking and design programs for victims.”³

Local trafficking

Trafficking is a thriving and lucrative business. It is the second most profitable criminal enterprise, generating over \$32 billion annually.⁴

In a study conducted by the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, all respondents believed human trafficking existed, but only 43% had actually heard of cases in their areas.⁵ Despite whatever pretenses may exist about where it is occurring, incidents of modern-day slavery are happening in our own backyard.

- November 2008, a young girl was reunited with her parents in Logansport, Indiana after being held captive for six months. During that time, she was repeatedly raped, beaten, and forced into domestic work.⁶
- December 2008, a man living in Steuben County, Indiana was arrested for attempting to buy an underage girl for the purposes of serving as his wife and domestic servant.⁷
- March 2009, a woman in Cedar Lake, Indiana was arrested for attempting to take her daughters (whom she did not have custody of) to

Albania, a country with a documented history of child trafficking. Not only was she planning to take her own children, it was reported that she was going to take them “along with any other children she could talk into going with her.”⁸



Given what is known about the issue, there are probably many more cases of trafficking that have gone unreported or unnoticed. To borrow the sentiment that many abolitionists groups use, we must look beneath the surface to find victims so we might help them. A local nonprofit organization, Not For Sale—Indiana, is doing that.

The Not For Sale Campaign (NFS), co-founded by David Batstone, professor of ethics at the Jesuit University of San Francisco, equips and mobilizes activists to deploy innovative solutions to re-abolish slavery in their own backyards and across the globe.

Indiana State Director Sarah Joy Morbitzer and a team of volunteers are taking the need for Biblical justice to the streets, making Indiana a state that is determined to set captives of slavery free. To accomplish this, NFS-Indiana members are speaking in churches and at pastors' gatherings to get faith communities involved in the abolitionist movement, either through Not For Sale Campaign's eight-week study guide, which bridges spiritual growth with

hands-on action, or through the Underground Church Network (UCN).

The UCN was created in the belief that people of faith have a special role to play in the work of abolition—freeing slaves and creating a world where survivors can thrive. The UCN challenges people to live differently by faithfully engaging in the work of modern-day abolition. They suggest four action steps:

1. Relate differently—help curb the demand that drives sex trafficking.
2. Buy differently—participate in a campaign to end child trafficking in the chocolate industry.
3. Work differently—work with companies to eradicate forced labor from their supply chains or work within the abolitionist movement.
4. Play differently—encourage athletes to raise awareness and funds.

The UCN is just one of the ways that Sarah and her team are making a difference. NFS will take part in Freedom Sunday, February 21, 2010. Churches all across the globe will preach, sing, pray and give for freedom. For more information about Not For Sale—Indiana or Freedom Sunday, contact Sarah Joy Morbitzer at sarahjoym@notforsalecampaign.org.

◆ Lori Brow

¹ U.S. Department of State. 2008. Trafficking in Persons Report. Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.

² Batstone, David. 2007. Not for Sale: The Return of the Global Slave Trade and How We Can Fight It. HarperCollins Publishers. New York, NY

³ Gozdzia, Elzbieta M. and Collett, Elizabeth A. Research on Human Trafficking in North America: A Review of Literature.

⁴ International Labor Organization. 2005. A Global Alliance Against Forced Labor. Global Report under the Follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights to Work. Geneva: International Labor Organization.

⁵ Greater Cincinnati Human Trafficking Report. 2009. The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center.

⁶ Hinkel, Dan. November 12, 2008. Fed case alleges girl was enslaved. Northwest Times.

⁷ Hasnie, Aishah. December 2008. Fremont man pays \$500 for 15-yr old girl. Retrieved from http://www.wane.com/dpp/news/Fremont_man_arrested_for_human_trafficking

⁸ Napoleon, Carrie. March 31, 2009. Potential child trafficking averted. Post-Tribune.

We apologize!

In *Voices From The Heartland*, May 2009, there was an announcement regarding a presentation about Haiti to occur in September. Unfortunately, the speaker canceled. We're sorry if this caused any inconveniences. We hope to have another speaker about Haiti in March 2010. We will publicize further details about the event as they become available.