

Business

Modern Day Slavery

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Hundreds of years ago, African slaves were beaten and forced to work. Abraham Lincoln was able to abolish the practice. Now, there is modern day slavery in the human trafficking industry. The terms human trafficking and sex slavery usually bring up images of young girls beaten and abused in faraway places. Actually, human trafficking and sex slavery happen domestically in cities and towns throughout the United States. Human sex trafficking is modern day slavery, with women being forced to have sex 25-48 times a day. (The Polaris Project, 2014) The reason for the rise of human sex trafficking is that a pimp can make at least \$150,000 per victim. (Trafficked Teen Girls, 2010) Because of this, sex trafficking is the fastest growing business of organized crime. The pursuit of money and the demand for sex are key aspects to the rapid rise in human sex trafficking around the United States.

Human Trafficking

The act of human trafficking can be defined as, “organized criminal activity in which human beings are treated as possessions to be controlled and exploited (as by being forced into prostitution or involuntary labor)” (Human Trafficking, 2014). When it comes to human trafficking, the majority of women are used in the sex industry while almost all of the men are used in the physical labor industry. Many of the statistics may be underestimated due to the constant increase in the industry. It is also very difficult to identify all of the victims due to the manipulative tactics used by the traffickers.

Human trafficking can be divided into three aspects referring to: the act, the means and the purpose. The act is the recruitment, transportation, or harboring of persons. (UN and Partners, 2000) The means is the threat or use of force, abduction, fraud, deception, or abuse of power towards the victim. (United Nations, 2010) Finally, the purpose is prostitution, sexual exploitation, and forced labor. (United Nations, 2010) When people think of human trafficking, they usually imagine a drugged woman being forced to have sex. Human trafficking does involve women, but also men in forced labor.

Victims of all ages are abused, physically and mentally, while being forced to do something that they do not want to do. The average age of entry into pros-

titution for a child victim in the United States is 13-14 years old. (Adams, Owens, & Small, 2010) The main targets for traffickers are usually young kids because they are easy to manipulate and easy to persuade. The victims are brought into the industry at such a young age that abuse is all they know.

Approximately 300,000 children are at risk of being prostituted in the United States per year. (Adams, Owens, & Small, 2010) The majority of these children come from orphanages or are runaways. These victims are easy targets for the traffickers. The victims eventually become attached and reliant upon the traffickers due to the manipulative tactics that the traffickers use.

Stockholm syndrome is a common illness that the victims succumb to during their time under the abuse of the trafficker. Stockholm syndrome occurs when the victim has been heavily abused and essentially operates as a puppet. The victim no longer knows how to live or even think on his or her own. This is very common with long-term victims of human sex trafficking.

The Operation

The traffickers themselves crave power. They achieve this power by using manipulative tactics in order to gain the cooperation of the victims. Common tactics are drugs, violence, and financial methods. These methods are used with females in the sex industry. The traffickers drug the victims frequently until they are incoherent and then use them as sex slaves. A victim may be forced to have sex 25-48 times a day. (Polaris Project, 2014) Also, the traffickers use violence to get victims to do what they want, which affects them emotionally. The victims then become reliant upon the trafficker.

The average pimp makes \$150,000-200,000 per year per victim. (Human Sex Trading, 2014) The average pimp usually has 4-6 victims. (Human Sex Trading, 2014) Financial gain is the key reason why human sex trafficking is currently the fastest growing business of organized crime. Criminals are leaving the drug business and entering the human trafficking business because the return on investment is greater.

Trafficking also involves forced labor in the agriculture, manufacturing, and hospitality industries. This is why it is becoming so much more prevalent in the illegal gangs. Migrant workers are commonly used in human trafficking involving forced labor. Migrant workers are usually separated from their families who are counting on them for financial support. The victim is forced to deal with extremely low pay and inhumane living conditions. Migrant workers will usually come back to the trafficker because they need to provide for their families.

Sex Trafficking Geography

Human sex trafficking is all over the United States, but it is most prevalent on the east coast especially in the southeast region. Out of the top cities in which sex trafficking occurs, there are two in the southeast region, Atlanta and Miami.

(Floyd, 2007) Other cities with high rates of sex trafficking are Los Angeles, New York City, Houston, and St. Louis.

Human sex trafficking is more prevalent in big cities near the coasts. In big cities, the victims are easier to hide from authorities. The victims are able to go about their business without being noticed in a big city. On the coast, it is easier to get the victims in and out of the country. The reason that human trafficking is so hard to stop is the fact that the crime can go unnoticed.

Barriers to Stopping Human Trafficking

The most challenging part of human trafficking is being able to identify the victims. The victims usually fear retaliation from their traffickers and have a lack of resources to help themselves. They have no place to go, no money, and face many obstacles in attempting to run away.

Victims are not easily recognized in a crowd. Many people that are involved in the communities where trafficking occurs have had face-to-face contact with the victims. Most commonly, police officers and health clinics deal with the victims face-to-face. Frequently the victims, who are mostly female, endure injuries due to their sexual obligations and the abuse of the traffickers. A key to stopping human trafficking would be to train hospitals and health clinics to identify victims and report them immediately to authorities. Some of the things to look for are lack of identification, lack of eye contact, malnourishment, and signs of physical abuse. People in the medical field and police officers should look for these characteristics on a day-to-day basis.

Investigating the Crime

Law enforcement agencies unknowingly encounter trafficking when dealing with homeless and runaway juveniles, criminal gang activity, and domestic violence calls. The majority of the victims of human trafficking are runaways or orphans. The violence and abuse that the victims endure is the reason that domestic violence calls are made, but the victims are usually too scared to take additional action past that. This is due to the manipulative tactics that the traffickers use.

The United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement team (ICE) is a federal organization that deals with human trafficking, among other things. (ICE) It works with the FBI to find the traffickers and attempt to stop more trafficking from occurring. ICE not only deals with traffickers from the United States, but also from foreign countries. This is because the traffickers are either trying to get into the United States to find new slaves, or they are attempting to bring slaves into the United States. ICE works undercover sting operations that in recent years have been very successful. It has been able to breach the industry from the inside. This takes time, but in the long run could lead to more arrests of human sex traffickers.

Not only is human trafficking being handled by federal law enforcement, but is also being investigated by local police departments nationwide. Local police

departments also work constant sting operations in order to attempt to stop human trafficking.

A solution for human trafficking is to eliminate the high demand for trafficked individuals. Human sex trafficking will not be eliminated until the demand for the trafficked individuals is diminished. Additionally, increasing public awareness will help. Because victims of human trafficking often go unnoticed, it is crucial that the public becomes more involved.

Conclusion

The pursuit of money, the act of manipulation, and the demand for sex are the key aspects to the rapid rise in human sex trafficking around the United States. It is not just an international or a national problem; it is also a local one. This form of cruel modern day slavery occurs more often than many people might think. The demand needs to be taken away as does the income that comes with human trafficking.

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