

Ending Sexual Trafficking

By: Julia Treadway

Imagine being ten years old and having your parents tell you to go pick up something from the neighbors down the street. Imagine walking there with no shoes feet hitting the hot pavement, preparing yourself to beg for food. Then imagine walking up to the small store and being taken to a dark room with other girls all your age but dirty and beaten. Imagine realizing you are in a brothel.

These exact thoughts run through little girls and young women's heads everyday when they are kidnapped or bought from Asian families. "Over 60% of those trafficked into sex work are adolescent girls in the age group 12-16 years." (UNDP, 2005). Personally, when I was ten years old I don't think I could even fathom being kidnapped, held against my will, raped, beaten or killed. These young girls and sometimes boys are sold and given out to anybody who is interested, this can be to police officers, government officials, your neighbor, your uncle, your teacher and many other people you come in contact with and depend on daily. I couldn't imagine not being able to trust my family, teachers, or government.

The adolescents are beaten, given multiple diseases including HIV/AIDS, fed little to nothing, and work as sex slaves often times to pay off a debt their family owes. According to the article *Sex trafficking in South Asia*, the author Sigma Huda states, , "The health risks and consequences include sexually transmitted disease, pelvic inflammatory disease, hepatitis, tuberculosis, and other communicable diseases." (p.378) The conditions these girls are living in are

unsanitary. They sleep on beds with various bodily fluids; imagine being ten years old and having no idea what is going on to you. These girls' childhoods are ripped away from them and something needs to change.

Things that need to be addressed worldwide is seeking help for these adolescents. Anybody and everybody around the world needs to put their best foot forward to help put an end to this issue. We need to start seeking better health care for these adolescents free of charge. We need to look for psychological help for them. We need to document these girls and look into their family history so if and when they are rescued they aren't sent back to live with their families that might send them right back into the trade. These girls deserve a better education so they know that there are other options out there for them and that the brothel is not their life. These girls deserve to know how to protect themselves from various infections and diseases that can come from this unsanitary lifestyle. We all need to help these children in any way we can because they might have not chosen this life for themselves and they may feel stuck there as if they will never be "normal" again.

We need to see improvement. Sex Trafficking needs to end not only in South Asian countries, but around the world entirely. The young girls involved have to be documented and identified. In order to accomplish this every young girl that seeks medical help or is out in the open needs to receive an identification card whether this is just a thumbprint or a name. They are treated like animals not human beings and there is no way to tell how many people are involved in this trade without identifying them. The various Asian government's need to be

held reliable and the people involved need to be prosecuted. Every official that is seen going into the brothel needs to be arrested and demoted from whatever position they hold. These people are supposed to be trusted and to make everyone feel safe. How are these young girls supposed to feel safe when it is police officers coming in to rape them? More importantly this issue needs attention, if this issue is recognized worldwide it is more likely to be resolved worldwide.

Some things you can do are going out and addressing the issue! Protest! People are always out protesting! Draw attention to small articles in foreign countries about sex trafficking by posting them on your social media, your friends will see it and their friends will see it and so on. You could even write your own article about the issue and publish it. Even donating to various charities around the world could help in a secondary way, donating a dollar to your favorite charity could provide a family with food so they don't have to think about trafficking their children. Some organizations you can get involved with to make a change are The Polaris Project, Urban Light which is a organization specifically for young boys and men, The Red Card Project, and The Empower Foundation.

Julia is a sophomore at East Carolina University looking to attain a degree in Cultural Anthropology. She looks to possibly join the Peace Corps to gain a better understanding of other cultures after graduation.