

Sex Sells

By Aryana Tillman

Think back to your teenage years when your only worry was about how much your new prom dress or new car would cost. The prices you worried about as a teenager seemed like such dire issues, but what if you were more worried about how much you would go for that night? This is the reality for over 2 million children who are exploited into sex trafficking every year.

When researching the most common places sex trafficking occurs, India was one of the top 10 countries sex trafficking occurs. Sex trafficking in India is very prevalent. India is located in the golden triangle, which is the most vulnerable for trafficking of women and children for trade. It is reported that India is the main recipient of an estimated 150,000 women and girls trafficked into India from South Asia in order to feed the commercial sex industry.

India is also a source and transit country for the sex trafficking of women and children from and for the Middle East. More than two million women and children are trapped in commercial sex work in the red-light districts in India. In addition, Nepalese and Bangladeshi girls are trafficked into India to work in brothels and be sex workers. A little over 50% of the total commercial sex workers in India are from Nepal and Bangladesh; the prevalence of sex workers from Nepal and Bangladesh can be attributed to poverty and lack of education in both these countries compared with India. India is both a common place that sex trafficking occurs and also common places that sex traffickers migrate to from surrounding places. It is estimated that every year between 5,000 and 10,000 Nepalese women and girls are trafficked to India for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and work in brothels in various cities in India however, 90% of India's sex trafficking is internal. With the increase in sex trafficking in India, there is something that needs to be done to end sex trafficking.

It is time we think of a solution to reducing the amount of sex trafficking in India. In order for the Indian government to respond more effectively and cease sex trafficking in India, they need to create a system that makes the government stronger and more education needs to be given on sex trafficking to lawmakers, government officials, and police. The government is responsible for fixing the sex trafficking problem in India, but also the police are needed to enforce these rules in order for them to work. It was found that some of the police were accepting bribes, starting their own brothels, warning or raids, and ultimately have been a part of the problem in feeding into sex trafficking instead of helping victims; so ultimately, the police need to also do their jobs and law needs to prosecute those who are sex trafficking because even if just a few police aren't doing their job, it makes it dangerous for all police to be trusted to help such a vulnerable group of people with a serious problem. Setting up a system to eliminate sex trafficking is hard and India needs the government, police, and laws to all work together to diminish the high amounts of sex trafficking in India.

Sex trafficking is very much a women's rights issue since women and girls make up 98% of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. In India, Indian government estimates that the vast majority of the 500,000 children in the sex industry are girls. Women and girls are being stripped of their innocence and being forced to have sex with strangers for little to no money all the while picking up various sexual transmitted diseases from their clients. Due to forced use of drugs, unsanitary forced or voluntary pregnancy termination, and multiple sex partners, HIV is very high and an often unknown status of victims of sex trafficking.

Sex trafficking is common in India but also happens right in our own backyards. Though India and America are two very different places, there are three root causes that drive demand in both countries. First, the women and children who are already in the local sex industry are not meeting the sexual demands of "johns." Second, sex trafficking is a very profitable business, usually more so than legal alternatives. Third, the victims of sex trafficking are vulnerable to promises made by traffickers and thus often consent to travel willingly-at least in the beginning.

Sex trafficking is the fastest growing criminal enterprise in the world, and is now the 3rd largest international crime industry behind illegal drugs and arms deals, so now is the time for us to take action. Here are some things that you can do to stop sex trafficking:

1. Be educated on the characteristics of someone who looks like they are being sex trafficked and ask follow-up questions if you suspect they are being trafficked.
2. Know the numbers of sex trafficking hotlines to report sex trafficking: National Human Trafficking Resource Center at 1-888-373-7888 and Homeland Security at 1-866-347-2423 and be sure to save these numbers in your phone encase you ever need to report to them.
3. Donate funds or needed items to an anti-trafficking organization in your area.
4. As students you can take action on your campus by joining or establish a university school club to raise awareness about human trafficking and initiate action throughout your local community.

It only takes one person and one phone call to help end sex trafficking. Always stay aware of your surroundings and trust your instincts when suspecting that someone is the victim of sex trafficking because it is better to be safe than sorry when it comes to reporting sex trafficking. It's about time that we stop one more person from being a victim of sex trafficking and start shinning attention on this issue. Speak up and speak out to end sex trafficking now!

Aryana Tillman is currently an undergraduate student at East Carolina University pursuing a bachelor of science in Sociology with a concentration in Marriage and Family. She is a senior who plans to graduate in May 2016. She hopes to pursue a law degree one day and work in juvenile law. Aryana Tillman dreams to be a child and civil rights advocate lawyer.