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Human Trafficking: Modern-Day Slavery

Human trafficking is a growing epidemic in the United States. The "Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000" identifies two prevalent forms of trafficking as sex trafficking and labor trafficking. Sex trafficking is defined as "a commercial sex act that is induced by force, fraud or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not yet attained 18 years of age," and labor trafficking is defined 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."

Source: *Bureau of Justice Assistance*

Sex trafficking is one of the fastest growing crimes in America. The US Department of Justice estimates that approximately 100,000 children are currently being trafficked. The median recruitment age is estimated to be between 12-14 years old. A huge misconception about sex trafficking is that the majority of victims are abducted and forced into prostitution. Although this is one platform used to acquire victims, it does not account for all instances of victim selection. According to law enforcement, social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter have become common tools used by predators in targeting and selecting victims. Modeling agencies have also increasingly been used by sex traffickers to acquire victims. A pimp will set up a fake agency or use an agency already in place to gain the trust of potential victims, and lure them away from their families to be trafficked. Common avenues for pimps to prostitute their underage victims are at truck stops and websites such as Craigslist.com and Backpage.com.

Sources: *Polarisproject.org Human Trafficking* (Website Copyright 2013), *Polarisproject.org Facilitators* (Website Copyright 2013), *Polarisproject.org Internet Based* (Website Copyright 2013), *Polarisproject.org Truck Stops* (Website Copyright 2013), *WSAW.com* (Last Modified February 19, 2013)

In 2011, Las Vegas Nevada Metro Police Department's vice squad rescued 131 children that were forced into prostitution; the youngest was 13 years old and six months pregnant. One 15 year-old victim that was rescued was found with burns across her back and arms because she tried to escape from her pimp.

Sources: *Lasvegassun.com Dark Secret* (Last modified November 1, 2012), *Lasvegassun.com Ground Zero* (September 20, 2012)

In December of 2012 in Denver, Colorado, 12 subjects involved in a statewide child sex ring were arrested. According to the Attorney General, the subjects were selling the underage girls on Backpage.com to various "johns". Of the 12 subjects arrested, four had paid for sex with the underage girls. In total, 36 indictments were filed against members of the sex trafficking ring.

Source: *KRDO.com* (Last modified December 10, 2012)



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Labor trafficking is the lesser recognized form of human trafficking. It is usually misconstrued as human smuggling, but labor trafficking is as big a problem within the United States as is sex trafficking. Most labor trafficking victims are brought into the country on work visas with the promise of making money to either pay off debts or help support their families. Upon arriving, their visas are taken away and they are forced to work as domestic servants, construction, farm, or factory workers to pay off any debts they may have accrued while traveling to the United States. With all of the money going to the traffickers, the victims usually receive very little payment, if any at all, for the work that they perform.

Source: Polarisproject.com *Labor Trafficking* (Website Copyright 2013), NIJ.gov (February 2013)

A study done by San Diego State University, found that out of 800 undocumented migrant workers, the majority are Spanish speaking, and the majority level of abuse reported was lack of pay, or being forced to do different work than they were originally told. The University also found that construction had the highest number of trafficking violations and reports of abuse, followed by cleaning or janitorial services.

Source: KPBS.org (November 29, 2012)

Local and national efforts are currently being made by both law enforcement and criminal justice policy makers to provide assistance to the victims of sex trafficking and provide tougher punishments to the predators who are recruiting them. Last month, Wyoming passed House Bill 133, which is the states' first human trafficking law. Similarly, Salt Lake City, Utah House committee just passed HB163 which, if passed into law, would provide law enforcement with more tools to help fight human trafficking. The US Senate has also approved two bipartisan amendments, and on March 7, 2013, President Obama signed the bill, which reauthorized the Violence Against Women Act. This bill helps protect the victims of human trafficking. In April 2012, Phoenix Police Department, the City of Phoenix Prosecutors Office, and a multitude of community volunteers conducted Project R.O.S.E. II (Reaching Out to the Sexually Exploited). The purpose of this group was not to arrest these victims, but assist them by providing safe houses and other services to help them get off the street.

Sources: Billingsgazette.com (February 28, 2013), Strib.com (Last modified March 7, 2013), Thehill.com (February 12, 2013), Polarisproject.org *Anti-Trafficking* (Website Copyright 2013), Arizonadailyindependent.com (April 28, 2012), NBCnews.com (March 7, 2013)



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