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Horror Too Close to Home: Human Trafficking in America

May 9, 2016 - By **CAROLINE ANDERS** ([HTTPS://CA-LIFE.ORG/AUTHOR/ANDERSC17/](https://ca-life.org/author/andersc17/))

AN OVERVIEW

We don't know what we don't know about human trafficking. There are too many variables: victim shaming, misrepresentation, skewed statistics, and the low chance to ever truly be able to understand what we're dealing with here.

Here's what we do know. Human trafficking is the third largest crime industry internationally, only behind illegal drugs and arms trafficking. Although it is nearly impossible to determine exactly how many trafficking victims there are in America today, experts say that there are currently more than **20 million** (<http://www.ovc.gov/pubs/FederalHumanTraffickingStrategicPlan.pdf>) victims of human trafficking worldwide. According to National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, there are 100,000 to 300,000 underage girls being sold for sex in America today.

Now it's time for some important distinctions to be made. According to the United Nations:

“Trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or of receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.”

According to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center, “Trafficking does not require physical restraint, bodily harm, or physical force. Psychological means of control, such as threats, fraud, or abuse of the legal process, are sufficient elements of the crime.”

Latest Scores

Baseball

Mon, Apr 01, 2019

Columbus Academy	0
Reynoldsburg	3

Boys Lacrosse

Sat, Apr 06, 2019

Columbus Academy	20
Dayton Oakwood	9

Girls Lacrosse

Sat, Apr 06, 2019

Columbus Academy	11
Mariemont	9

Boys Tennis

Thu, Apr 04, 2019

Columbus Academy	3
Upper Arlington	2

Boys Track & Field

Sun, Mar 10, 2019

Columbus Academy	TBA
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Girls Track & Field

Sun, Mar 10, 2019

Dr. Jacquelyn Meshelemiah, an Associate Professor at Ohio State University, clarifies that “prostitution does not include coercion, fraud or force. It if does, then it is sex trafficking.” This is a subtlety that is crucial to one’s understanding of human trafficking as a crime. It is possible to be a prostitute and not be a victim of trafficking. Misconceptions of this rule ultimately harm those who use sex work as a means of economic support. Additionally, expecting trafficking victims to be foreign is a large misconception. A study by TIME shows that 83% of those forced into prostitution in the U.S. are from the U.S.

WHERE IS IT HIDING?

Hotels

Those being trafficked in a hotel or motel environment often report to an individual controller, often known as a “pimp.” Pimps are known to create false dependency by posing as a victim’s caretaker or forging a false romantic relationship with them in order to ease the exploitation. Sexual trafficking in hotels often goes unbeknownst to hotel management, and the victims of this area are the most diverse. Runaway youth and LGBTQ-identifying youth are the overrepresented statistically in this field of trafficking victims. In the words of Tammy Lee Stanoch, VP of corporate affairs for Carlson, “It happens in hotels that are five star hotels and it happens in the sleaziest, slummiest rent by the hour hotels.”



Massage Parlors and Nail Salons

In America today, human traffickers most commonly conceal their trade by operating behind a fake storefront. Fake massage parlors are often able to advertise freely under the guise of being a legitimate business. Behind the scenes, however, they function as commercial brothels. Business such as these rely on internet-based advertisements on websites that are used primarily to facilitate sex slavery and prostitution. Victims are often in debt and unable to find another source of income or residing in America as illegal immigrants. These victims have a unique and horrific kind of vulnerability in which they do not trust government officials and truly have nowhere to turn. Language barriers are also often a huge disadvantage to foreign victims seeking help.



Airports

Trafficking occurring in airports is a prime example of hiding in plain sight. People in airports are generally not on the lookout for signs of victims, so it’s very easy to move them around without the authorities finding out. Due to the often haphazard lives of many traffickers, it is often that you yourself have seen a victim of human trafficking in an American airport and not known. To be frank, it just makes sense. Many victims of trafficking, especially younger victims, are ushered around the world against their will in an attempt to not stay anywhere too long and raise suspicion.



Columbus Academy

TBA

Polls

What is the best way to influence your government?

- Protest
- Vote
- Call/Write to a senator
- Volunteer in campaigns/public sphere

VOTE

View Results

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(<https://t.co/16Zf0zVD4s>)

Major Sporting Events

For example, the annual Super Bowl is allegedly the “single largest incident of human trafficking in the U.S.” according to *The Huffington Post*. Accusations like these may seem far-fetched, but when you consider that large sporting events of that nature cause huge booms in the sex-trade, and then you consider that as much as 95% of prostitution constitutes trafficking, this horrible assertion begins to make sense. Also, according to *The Huffington Post*, there were various incidents of girls being sold for just “a few dollars or a pack of cigarettes” at the 2014 World Cup, showing how easy recruitment is and how it can happen right under our noses.



SIGNS OF TRAFFICKING

- Victims are often not permitted to carry their own documentation. This becomes especially apparent in places like hotels and airports where commuters are expected to carry and show identification.
- Many who are being trafficked don't know what their final travel destination is. Some airlines are not training staff and crew members to ask possible victims, generally young girls, where they're headed.
- Signs of abuse can often be linked to trafficking victims.
- Tattoos or other markings that display ownership are not uncommon on victims.
- Victims are not generally allowed their own spending money, and may be wearing clothing that is inappropriate for the weather.
- Unexplained scattered attendance in school and extracurriculars if applicable.
- Many of those who end up as victims of human trafficking were abused or runaway children.
- Warning signs specific to hotels include:
 - A guest checking in without any luggage and leaving soon thereafter



WHAT CAN I DO?

The number listed below is the *National Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline*. Call them to do the following:

- Get help
- Report a tip
- Learn more

OR

Text “Help” to 233733 (BeFree)

1-888-373-7888

OTHER CONTACTS: Human Trafficking Resources (<http://goaconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Human-Trafficking-Resources.pdf>)

This webpage originally appeared as a part of the 2016 Catalyst Conference and was created with the help of Jack Gold of Menlo School and Caroline Huger of Lovett School.

AUTHOR

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