

Opinion

3 ways you can combat sex trafficking



“I am afraid to go home. My father’s friends used to rape me weekly and said if I told anyone they would bring shame to my family.” This statement was made by a teenage girl I interviewed in India recently as part of my research into rehabilitation processes for survivors of sex trafficking. To escape this abusive home situation, she ran away, and in the process was trafficked from Bangladesh to India. She spent two years in a brothel before being rescued by Rescue Foundation. She was 14 years old.

It is estimated that 27 million slaves are being held worldwide, with the most common form being sexual exploitation of women and girls, according to the US State Department Trafficking in Persons Report for 2012. International Women’s Day marks a time to celebrate the victories of women’s rights across the world, but it is also a call to act together against sex trafficking – around the world and in the United States.

For close to two years, I saw the reality of sex trafficking first hand as I lived in India and worked with an organization that rescued girls from commercial sexual exploitation. When I moved to Harrisburg, Penn. to work at Messiah College, I was surprised to hear that a similar subculture existed in my own backyard. Carlisle, near Harrisburg, is one of the bigger hubs for trafficking in the East Coast of the United States due to a stretch of trucker motels and gas stations off of main highways.

What can be done about this global and complex problem? Here are three key ways that you can make a difference.

- Rodney Green



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Tulalip Tribes of Washington state and trafficking survivor and advocate Tysheena Rhames react as President Obama announces that he is signing the Violence Against Women Act, March 7 at the Interior Department in Washington. Op-ed contributor Rodney Green says suggests three ways people can help combat sex trafficking around the world – and in their own backyards. (Manuel Balce Ceneta/AP)

1. Get educated

Contact organizations like Polaris Project or the National Research Consortium for Commercial Sexual Exploitation for more information about trafficking issues in your area, and guidance for what is needed to help.

Learn about the factors that foster vulnerability to trafficking such as poverty, unsafe migration, subcultures of gender discrimination, lack of education, demand, and lack of law enforcement. Investigate reputable organizations like International

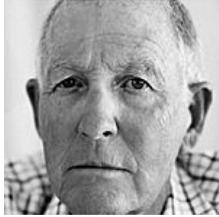
Justice Mission or GEMS, examine their approaches to combat trafficking, and consider volunteering or supporting their interventions.

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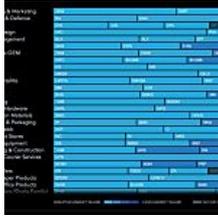
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