

The Call, Challenge and Commitment:

Discovering the Role of Faith Based Organizations in combating Human and Sex Trafficking

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### Abstract

Nearly fifty years ago, Atlanta, Georgia was not the metropolitan city it is today. Take it from a native; the city was pleasant indeed but typically didn't appear a person's top ten cities to relocate to. Nevertheless, over the years the city began to prosper slowly under leaders who possessed a keen sense of economic development acumen. As a result, Atlanta has become an international hub, major attraction for tourists, filmmaking, southern cooking, hospitality and charm, Hip Hop and R&B entertainment and regrettably, for one of the world's prevalent issues of today's time, human and sex trafficking. According to Foster (2013), "If trafficking within countries is included in the total world figures, some 2 million to 4 million people may be trafficked annually." The number of lives affected by this crime is sickening to say the least and the issue has become so widespread that it's gaining the attention of Fortune 500 companies, celebrities, entertainers, blue collar workers; yet little progress has been made with gaining the attention and participation of the faith based community. This paper will explore the topic itself and peel back layers of the crime that knows no barriers, socio economic status, gender, sexual orientation or ethnicity. The remaining contents will raise awareness for the role of faith based organizations in this fight, as well as provide clear arguments that underscores their significance to eradicate human and sex trafficking.

*Keywords:* human trafficking, organized crime, faith based organizations

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Trafficking**

The table to help combat one of society's largest issues today is rather large, extremely long and wide in diameter and is surrounded by an abundant number of seats. The seats that are filled are occupied with celebrities and the world's most loved entertainers, musical artists, representatives from small, medium and large businesses including Fortune 500 companies, city officials and every day blue collar workers who volunteer their personal time – people like you and me. Yet there's still room at the table for more people to have a seat and voice, like mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers and community leaders including our pastors and faith based leaders, who can join the fight against human and sex trafficking. Human and sex trafficking is not his issue or her issue, my or your issue; it's our issue because every individual has a right to live, work and go to school in safe environments, homes and communities. For this reason, it is our duty as a human being, citizen and good neighbor to exercise a moral obligation and values to help protect our cities from crimes such as this one. To add another level of dynamics to the equation, followers of Jesus Christ have a responsibility to engage on some level because they answered the call to salvation.

**Raising Awareness**

While human and sex trafficking is a popular topic today, many people are clueless as to what it represents and involves. Speaking from a volunteer's perspective, questions organically surfaced before volunteer training like "What is human and sex trafficking?", "Who are the key players or culprits?", "Is this all about perverted men?", "How are victims picked?", "How do victims escape?" and "Do victims ever recover from such a traumatic ordeal?" Perhaps you can hear the tone of sexism and closed-mindedness in the afore-mentioned questions; nevertheless

the questions came from a place of naivety and lack of knowledge. There are several components to trafficking such as organ trafficking, which involves luring and deceiving individuals so their organs can be sold for profit. On the contrary, “labor trafficking or modern day slavery involves stripping individuals of their freedom and forcing them to work even though they will never receive compensation” (Stolen Youth, 2018). One such story is that of “Given Kachepa who became a victim of labor trafficking as a young boy.

Given was enjoying life as best as he knew how as a young lad in Zambia. He regularly used his God-given gift to sing in the church choir when a Texan missionary visited his church one day and offered his siblings a deal they couldn’t turn down. The missionary promised to fund Given’s education if his siblings allowed him to return to the United States, specifically to Texas.” (Stolen Youth, 2018). Wouldn’t this offer sound like a miracle to most people in developing countries and deprived of an education? “Surprisingly, once Given landed on U.S. soil he spent his life in servitude along with 9 other boys from Zambia for eleven years. During this eleven year period the Texan missionary and his wife brought in more than \$500,000 each year, monies that individuals paid to attend the Boys Choir performance.” (Stolen Youth, 2018).

“All facets of human trafficking is based on the economics of greed, on the desire to profit from the work of others without providing just compensation to the workers.” (Steinfatt, 2015). A third component of trafficking to highlight is the area in which this paper will focus on. According to Steinfatt (2015), “Trafficking in women and children in which economic activity involved is often sex work, better known as sex trafficking. Sex Trafficking occurs when persons are induced to engage in sex work through force, fraud or coercion, or when the sex worker is under 18 years of age.” On the contrary, the Federal law extends the definition of sex trafficking as follows: “The recruitment, harboring, transporting, provision, obtaining, patronizing or soliciting of a person for the purposes of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act

is induced by force, fraud or coercion or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age” (Cornell Law, n.d.). The significant point to raise is that “by law any minor under the age of 18 that’s transported, facilitated or used for commercial sex is automatically a victim regardless of whether force, fraud or coercion is used” (Cornell Law, n.d.). For the purpose of raising awareness and issuing a call to action this paper will specifically focus on sex trafficking victims who are forced, deceived or coerced.

### References

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