

Human Trafficking

And Why It's So Important To Get More Youths Involved

Human trafficking and its consequences are not only far away and other peoples problem! It is a problem of our daily life and happens right here in Winnipeg as well as in almost every other “civilized” city all over the world.

Before starting to combat human trafficking it is necessary to have a closer look on the definition of human trafficking. The United Nations gives the following definition:

“The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring 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 receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.”

The three most important things about this well accepted definition are: the description of the act of trafficking, the different ways of the trafficking and the purpose of exploitation. The majority of trafficked persons are doomed to forced labour or sexual services, sometimes getting a ridiculous low payment but mostly nothing at all.

The main sectors where victims of human trafficking can be found are: commercial sex or prostitution, domestic caregiving, sweatshop factories, construction, farming or landscaping, fisheries, hotel or tourism industries, restaurant services, janitorial services and panhandling. Amongst all those horrible destinies I feel that human trafficking with sexual purpose is the worst of all.

Every year thousands of girls and young woman are kidnapped or sold by their relatives and trafficked to a foreign country. There they are forced to work as prostitutes against their own will and suffer incredibly from both physical and psychological pain. Many of those young girls lose their virginity and dignity by being raped by their pimp who “tests” them for their future “quality” for the first time.

People that judge the victims of the sex trade as stupid whores, insisting that the victims were always free to refuse their service and leave the place, do not have much more dignity than the traders themselves and have to be taught better !

The girls are controlled and punished by their pimps with beatings and threats if they don't obey. Many of the few girls who found a way to escape their fate mentioned afterwards that they were threatened with the murder of their family or the kidnapping and trading of their sisters. None of them dared to escape nor could they ask for anybody's help. Some girls tried to beg their johns to help them and told them that they didn't want to do this, but no one listened. Men who buy sex come for their 'natural desire' as they like to call it and don't care about anything else. They just take what they have paid for and leave afterwards.

The majority of trafficked women are still kids from age 12 and up. It is impossible to imagine the sorrow they go through.

And as I mentioned before this is a nightmare happening all around us in our everyday life. Each year about 800 people are trafficked into Canada and between 1500 and 2000 are trafficked through Canada to the United States. The number of trafficked human beings in Canada is increasing rapidly and has to be stopped!

Many of those young girls who are forced into prostitution come from an aboriginal background or from foreign mostly east European countries.

One of the most common methods, which traders use to get their victims, are "recruiting" aboriginal girls who come to the city and hang out at the big malls. In Winnipeg those places are Portage Place or Polo Park. Sometimes the recruiters are only young men who make friends with those girls and pretend to care about them supporting their settlement in the city. Unfortunately the girls don't know that the only aim which those guys have is that the girls fall in love with them and start to trust their boyfriends without any doubts.

The next step is that the boys invite the girls for a trip to another province which they most likely accept because the "boyfriend" would pay for everything. From the time that these girls go on the trip they may already become victims of human trafficking and there is most likely no way back.

When the girls start to realize that there is something strange going on and try to get help it is yet too late. They are locked in a hotel-room without phones neither knowing the name of the hotel nor the city.

Thus it is very important that we try to prevent human trafficking. It is often too late once the victims are trafficked. Preventative steps are fundamental in the combat against human trafficking! We have to raise awareness and warn everybody to be alert.

The two major things to do are to convince people how important it is to tell the police everything we see that could involve human trafficking; And of course to warn young girls not to trust false friends. Don't be afraid that something you told the police is not useful! More suspicion is always better than none.

Especially because young people are the victims of human trafficking it is very important to get young people involved in the combat against sex trade. Unfortunately it is often the case that teenagers tell their friends more than their parents. Friends should raise the alarm if they see something suspicious in a friend's behaviour. Young people should be informed and aware of human trafficking so that they can react quickly if necessary.

For that reason Micah House – Catholic Centre For Social Justice intends to start a youth project to combat human trafficking. We have to do something and help the victims amongst us! The first aim is to found a group of young people to raise awareness amongst peers and to spread the word. Maybe there will be a chance in the future to do even more and to prevent a trafficking in our neighbourhood. We are of course happy for any further suggestions and support. Hence I want to encourage every young person who is interested in combating the human trafficking to register for our group and do something instead of watching! Anything is better than doing nothing and I am sure that we are able to help!

For registration or any further information please contact:

Maximilian Werner

Volunteer at Micah Micah House – Catholic Centre For Social Justice

1039 Main Street

Winnipeg, MB

R2W 3R2

Phone: (204) 589-5393

E-mail: sjustice@mymts.net