



Resolutions To Action

LCWR Global Concerns Committee

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Sex-Trafficking in the Hotel Industry

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EXPERIENCE

Four and a half years ago, the Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph came to Nix Conference & Meeting Management to research the hotel site for their conference. They asked about the hotel's policy on human trafficking. We were not aware at the time that hotels were the venue for this crime. Together with the sisters, we worked to generate conversation with the Millennium Hotel St. Louis to sign the ECPAT-USA (End Child Prostitution and Trafficking) Code of Conduct. Nix has also worked with ECPAT to develop a Meeting Planners Code of Conduct to combat commercial sexual exploitation of children. As a socially responsible company, Nix utilizes our professional resources in the travel and tourism industry to create awareness of domestic minor sex trafficking of children.

Healing Action Network was founded in 2011 to provide a psychosocial support network for trafficking survivors, organize public awareness, train hotel staffs, and work with policy-makers and law enforcement to create person-centered policies that serve survivors

and punish perpetrators. The founder of the network survived a horrifying experience as a victim of commercial sexual exploitation and domestic sex trafficking. She brings this intimate familiarity with the subject matter, as well as educational and professional expertise to her work with survivors and the community.

SOCIAL ANALYSIS

Human trafficking, modern day slavery, is the illegal trade of human beings for commercial sexual exploitation or forced labor.

- Trafficking has been identified as the fastest growing criminal industry in the world. It is second only to drug trafficking in profitability. Human trafficking generates \$32 billion dollar in profits each year.
- There are an estimated 300,000 children sexually trafficked in the United States.
- Approximately 75-80% of human trafficking is for sex.
- Although human trafficking is often a hidden crime, and accurate statistics are difficult to obtain, researchers estimate that more than 80% of trafficking victims are female. Over 50% of human trafficking victims are children.

- Human trafficking has been reported in all 50 states, Washington, DC, and in some US territories.
- Victims are not just runaways or abandoned children. Many are from "good" families who are coerced by clever traffickers.

REFLECTION

As one learns about the atrocity that is human trafficking and the trials and tribulations of these women and girls, we are convinced that it must be stopped. But how; what can we do? Trafficking is a hidden crime. When you speak of it, there is often shock and disbelief. Isaiah 43:19 says, "See, I am doing something new! Now it springs

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forth, do you not perceive it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, *and* rivers in the desert." We too must call on Christ to deliver us. We must do a new thing. We must bring forth freedom. After four and a half years, the rivers are forming in the desert of trafficking and there are new paths of knowledge in the wilderness of ignorance.

Yet the cycle continues. A girl is born into poverty, of a woman who has been raised in poverty, of a mother who will raise her in poverty. The mother sells the girl to a man for money, or drugs, or food. The mother, a child of poverty herself, has learned that selling this child is the only way to survive. We must all work with these victims to help them see that there are other options, other ways. We must all work to break this cycle and give these children a chance for change.

One victim literally begged us to keep bringing awareness to hotels. When asked why, she told this story. "My pimp and the other girls fell asleep in a hotel one night. I decided I was going to make a run for it." She knew she would be beaten again or perhaps her toes broken with a hammer if she was caught, but she wanted out for the sake of her children. At age 20 she was already the mother of four. "I ran out the door and found a room with one of those big carts in front of it and a person was cleaning the room. I cried, 'Help me! Call the police!'" Much to her dismay, the housekeeper was not trained in the ECPAT-USA Code of Conduct and she did not speak English. Her pimp grabbed her, beat her, and kept selling this young mother.

This girl could have been saved that night, had the housekeeper been trained. But, would law enforcement have believed her? Would current legislation protect her? Would the social service system and the protective shelters provide counseling? The reality for her and so many others is still a tangled

web characterized by lack of education and understanding.

The Spirit enters our hearts and directs us through the wilderness toward compassion and justice. Catholic sisters have an effect on those they touch in ways they do not know. They have

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brought world-changing awareness to an issue as taboo as sex trafficking occurs. Sisters have nurtured this movement by bringing awareness to hotel trafficking and their continued support is imperative. I implore them, "Be radical, save women and girls, your voices, your actions, save lives. Children are living new lives because you took a corporate stand for justice."

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ACTION

Ask companies you patronize if they have signed the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism. www.ecpatusa.net

Join the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) and challenge corporations to monitor their supply chains and develop programs that actively combat trafficking and exploitation. www.iccr.org

Visit Nix Conference & Meeting Management to learn more about our efforts and accomplishments in this fight. www.nixassoc.com/more-about-nix

Visit Healing Action Network and see what a difference a few committed women can make. www.healingaction-network.com.

Advocate for legislative reform. Monitor government action on the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act and the Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking Act, as well as bills related to child welfare, immigration, and trade.

Assess the supply chain for human trafficking in your community through providers such as lawn care, cleaning, food providers and promotional suppliers such as T-shirts, mugs, pens, etc.

Collaborate with the networks in your area that fight human trafficking including the Rescue and Restore Coalition. www.acf.hhs.gov

Call the National Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline (1-888-3737-888) and report anyone you suspect is a victim of trafficking.

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