

U.S. FORUM CONNECTION #111, MARCH 2013

This publication is intended for your information about issues important to education, women and children. How you choose to use the information included here is up to each individual.

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HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Most people would think of the term - human trafficking - as referring to the sex trade, but there are many other forms of human trafficking in the United States. Several bills are currently pending in Congress which address the issue of human trafficking. Two of these are H.R.898 Latest Title: Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2013 and H.R.906 and S.413 Human Trafficking Reporting Act. It is interesting to note that portions of the Violence Against Women Act also address human trafficking.

April 9 has been designated Shine A Light on Slavery Day. Those participating are urged to place a red X on the back of their hand to show their support. When asked about the significance of the X, you can explain. From 6-9 p.m. on April 9 the Cornerstone Church in Akron is holding a gathering in support of an end to human trafficking.

Who are these trafficked people? Obviously many are found in the sex trade, but some may be lawn care workers, house cleaners or children who braid hair. In other countries they may be children forced to beg in the streets with the money collected going to their controller. They may be laborers (often children) forced to harvest crops. Nestle has ascertained that some of its chocolate is being harvested by forced labor. I wondered how those who control these people keep them under control. First many are brought in from other countries making them illegal immigrants subject to deportation. They may be beaten or endure other forms of abuse. Some are forced to take drugs which make them easier to manipulate. The drugs serve a dual purpose. In addition to making the person easier to control while they are being used for profit, the drugs can be used to overdose the person when his/her usefulness is deemed to be at an end.

CNN's Freedom Project has taken on this problem as an issue it wants to continually address. Their web site states:

Obviously there is no precise figure, but the International Labor Organization and respected abolitionists ... put the global number of slaves at ... 10-30 million worldwide. At a minimum, 10 million... The United Nations estimates the total market value of human trafficking at 32 billion U.S. dollars. In Europe, criminals are pocketing around \$2.5 billion per year through sexual exploitation and forced labor... In previous centuries, when slaves were captured and traded each had a significant market value. Although their ill-treatment was often horrific, the reality was that it made economic sense to keep a slave alive and functioning, to protect what was usually a significant investment, made with a view to (the) long term. That is not so today. Many girls and women, who are trafficked, particularly for the sex trade, are used with a view to high rate of return over a relatively short period of time. Then they are switched (with another) from the steady supply of replacements." For more extensive information on human trafficking go to <http://thecnnfreedomproject.blogs.cnn.com/category/the-facts/>

It is interesting to note that in terms of 2009 dollars, in 1809 it cost \$40,000 to get a slave today the average cost of obtaining a human is estimated to be only about \$90.

To see how your state ranks in legislation which seeks to control human trafficking, go to <http://thecnnfreedomproject.blogs.cnn.com/category/the-facts/> CNN reports “The state of Massachusetts was named among the most improved in the U.S. in 2012 after it passed wide-ranging anti-human trafficking laws. A report published by Polaris Project, one of the leading organizations in the global fight against human trafficking and modern-day slavery, rated and placed all 50 states plus the District of Columbia in one of four tiers based on the human trafficking laws in the state. South Carolina, West Virginia and Ohio were also rated 'most improved' for taking concrete steps to address human trafficking. Of those states, Massachusetts was singled out for particular praise as it is now also ranked in the top four states having the strongest legal framework. Washington tops the list, with Minnesota third and Texas fourth.”

An example of human trafficking is given in the film AMEXICA which is the story of a young boy from Mexico who is sold by a human trafficking ring to two con artists from Los Angeles with a get rich scheme. They portray him as their son, extorting money from innocent people by risking the boy's life in staged automobile accidents. Trapped, alone with his captors, and unable to speak for himself, the boy decides to take his fate into his own hands, forever changing the lives of the people around him. Amexica takes a different approach in the exploration of human trafficking, showing the unexpected results from both the captors and the victim's point of view.

Editor’s note: This has been an extremely difficult topic to cover; however, it is one in which Forum members have been very interested. Because I do not want to make it too sensational, I have purposely not used the term slavery; although that term has been used in legislation and in the print media in dealing with the subject. This is a topic about which we all need to be informed, and one which may cause you to view some activities in your community in a different light. *****

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<http://www.house.gov/> for members of the House of Representatives <http://www.senate.gov/> for members of the U.S. Senate

White House [1-202-456-1111](tel:1-202-456-1111)

STATE GOVERNMENT CONTACT INFORMATION can be obtained through <http://www.emailyourgovernor.com/> Information available at this site allows contact with governors, members of the state legislature, state supreme court, congressional delegation and state agencies such as the Education Department, Attorney General, Motor Vehicles Department and Voter Registration. PLEASE NOTE THAT SOME OF THIS INFORMATION MAY BE OUT OF DATE

INFORMATION ON HOW YOUR CONGRESSMAN VOTED ON KEY BILLS <http://projects.washingtonpost.com/congress/111/bills/> FIVE CONSTITUENT CONTACTS WILL CAUSE A LEGISLATOR TO PAY SERIOUS ATTENTION TO A GIVEN ISSUE.