



# HUMAN TRAFFICKING:

## The Exploitation of Children, Women, And Men

By Towanna Hogue —



Human trafficking has been the most covered up and exploitative criminal act that has affected individuals, families, and communities for decades. With the recent media attention garnered by this issue, specifically in the context of how many powerful people are aware of this, it is important to discuss, understand, and fight against this massive problem.

Human trafficking involves recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, and or receipt of any children, women, and men. It is an act of stealing someone's freedom to make a profit. Traffickers trade humans for slavery who are then compelled to providing commercial sex or made to work under inhumane and illegal labor conditions. This act goes against every strand of human rights and brings out the darkest side of society. The means of trapping the victims itself is massively deceptive.

It can take forms of grooming young children to be pushed into sex or even criminal activities. It can also take the form of offering precarious employment offers to men and women who are desperately looking for means to make money. Once the victims are in the area of control by the traffickers, it becomes almost impossible for them to escape. Furthermore, victims are forced to work in a multitude of sectors, such as factories, farms, restaurants, construction, or domestic work, to name a few.



This means anyone could be at risk. Human trafficking strips away individual rights and, consequently, is a major threat to national and international security. This illegal activity is mainly dependent on the nature of vulnerability inherent in our society. A person in a lower socioeconomic condition, people displaced during natural disasters, suffers from violence and or abuse, migrants, orphans, runaways, women, men who are looking for work, or anyone lacking self-esteem or self-confidence. Since they are unprotected and vulnerable, they become victims of human trafficking.

However, it is not restricted to just one section of society. It is very well present in our own surroundings. Victims can be recruited and trafficked in their own homes and towns they reside in. In the United States alone, there are an estimated 1.5 million victims and many more undocumented victims (DOAS, 2020). Out of this, Georgia is one such state that has been identified as a hub of human trafficking since 2005, with the most recent documented data showing approximately 417 'reported' cases in the year 2019. The majority of the victims being females and unsurprisingly the biggest cause of being sex work (NHTH, 2020; Wright, 2019).



Furthermore, a study found that more than half of the youth who are homeless in Atlanta have experienced human trafficking. In one year, approximately 3500 minors are trafficked in Georgia. Amongst them, African American and LGBTQ groups are the most at-risk population (Wright, 2019; Smith, 2019). Thus, proving the point of exploitation occurring amongst the most vulnerable groups of society.

Investigations have revealed that crowded events such as Super Bowls are also chosen as days where buyers and sellers are present to conduct this illegal activity. In Super Bowl 53 in Atlanta, there were 169 arrests made by the FBI for human trafficking (Smith, 2019). Hence, seemingly ordinary events also have underground and illicit activities occurring in Georgia.



## Efforts to Tackle Human Trafficking in the State of Georgia

There have been measures and policies set in place to tackle this exploitative practice. One of them being the establishment of Georgians for refuge, action, compassion, and education commission signed through an executive order by the governor Brian P. Kemp.

Furthermore, journalists have been uncovering and vocalizing the business of human trafficking in media channels, leading to a more active response against such illegal activities. Many non-profits also have been established in Georgia, solely focusing on tackling human trafficking.

The fundamental approach taken to tackle human trafficking rests on the principles of—prosecution, protection, prevention, and partnership (U.S. Department of State, 2020). Identification of what is the act, how it is carried out, and why it is carried out are steps to the investigation of human trafficking.



This is one criminal line of business that cuts across geographical locations, genders, ages, and other social categories. Anyone at any point in time can be at risk, and protecting citizens from such criminal activities is a task inherent with difficulties. The root of the issue is that human trafficking occurs simply because there is a huge market for it. The buyers benefit in terms of selling the victims for forced and cheap labor or sex work. The suppliers and buyers only view their profits and not the sheer cruelty inflicted upon human lives. Hence, careful, and major operations need to be carried out on a large-scale by both the public and private sectors in order first to discover those involved and then to dismantle this one by one.

Hasty or unplanned strategies can cause more harm than good for the victims as their lives are always at stake. Subsequently, the protection of the victims is the foundation of all human trafficking dismantling operations.

Therefore, as a citizen of this society, our responsibility is to understand this issue and how it runs deep in the system. This can facilitate in being informed citizens and consequently spread awareness of human trafficking. Being vigilant and spreading awareness can be through powerful mediums such as writing, videos, research, and discussions.

Once we begin to recognize this criminal act and raise our voice against human trafficking, then there could be more swift measures in place to tackle and prevent it.

Last summer, my daughter was approached by someone at the Hartfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. She was on her way to travel abroad with her teachers and fellow college students to Milan and other cities throughout Italy. This strange man approached her immediately as she was



entering the airport to stand in line to check-in her luggage. My daughter stated he was dressed in clothing that she thought resembled other airport employees. He asked her if she was traveling alone and naively, she said yes. He then went on to ask if he gave her 800 euros would she travel on a different flight with him. She told him no. She became suspicious at that point. Fortunately, one of her teachers walked up and started talking to her, and he then proceeded to walk away. I explained to my daughter that he was watching her, and I am sure others were in the airport seeking to recruit, force, and coerce other young women as well. My daughter did not share this story until after she returned home. I might not have ever seen my daughter again if she had decided to trust this stranger. She was not aware of human trafficking happening within the Atlanta Metropolitan Area then but is very much so more informed and empowered today!

If you are in the United States and believe someone may be a victim of human trafficking, report your suspicions to law enforcement by calling 911 or the 24-hour National Human Trafficking Resource Center line at 1-888-373-7888. Trafficking victims, including undocumented individuals, are eligible for services and immigration assistance.

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