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The Forgotten Victim: Fighting Sex Trafficking by Addressing the Effect of Sexualized Culture on Costumers' Demand

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The Forgotten Victim:
Fighting Sex Trafficking by Addressing the Effect of Sexualized Culture on
Costumers' Demand

Becca Nixon

Honors Senior Thesis

N. Kravitz

Winter 2011

These types of reports generally open using dark imagery, painting the picture of a victim's shame and abuse at the hands of the sickening perpetrators, day after day forced to have sex with those who will pay for momentary pleasure. Kidnapped girls, lives hallowed by the exploitation that should have never been known. Physical abuse so vile that it was never meant to be imagined, let alone experienced. Reminders that night after night, young girls are forced to satisfy the sexual cravings of man. Perhaps these illustrations are used in order to invoke sympathy for the victims of sex trafficking, to plant hatred for the pimps and abusers, and attempt to give readers an understanding of these atrocities. But we cannot for a moment pretend that reading a story gives an understanding of the realities behind that life. We cannot be so naive as to believe that simple words can illustrate pain so deep in the soul that only knowing faces filled with tears and pain and fear can understand. And yet we often unrelentingly strive to relate to the victims, to come to their much needed aid and rescue. But what of the abusers? What of those who cause their unimaginable pain? Are they simply subject to our hatred and loathing because we have seen the news reports and read of the horror? Are they truly monsters in human form that prey on girls in order to satisfy their greed, gaining temporary pleasure while presenting the victims with a living nightmare? Or, underneath their foul disguise, are they also suffering deep pain? Perhaps in our heroic efforts to save the trafficked, we have neglected to fight for another type of victim. The costumer, the client, the pimp, the 'john.' Different names, different faces, and largely thought of as the criminal. And yet it is the criminal that so often holds the power to end the crime. If we are truly going to fight the trafficking of sexual services, we must cut the issue at its root. We must seek to assist the victimized consumers, as well educate those at risk of becoming a 'john.' Advocates to end sex trafficking need to establish rehabilitation units to promote true care for the perpetrators, identify cultural influences that

normalize and encourage this crime and utilize preventative education in order to truly effect the sex trafficking market.

Supplying the Demand

Under the name of “white slave trade” and other terms, the selling of individuals for sex has been in our midst for ages (Hughes). It is no new evil or unknown crime. Just as before, the numbers of sufferers, and therefore costumers, is astronomical. It is estimated that each year, between 18,000 and 20,000 are trafficked in the United States alone. That means within just a span of five years, up to 100,000 individuals are forced into labor, both sexual and manual (Polaris). And for each sex slave, there can be hundreds of costumers, increasing the demand and creating the need for the trafficking industry to evolve with the changing society.

In order to meet this demand, the transport and supply of girls into this market has been altered and increased and technology has created opportunities for the sale of sex that would have never before been possible. Today, men can simply log into the internet and find porn at their fingertips. Or if they so choose, they can find sites that are literally selling girls to the highest bidder. Common local marketing search engines such as ‘Backpage,’ ‘Craiglist,’ and less fimilar to the common citizen, ‘USA Sex Guide,’ are filled with erotic messages, selling the services of women and girls to anyone wiling to pay for a night of purchased pleasure. These men will find no end to the supply. Before the “Adult Services Section” Craiglist was shut down due to the magnitude of illegality, one could find up to 16,000 postings everyday in relation to the selling of these highly sexually and often trafficked services (Polaris). Now, despite the fact that Craiglist is closed down, others services have surfaced to fill the gap. There, any user of the internet can find costumers discussing their satisfaction with the client just as someone might

rate a restaurant or hotel. They casually discuss how to avoid law enforcement and where to find the best deals. Yet despite their tone, there is nothing casual or innocent about these conversations. They are speaking of women's lives. Of their bodies and their well being. But because they are behind a computer screen, under usernames such as "twisted brother" and "lion 22" they can say and admit to almost anything without feeling the repercussions (USA). For "...it's upgrading from street walking to advertising on the computer and using cell phones, because it's safer." (McAllister). No longer do prostitutes and 'johns' have to cower on street corners avoiding the eyes of law enforcements. Rather, computer screens serve to connect customer to provider, allowing them to anonymously set up meeting places and prices in relative safety, away from the handcuffs of the officers.

In addition to the Internet, pimps know the benefits of preying on those who are vulnerable and in need; therefore, they are often supplied with girls from developing nations, using a number of techniques to ensure their work. Commonly desperate for money, these girls will gladly take a promised job in the US to help their families. Traffickers hardly need to convince the girls to accept a position in America, promising adventure in the land of the rich ensuring the girls that they will send money to their family. They often come illegally and without knowing the language, creating a deep dependence on the trafficker or pimp. The girls fear leaving the brothel for they often know nothing of America or the language needed to make their way through the culture. And because they are often illegal or have had their passports confiscated, they fear going to the police. Pimps and traffickers often tell the girls that once they pay back their debt from travel expenses, they can go free. This 'debt,' however, simply continues to increase as the girls are charged for their room and board, abortion pills, and clothing. In a final threat, the traffickers also tell the girls that they will harm their families in

their native country if they try to run away (Bales). It is in the face of these threats that the girls remain in bondage, desperate to escape and yet forced to remain. In one of thousands of common cases, Sunee was told that she could earn money for her family and her ailing father by working in a restaurant in Los Angeles. Leaving her native Thailand and arriving at a massage parlor instead of a restaurant, she was told that she needed to work to repay her debt. When she refused to submit to the massage and sex work, she was raped and beaten into obedience. Today, she serves about eight men everyday, seven days a week. When asked by an activist if she would like to contact a shelter that would help her gain her freedom, she quickly responded with the answer that had grown in her mind through abuse and suffering. "If I make trouble, [the trafficker] will harm my parents" (Kara). Sunee, like so many others, was simply found in a time of vulnerability, and is now trapped in this fear of escape, and yet in this desire to run from the pain she knows everyday.

In another common type of case, the pimps prey on vulnerable runaways or teenagers seeking a relationship with an older man. Perhaps they are without a family, or lacking affirmation of a healthy parental relationship. Whatever the reason may be, these victims find these needs of provision and support from the pimp. It has been estimated runaways are approached within their first 48 hours on the street with the opportunity to perform sexual services (Bales). Young teenage girls who are often looking for an adventure and a way to rebel against their parents can often enter into relationships with older men who, at the beginning of the deceit, sweet talk them and shower them with expensive gifts. She may "perceive the relationship as a normal man-woman relationship. [She] usually lacks knowledge of the pimp's involvement in prostitution in the beginning...soon [he will be] beating her and forcing her into prostitution" (Bales). Often, once an emotional attachment and fear of violence has been created

within the relationship, their older 'boyfriend' seduces them, drugs them, or simply threatens them and the girls often believe that they have no choice but to agree to prostitution. The dependence is created and the pimp uses this reliance to take complete control. The girls quickly discover that their pimps will provide enough to keep them alive and working. They might clothe and feed them. But the pimps require one cheap commodity in return. Their bodies. Often too ashamed to return home, addicted to the drugs the pimps freely give, relying on the meager money they provide, terrified of the authorities and conviction or deportation, they simply continue to work, giving their bodies to satisfy the demands of our sex driven society.

Creating the Demand

Walking down the street, turning on the television, or standing in the checkout line is all that it takes to realize the effect that sexualization has had on our culture. Images of women are used to sell beauty products and cars on billboards. On the cover of magazines, nameless women lure both men and women's eyes to their provocative bodies. In our media, pimps and prostitution are portrayed as a glamorous occupation. Porn is available at the click of a mouse and largely seen as normal and acceptable. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that the trafficking of sexual services is continuously increasing in our culture of self fulfillment.

We are not a culture that is known for its patience or self control. In gluttony, we gorge on fatty food that takes seconds to make. In anxiousness, we reply to emails and text messages within minutes of receiving them. We are also a culture that has a keen knowledge that sex sells. Committing to your spouse is thing of the past. We have a history of objectifying women. These combined factors create a hot bed for the market of sex trafficking, and men are given minimal reason to avoid or refuse this pleasure.

In our highly sexualized culture, it is common to think of forced prostitution as a 'victimless' crime. Costumers and pimps justify their actions by claiming that women enjoy serving multiple costumers night after night. Movies such as "Pretty Women" display women and girls living as prostitutes, yet smiling and seemingly enjoying life (Bales). Pimps plead that the women are taken care of and appreciate the job. But we cannot truly believe that forced prostitutes are enjoying sexual pleasure for each costumer they must bear, or that they welcome the steep price for the roof over their heads. "Putting a girl out on the street for prostitution exposes her to beating, to assault, to murder. It...creates a serious potential risk. They suffer psychologically and emotionally and they suffer physically. And they often suffer for a lifetime" (Bales). The reality behind sex trafficking is nothing like the lives shown to us through the media; we must realize and seek to understand the actuality of the trauma.

Yet in the face of this actuality, we are a culture of greed and glorification of the trade. Pimps, those who are in charge of providing the women for the 'johns,' are fully aware that pimping has developed into quite a money making business. Though it is a difficult number to estimate, it is thought that pimps average at about \$60,000 per year (Kara). Some make tens of thousands more, while others get by with just a few girls bringing in much less. But in each situation, they have placed wealth and money not only above the law but above individuals' lives and freedom. While it sounds like a terrible injustice, our culture has not threatened their wellbeing. In fact, we have sat idly by as our society glorifies the job of a pimp in media. For example, a song entitled "Its Hard Out There for a Pimp" won the 2006 Academy Award for best song. HBO produced a show called *Pimps Up, Ho's Down* which documented the life of a pimp. Outside of the media, the pimps even go as far as holding "Players Balls" around the nation every year in which pimps gather and give awards such as 'Number 1 International Pimp'

(Bales). These examples illustrate that despite the fact that their actions are illegal, greed filled, and degrading; our culture actually reinforces pimps activity by giving them attention in the spotlight of our society.

How can a culture fight sex trafficking with one hand and with the other promote songs, events, and television shows that glorify the very essence of the evil that surrounds this tragedy? We cannot expect members of our society to truly understand the horrors of this evil if they are constantly bombarded with the message that forced prostitution or trafficking is acceptable. It appears to be somewhat of an oxymoron, creating a difficult, if not impossible, message for the law enforcement to fight against.

Striving to Fight the Culture

Many local governments have begun to recognize the need to fight the rising trend of sex trafficking in their communities, looking to the power of law enforcement to eliminate this problem. New York state, for example, “now has, on paper, the most thoughtful and comprehensive state law against sex trafficking in the United States” (Brannon). Since the law’s reconstruction in 2007, sex trafficking is now classified as a significant class “B” felony, victims are given a right to assistance and aid, and ‘johns’ can be sentenced up to a year in prison. In 2009, Arizona expanded their laws against human trafficking to include all commercial sex acts and sexually-explicit performances (Federal Human Trafficking).

Nationally, in 2000, the federal government passed the Trafficking Victims Prevention Act which increased the sentences trafficking to include possible life in prison as well as economic sanctions. It also gave \$98 million over a two year period in order to promote enforcement of state laws as well as to endorse victim assistance programs. This act was

reauthorized in 2003, 2005, and 2008. In its most recent revision, the act increases federal efforts to fight trafficking on both the national and international level (Federal Human Trafficking). The changes also broaden the definition of trafficking in order to allow for a more complete awareness, and therefore convictions of the crime.

Because these laws display the growing awareness for the need to reform the way in which we fight the war on trafficking, they need to be recognized and encouraged as a vital element in the ending of the trafficking of human lives. The success of these laws, however, also needs to be addressed. Despite the seemingly effective New York's laws against trafficking, the state saw an increase of 20% in the number of girls trafficked using the internet in 2010 (Six Month Report). The National Human Trafficking Resource Center, reports that in 2009, they handled 289 calls from New York in their human trafficking crisis hotline. In 2010, this number had jumped to 409. From Arizona, another state working to revise their trafficking laws, they received only 63 calls in 2009. But in 2010, they handled 112 (Polaris). While these statistics are nowhere near exhaustive, they do display the rise of trafficking in spite of the growing awareness of the issue. Even more alarming, however, is the fact that the trend of increase is a common tale nationwide, with no reports illustrating even the slightest decrease.

Is There a Solution?

In the face of law enforcement that seems to be fighting an impossible battle against culture, are we to assume that the horror of sex trafficking will simply continue to grow, destroying more lives of both the perpetrators and victims with each passing day? The government has passed both federal and state laws in order to combat this issue, there are countless non governmental organizations that work to bring justice, and awareness is increasing.

Yet we continue to see the numbers of suffering rising. Stories continue to flood the news about victims in immense torture, and we are continually challenged to do more to fix this world problem. We are told to give more money, give more time, raise awareness in your community, sign this petition, and call your senator to encourage the passing of a new bill. These steps are vital and important to the fight. I have encouraged them and still do believe in their power. However, I have also come to believe that many of these laws and victim assistance programs cannot stand alone, for they are disregarding a vital aspect of the fight in the overlooking of the potential in the pimps, traffickers, and johns. These types of victims, in our anger, cannot be ignored. Therefore, in order to truly fight trafficking, I believe that we must first fight our own battle against anger and bitterness towards those who we have assumed to be monsters.

I, too, began this fight in anger. Towards men for abusing women. Towards our law makers for not quickly passing laws that would bring about justice. And most prevalent, anger towards myself for my inability to know what to do in response to the issue. I dreaded the feeling in the pit of my stomach that would appear after watching a documentary about the issue, or finishing a book that told a victim's story, feeling that I could not do anything to help them. The more I learned about the issue, the more hopeless it seemed as I saw the rising statistics and the laws that seemed weak in comparison to the culture that supported pimps and traffickers.

As I was researching, searching for a bit of hope in the darkness of trafficking, I instead found myself drowning in the evil of the struggle. In researching the prevalence of sex trafficking in my local community, I was directed to the websites and chats that the johns and pimps use daily to rate massage parlors and girls in the quality of their services. I began to recognize the girls' names as they were rated again and again, literally spoken of as if they were a product on a shelf in a store. Instead of separating myself through the space and time of books

and movies regarding the subject, the men and women involved in the trade were encroaching ever more closely in my own life. I could now read a review of a girl who was residing in my own community within minutes of the john posting the degrading and shameful words. The way in which they spoke, boasting of what was meant to be intimate and sacred in an sickeningly open and unemotional way made me want to scream. They described the girls' bodies as if they owned them, prideful in their vulgarity and boastful in their torturous actions. Over and over and over again, these men wrote of what they claimed with each visit. With every review I read, the anger within me grew. How could these men look in the eyes of the girls, talk to them, and continue to shamelessly empty the women of their very lives? Did they think that the girls were immune to pain? Do they assume that somehow, these women were truly no more than a object that they can use at their pleasure and then disregard like the piece of trash that they make them out to be? In my frustration, I concluded that these men were truly monsters and that the issue was truly hopeless. Nothing was going to change the thoughts of the men who relentlessly posted reviews of women as if they were empty bodies that were there only to satisfy man's pleasure.

But then, somehow, I began to see the hypocrisy in my anger. For just as the men were dehumanizing the women they were oppressing, I was dehumanizing these same men. Who was I to forget that they were people as well, dealing with the pressures of culture, the pain of a broken past, or an erroneous view of sexuality? As soon as I began to think of them as another type of victim, I began to see their vulgar postings not as a prideful disgust, but as a cry for help. Maybe they are actually suffering as well. Maybe in their payment for sex, they are looking for affirmation, but find themselves coming up empty each time. Perhaps they have been so indoctrinated by our sexualized culture that they see the objectification of women and paying for pleasure as the norm. My heart began to soften as I realized the pain they must be suppressing as

they inflict pain on others, desperately hoping to be fulfilled by the most expensive service, the most attractive girl, and yet each time walking away feeling the weight of guilt, only to try in vain to be filled again.

Therefore, it is my belief that there is no law and no anti trafficking organization that can fully fight the issue without recognizing the importance of the perpetrators and the fact that they alone have the power to stop the demand, and therefore put an end to the suffering. If we are to even hope to begin to see the statistics lower, we must move past anger, and begin to see the men as victims of our culture. In order to truly end sex trafficking, rehabilitation programs must be put into place in order to un-teach the lies that our culture has implanted in sex trafficking costumers.

Rehabilitation for 'Johns'

Just as the rescued girls are often placed in rehabilitation facilities in order to begin to heal from the effects of prostitution, the men who abuse the girls are also suffering from the influence of society and are in need of treatment. Law enforcement cannot expect the 'johns' to simply stop their behavior after a night in jail or a petty fine. The motivations run deeper than inconvenience can cure and the reasons behind their justification of their behavior rests on more than a night in jail can sever. In order to truly find the root of their unethical and unlawful behavior, rehabilitation must work to dispel the lies that they have been convinced of by the society in which they live. The lies that they must look to prostitutes for fulfillment, that it is a victimless crime, and that this act makes them more of man is deception that our culture has normalized. Instead of sending them home with an empty warning and the lies still very much

intact, 'johns' must undergo significant detox from our sexualized culture. It is only then that these same men will refrain from repeating the same horror with another woman.

While other states and communities have begun to see the importance of this rehabilitation in order to end the cyclic demand for prostitutes, San Francisco has been pioneering the 'john' school movement. In the past, the city had been paying more than \$4.1 million annually to prosecute offences related to prostitution. This expense did not include the cost of incarceration, a sum that would astronomically raise the price (Hotaling). In response to the continuing problem and cost, the city decided to create the First Offender Prostitution Program (FOPP) under the Standing against Global Exploitation program (SAGE). The program also includes the Prevention Service for Girls for their goal is not to forget about the abused, but to include the abusers in the rehabilitation. Therefore, they have made it a priority to not only care for the women, but to effectively fight against the sexualized socialization of men.

In order to replace this acculturation with which the men have been indoctrinated, the FOPP works to change offenders' attitude in a seven session rehabilitation program. Logistically, in order to be eligible for the program, it must be the abusers first offense. It serves as an alternative to jail but the participants must pay a fine in order to participate. This fine often covers the cost of the program, meaning that taxpayers do not feel the effects of its budget. During these sessions, the program covers a wide range of topics, creating a full picture of the effects of their actions. The attorneys describe the lawful risks, doctors and nurses describe health factors including STDs, and neighborhood activists describe the negative impact that prostitution has on a community (Hotaling). Through these presentations, offenders can begin to see that in their desperate need for sexual satisfaction, they actual effect individuals on a large scale. This dispels the justification that their actions are irrelevant to those around them. In

another attempt to justify their actions, the ‘john’ must ‘other’ the girls they prostitute, making them less than human as they use them to satisfy their cravings. Therefore, often challenging many of the participants is the testimonial from a survivor of the sex industry. These speakers give an account of the trauma that the experience, confronting the ‘johns’ with a face and a name to the many girls that these men might have abused. ‘Experts want these men to think of the prostitutes as victims, and speakers often try and teach empathy for the women’ (Pisarcik). These speakers fight the lie that the victims are thankful for the pay and that they enjoy the sex with each customer. It gives voice to the voiceless, allowing the girls to speak for themselves in order to shed truth on the lies that the men have been taught to believe and therefore fighting trafficking at its root.

In comparison to the rising numbers of trafficking that other communities have seen, this technique of fighting prostitution has seen relative success and has been adopted by other cities. Between the years of 1995-1997, 98% of the men who completed San Francisco’s program remained arrest free. In Buffalo, New York, where a similar model was adopted, the number of prostitution related calls was reduced by 50% in the two years after the implantation of the program (Hotaling). Furthermore, as of 2007, only 9 of more than 2,000 participants had been arrested a second time. In a world that has seen only rising statistics, this success has caused other cities such New York, Pittsburgh, and West Palm Beach to implement similar programs (Pisarcik).

San Francisco’s program, however, is far from perfect. In only seven sessions, the presenters must work against a lifetime of socialization and an entire culture telling the men that soliciting prostitution and doing business with pimps is acceptable. Other cities such as Brooklyn have implemented a program that merely lasts a day (Pisarcik). While this might serve to begin

the discussion, these programs must have time to dig deeply into the ‘johns’ motivations and beliefs about sexual services. Although the FOPP program does highlight the effects of trafficking and prostitution on many aspects, it seems to strangely ignore, outside of the physical trauma, the effects it has on the johns and pimps themselves. If these programs are to truly get to the root of the demand, they must address the personal issues that have drawn these men to this crime. For example, ‘clients are not as likely to be married, or if they are, they are more likely to be unhappily married’ (Preston). Without addressing this problem men will simply return to loneliness of the homes after the program. Ignoring this root will not serve to destroy it. Therefore, programs must seek to restore the broken marriages that have caused the men to seek satisfaction elsewhere, as well as heal the loneliness and insecurities that could be caused by a single life. Furthermore, some studies have shown that men who have been abused as children are more likely to solicit prostitution (Preston). In the face of this past, programs must be equipped to handle the psychological wounds that have been instilled in them since childhood and have manifested themselves in this crime. In addition to the impact of past experiences, the ‘johns’ can be facing the growing awareness and realization of the trauma that they have caused another human being. If they are truly going to be detoxed from the lies of this culture, they will come to realize the wrong in looking to prostitutes for satisfaction, they will realize the hurt that they have caused, and finally, they can begin to come to terms with the reasons behind why they felt the need to look for prostitutes for satisfaction. This type of self realization cannot occur over the course of one day, or even seven sessions. But it is completely necessary if true transformation is going to occur.

In addition to focusing the programs on internal issues rather than just external effects, the structure of the programs can also be changed in order to promote more productive learning.

It has already been mentioned that the programs need to be extended. Furthermore, law enforcement needs to broaden their market to encompass the ever growing use of the Internet. Instead of simply roaming the streets looking for solicitors, the police force must search the Internet for sign of trafficking and forced prostitution. This will open up an entirely new realm of pimps, prostitutes and costumers who are currently succeeding in evading the needed rehabilitation. Another reform that these programs need to undergo is the decreasing of the class size. Because of the depth of these topics, offenders cannot simply sit in a lecture hall and listen amidst a large crowd where they can be lost in the numbers. Instead, classes need to remain small in size and intimate in nature so that honest discussion is encouraged. Within the context of speakers, programs should also make time for small group discussion in which participants can process what they have been learning, share their own stories, and ask questions. Without this time to process, offenders cannot be expected to process the information they are taking in or apply it to their own lives, consequently never having its full effect. With the reformation of these programs, however, 'john' schools can truly work to stop trafficking by closely examining the demand and identifying the causes behind the costumers motivation.

Un-teaching the Next Generation

In fighting to end trafficking, these programs cannot stop with those who have already been found to be guilty. Much of the damage has already been done, and their actions have already increased the demand. Therefore, advocates must take this fight yet another step deeper; bringing similar programs to the youth of our nation. For these are the individuals who are at great risk of becoming the next 'johns,' pimps, and prostitutes, simply continuing this atrocity.

Because children are exposed to the sexualized culture through constant access to media and advertising, it can come as no surprise that they too, would assume that prostitution is acceptable. How can they think otherwise when sexuality is used to sell clothes and music? At a young age, girls begin to believe that their power rests in their body and appearance. At the same time, boys begin to realize that they can take power over women and satisfy their sexual cravings through their vulnerability. While we can tell them that it is wrong, our culture is screaming a different message. A message that sex sells. A message that sex is there for the taking, that it does not mean anything except momentary pleasure. But these young people need to know that this issue is much more intricate and vulnerable than our culture has made it out to be. They must learn that, while sex does sell, for both the abuser and the abused, the cost is high and the scars run deep.

An Example of a Prevention Program

Following is just one example of a prevention program that can be used in schools, community centers, or other organizations. Created for young adults, it can also be modified to be used in rehabilitation and is modeled based on the recommendations made in this study.

Week 1

Objectives:

1. To introduce the ideas of prostitution, internet porn, and the objectifying of women that lead to and cause sex trafficking.
2. To illustrate the prevalence of trafficking in the US.

Initiation:

To begin this lesson show this video clip that briefly exposes the harm of prostitution and how it is linked to trafficking

Sexual Exploitation Of Women Is A Crime:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vvKOe4urt4U>

After the video, define key terms.

1. Prostitution: the act or practice of engaging in sexual intercourse for money
2. Porn: writings, pictures, films, etc, designed to stimulate sexual excitement
3. Objectify: to present as an object
4. Trafficking: the process by which people are transported for a number of illegal activities, including prostitution, drugs, and slave labor

Interaction:

Ask students to record their answers to the following questions in their journals:

1. What percentage of males do you think look at porn?

-70% or males ages 18-34

2. How many people do you think are trafficked in the US every year?

- 18,000 and 20,000

3. What do you think is the average age that girls are brought into prostitution in the US?

- ages 12-14

Do not require them to read their answers out loud, rather simply read the actual statistics in order for them to see the magnitude of the problem.

Closure:

Introduce the idea of their journals that will allow them to keep track of they learn in the coming weeks. Challenge the students to take notice in the media (television, advertisements, movies, etc) and how our culture objectifies women. Write the observations in their journals in order to report them at next week's class.

Week 2

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to see the impact of our sexualized culture in their own lives.
2. Students will be able to be able to identify the objectification of women in our culture and articulate that connection to trafficking.

Initiation:

Have students bring out their lists of examples of objectification that they collected over the week. Have them join their established small groups to discuss the examples that they came up with through the week. After that short discussion, teach on the connection between objectifying women, porn, and trafficking.

Interaction:

In the journals, have students answer one or more of the following questions:

1. Have you every felt objectified? What happened? How did you react?
2. Have you every objectified someone? What happened? What did you say/think/do?
3. What can we do to stop objectifying women? To stop trafficking?

In their small groups, have each students share what they have written. Make sure that each group has a good mixture of males and females so that they can hear each other sides and seek understanding.

Closure:

Have students continue to track the objectification of women. But this week, also have them journal about the health side effects of the sexualized culture.

Week 3

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to list the negative health effects that stem from our over sexualized culture.
2. They will identify how those influences have impacted their own choices.

Initiation:

On the board, list the health concerns that the students have thought of throughout the week. Examples may be:

1. Anorexia Nervosa and/or bulimia
2. AIDS/STDs
3. Unplanned pregnancy
4. use of steroids

Interaction

Have guest speaker (preferably nurse or other health professional) explain the consequences of our sexualized culture on our health. Have them explain the health concerns of a prostitute as well as a 'john.'

Closure

In small groups, have students talk about how these health concerns have affected their own lives, just as it affects prostitutes. Bring them together to explain that these influences are often stemmed in our overly sexualized culture, causing us to obsess about appearance, as well as spread life threatening disease. The things that they shared in their groups display that they have been affected by the lies about sexuality.

Continue to challenge them to think critically about the culture around them and record example of sexualization.

Week 4

Objectives:

1. For students to hear from a survivor of the sex industry in order to more clearly relate with the industry.

Initiation:

Remind students of the basics of sex trafficking that were discussed during week 1 and give them time to think of questions to ask the speaker.

Interaction:

Invite a guest speaker who has survived the sex industry. If at all possible, invite both an ex-prostitute and 'john' so that listeners can see the emptiness in both situations.

Closure:

Allow students to ask questions of the speaker.

Week 5

Objectives:

1. For students to know how to stand up for what they have learning in the week.

2. For students to know specific next steps in fighting the roots of trafficking.

Initiation:

Have students journal in response to one or more of the following questions

1. What lesson has most stood out to you in the past month? Why?
2. How has our sexualized culture affected you?
3. What can you do to continue this journey?

Interaction:

Have students write out a commitment card for themselves regarding what they will do in response to this training. Will they stop looking at porn? Will they stop dressing in such a revealing ways that encourages objectification? Will they stop laughing at dirty jokes?

Closure:

In small groups, have students share their commitments with each other.

Giving Words Power

This knowledge cannot simply sit on a page. These words alone cannot rescue the girls from the brothels or release the ‘johns’ from the chains of sexual addiction. Just as the laws themselves cannot end trafficking, the words on the page have no meaning unless they are put into action. Therefore, it is my goal to inform local schools and education programs not only about the severity of this issue, but the potential they hold to end this atrocity. In order to communicate this importance, I have sent this program to more than fourteen schools in the Grand Rapids Area. Following is the letter that these principals received:

My name is Becca Nixon, a senior in Grand Valley State University’s Honors College majoring in Language Arts Education. Over the course of this past year, I have spent a significant amount of time researching the issue of sex trafficking and exploring the ways in which we can fight to

end this growing atrocity. Today, there are more humans trapped in slavery than during the entire transatlantic slave trade and there is no sign of it decreasing based on the current prevention plans. After much frustration at this growing problem, I have come to the idea that the only way to end this suffering lies in prevention through education, giving schools an enormous amount of influence and power. Therefore, I would like to invite you to open the attachment and scroll to the last section entitled "An Example of a Prevention Program" to see a preview of my proposed prevention plan. If you would like more information about the issue in general, please view the rest of the document which outlines the issue and my research.

I would love to discuss the possibility of integrating these ideas into your school curriculum. Please contact me at becca.e.nixon@gmail.com or [616-295-3501](tel:616-295-3501).

Thank you very much for your time.

Though they are only words, I hope and pray that the readers allow the pain of the situation to lead them into action. For if we each play a role in conforming to the sexualization of our culture, we must therefore also hold power to challenge the suffering. May we all do our part. May these words be given wings.

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