

As the long harsh winter has come to an end spring has arrived. The empty trees and piles of snow have been replaced by lush green trees and springing flowers. Long snow pants and boots have transformed into beautiful dresses and flip flops. Children are now able to freely play with their pals in their front yards and girls are now able to travel to the mall in their hordes. There is a sense of renewal in the air. But unfortunately for some of these young girls they will be taken by vile men and sold into sex slavery.

The 2008 movie “Taken” depicts how young women are sold into sex slavery. Sometimes young girls will be marked by a head-hunter and lured. Once they have been marked and lured they are kidnapped and sold into sex slavery. This happens not only in the US but also in countries around the world. According to Rachel Lloyd who is an executive director of Girls Education and Mentoring services in Harlem the starting age of sex workers has been decreasing each year. It is now at 13. Furthermore, 1 in 7 children who run away from home are victims of sex crimes (Child Sex Trafficking).

“Taken” also depicted how women are controlled in sex the sex trade. Many women are controlled through drug dependency. “There are basically two business models: manipulating girls through violence—that’s called ‘gorilla’ pimping—and controlling them with drugs,” says Patel, who prosecuted the case of New York-based trafficker Corey Davis, a.k.a. “Magnificent” (Collins). In the case of violence women are controlled through fear. They are afraid of the physical harm they will come to them if

they do not do what they are told. Felicia who was enslaved by trafficker Corey Davis says about Corey Davis “He called me a stupid b\*\*\*\*h ... a worthless piece of s\*\*t.... I had to tell people I fell off stage because I had so many bruises on my ribs face and legs.... I have a permanent twitch in my eye from him hitting me in my face so much. I have none of my irreplaceable things from my youth.” Fear is a powerful motivator. In the case of drugs women are made to be extremely dependent on these narcotics. These narcotic is typically heroine. When someone is addicted to these narcotics their brain develops a chemical dependency. The need for a fix is so strong that they are willing to be with “johns” until they get their next dose.

The crime of sex trafficking is a world epidemic. The question must be asked how many of these young girls get involved in the trade. Many times parents have sold their children into the trade. For many parents the struggle for survival is very real. Countries like Cambodia the struggle for survival makes parents do the unthinkable. Take the parents of Kieu. When her parents were feeling the pressure of loan sharks her parents sold her into sex slavery. She was given a certificate of virginity. Shortly after, her mother delivered her to a brothel where she was raped by three to six men a day. "It was because of the debt, that's why I had to sell her," she says. "I don't know what to do now, because we cannot move back to the past." The pressure on Kieu's mother, Neoung, began to build and build to pay back the loan sharks. Neoung sold her daughters virginity to a Cambodian man of for \$50. Unfortunately, the transaction netted the family only \$500, more than the \$200 they had initially borrowed but a lot less than the thousands of dollars they now owed a loan shark.

As a result of the debt Neoung sent her daughter to a brothel to earn more.

Kieu gives an account of the experience:

"They told me when the client is there, I have to wear short shorts and a skimpy top," says Kieu. "But I didn't want to wear them and then I got blamed." Her clients were Thai and Cambodian men, who, she says, knew she was very young. Don Brewster, a former pastor from California, is the founder and director of Agape International Missions, an organization dedicated to rescuing and rehabilitating the victims of child trafficking in Cambodia and smashing the networks that exploit them. He moved to Cambodia with his wife in 2009 after a harrowing investigative mission trip to the neighborhood.

"When they sleep with me, they feel very happy," she says. "But for me, I feel very bad." (Hume Cohen Savino).

Mumbai is also one of the worst areas in terms of sex trafficking. Here children are openly sold. Many children live the horrors of sex work every day. Children like Guddi who at the age of 11 was pursued by a neighbor to move to Mumbai where she was promised a well-paying job to help her family make money. She had no idea she would experience the horrors of sex work. When a new girl is brought in she is repeatedly raped in order to break her pride.

Many of the Mumbai brothels were established and maintained by British soldiers in the 1800s. These brothels are covered with bars on the windows and bars to protect women from customers. "Today the women charge up to 500 rupees (\$8; £5) for sex and girls aged between 12 and 16 can earn up to 2,000 rupees(\$32; £20), she added. Virgins in Kamathipura are auctioned to the highest bidder." (BBC News). Maybe the most horrific aspect of the sex trade is that many of the women who are sold into sex slavery are treated as social pariah and are not allowed to go back home. British photographer

Hazel Thompson has been working to help bring awareness through sex trafficking in India through her photography and her new book Taken. "In the 11 years I've been there, I've never met one woman who has chosen to be there. Every woman I've met has been trafficked or born there," Ms Thompson said. "These girls who have been trafficked can't return to their families because of the stigma and [yet it is] often [they who] are responsible for them being in Kamathipura," she added.

There are many people who are fighting against this sick and disgusting act. Countries like Sweden and Norway have made the purchase of sexual services illegal. This has really helped to decrease the demand for prostitution in these countries. Hopefully countries like Mumbai and India adopt this process. Also, organizations like Bombay Teen Challenge in Mumbai help to raise awareness for these despicable acts. They help these girls by letting them talk about their experience. Many of the members of the Bombay Teen Challenge are former slaves themselves. They have also help young girls find their way back home. "Lata, for example, was tricked and trafficked by her boyfriend at the age of 16, when she was drugged and taken to Mumbai from the southern state of Karnataka. But years later, with the help of Bombay Teen Challenge, she was reunited with her family and now lives in a rehabilitation home run by the charity." (BBC News).

Undoubtedly, western culture has helped desensitize Americans to the realities of prostitution. Dr. Sharon Cooper, a forensic pediatrician, believes that games like Grand Theft Auto: Vice City have helped to make American view prostitution as nothing more than a mere joke. Anyone who argues that point can simply look on YouTube and look up Grand Theft Auto and they will see hundreds of videos where prostitutes in the game

are being used for sexual gratification then killed and the person gets their money back. But this is no joke. Every day young girls are sold into sex slavery and brutally raped and their innocence taken from them. This epidemic needs to be stopped now. And that is no laughing matter.

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