The Hidden Truth

SCRIPT

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**Disclaimer**

* Hey everyone, before we delve into today’s podcast we wanted to provide a trigger warning. Today’s episode will center on a topic that is heavily related to child sexual abuse, rape, and domestic violence. Although we refrain from being unnecessarily graphic or shamefully insensitive, we understand that different things have the power to trigger different people and, therefore, deemed a warning compulsory. Listener discretion is advised.

**Grabbers**

* Get increasingly faster and then fade into “ I love you I would do anything for you I mean it….And what about you? Would you do anything for me ?” echo echo echo
* Then silence
* Then “Cold” plays

Voices:

Narrator 1 & 3 went to the screening of The Chosen Ones

Narrator 2 very curious about said screening

**Intro**

1: Hey everyone my name is

2: I’m \_\_\_\_

3: I’m \_\_\_\_ and you’re listening to The Hidden Truth, the podcast that brings you the cold, hard facts about the world around you.
1: As you already know, today’s topic is a little more touchy than our usual discourse, but is definitely one that is important.

3: Yeah, after \_\_\_\_ and I attended the screening of The Chosen Ones[[1]](#footnote-1), spoke to various experts, and spent time doing our own research, we felt compelled to share this knowledge with you, our audience. Today, in particular, we will be discussing sex trafficking near the United States border - specifically in Tijuana.

2: I didn’t attend this screening, but from what I’ve heard so far , sex trafficking is not as foreign or distant as people tend to think, and it’s time that people fully understand this nightmare.

1: You are absolutely right, with the way movies like Taken sensationalize human trafficking, a lot of public knowledge on sex trafficking is innacurrate. So let’s start with defining what sex trafficking is.

Add Adia 11:10

**\*\*It being modern day slavery because maybe its so easy to make people understand that concept right. We don't see it physically you know girls and boys are being physically chained and all that stuff but they are explained psychologically. For me sex trafficlking looks like and is all about exploitation and the trafficker is all about power and control so using force frauded coercion to exploit and individual for either personal or commercial benefit. And then I also say that it does not apply to children under the age of 18 because they are automatically considered a sex trafficking victim.**

2: Kamala Harris, the Senator of California, states that anyone who “deprives or violates the personal liberty of another with the intent . . . to obtain forced labor or services” is guilty of human trafficking.[[2]](#footnote-2) But as horrifying as that definition already sounds, that’s just the tip of the iceberg.

1: It’s really a global catastrophe that is not nearly as openly discussed as other illegal enterprises such as the drug business. And since I didn’t see it in the media as often, I never thought the problem existed on such a grand scale.

3: Yeah definitely. It generates the second largest illegal revenue coming second only to drug trafficking. Sex trafficking generates more than $150 billion dollars in revenue per year.. That's 3 times more than Starbucks and McDonalds make in a year combined.

1: Although this feels like a distant problem, it’s happening in our own backyard. According to the Department of Justice’s 2019 Trafficking in Persons Report, there are approximately 13,600 open trafficking cases in the United States, and more than 9,000 cases take place in Mexico’s bordering city of Tijuana. That’s less than a 2 hour trip away from us in LA!

3: Since trafficking is notoriously underreported, it’s virtually impossible for us to know how many people are currently trapped in this nightmare.

2: Wow, that’s crazy. How is it that Tijuana became such a hot spot for sex trafficking?

3:There are over 1.5 million people in Tijuana. The city is a major transit point for cross-border activities, legal or otherwise. And because of its geographical location, Tijuana has become a major way station for human smugglers and traffickers alike to stage their operations and other illicit activities.

1: Activities which include masking their involvement in trafficking with a front in Tijuana’s poorly regulated sex industry. Prostitution is a multimillion dollar enterprise that recruits thousands of sex workers. Tijuana's red-light district, also known as “Zona Norte”consists of a few square blocks near the Avenida Revolucion (the main tourist street).[[3]](#footnote-3)

3: And for an industry that brings in millions of dollars for the city, there are almost no elements of protection for these women. There are no strict laws set in place to ensure their safety, standardize and protect their earnings, or make sure that underage girls aren’t being passed off as workers that have reached the age of consent.

1: Protection and responsibility falls on the shoulders of the sex workers, as they are required by law to obtain a permit and attend monthly health check ups. Johns and traffickers alike basically get to do as they please.

2: So the safety and well being of women and young girls is being sacrificed for money ??

3: It’s very sad, but that’s the type of influence U.S. capitalism has on Mexico. Since sex work is such a big part of Tijuana’s economy, it’s as if no one is really concerned with making the changes necessary to ensure the safety of the consenting and the rescue of the victimized.

1: And the consequences of such disregard are exactly what The Chosen Ones portrays as it follows the story of 14 year old Sofia and her deceptive best friend turned boyfriend.

3: Her story starts in a small room with no windows, an air mattress, and seven other girls in a brothel. She and her 7 roommates are coerced by their pimp to have sex with 30 customers a day. If they reject any customers, they are beaten or drugged by their pimps.

1: Sofia is malnourished, her body hurts. She wishes for the day her brother comes to pick her up from this wretched hell. She is mistreated, abused, and ill...

2: Whoa whoa wait how’d she get there?

3: This is all because of her “loving” boyfriend, Ulises, who sold her to a sex trafficking ring for his family business. Ulises begins this manipulation by showing her a love that was absent in all parts of her life. After gaining her trust and showing her a future that they could have together, he turns the tables and reveals his true colors

**\*brainwashing audio \***

**“You have to make her share your opinions. Get her used to the good life. Treat her like no one ever has. After a week or two she’s brainwashed. That’s when you make your move.”**

2: Wait but I thought traffickers were strangers to their victims , or like flashy pimps. Is this tactic common or was this just a way to add drama to the movie?

1: I thought the same thing ! But after speaking to Briana, the Project Director of New Hope Foundation International, it became clear that - like many crimes- evil lurks closer than you might think.

**\*Insert audio of Briana, 10:00\***

**A lot of our cases were um familial members that were trafficking and so that is also very difficult too, because sometimes you have you know the mother is the one who’s the trafficker and it's not easy for a child to testify against their own mother even though, right. So um so that in itself too was very difficult because of the closeness of the trafficker with a lot of the cases that we worked with. Um, you know, making it so that a lot of times the victim is not really ready to testify, or will say okay yes she’s ready, but then, you know, will change her mind the minute that she’s in the courtroom. So um so that was one major difference too because if you get anywhere near it you’re putting yourself at risk with anything with organized crime.**

2: It’s so shocking to hear that mom’s of these victims are there because of the mother’s substance abuse issue.

3: Yes, it is very hard to fathom. But as research, conducted by Dr. Kent Kiehl shows, drug abuse has the ability to severely impair an abusers moral judgement. So in a lot of cases doing something as horrid as trafficking one’s own child is rationalized because it is a means of obtaining their first priority: satisfying their drug needs. [[4]](#footnote-4)

1: The issue of drug abuse and its effects on an individual’s decision making could be the topic of an entirely different podcast but for our purpose, it should be noted that many cases of familial related sex trafficking are motivated by parental drug abuse.[[5]](#footnote-5)

2: But how didn’t Sofia see the red flags in her situation? That was her best friend *and* boyfriend, how couldn’t she sense a shift ?

1: Like many other victims Sofia faced a plethora of ACEs, or Adverse Childhood Experiences.

2: Oh I see, I’ve done a bit of research on ACEs in the past. They’re traumatic single events or a series of events that can take a heavy toll on the children and young adults that experience them.[[6]](#footnote-6) These include divorce, incarceration of a family member, substance abuse, and mental illness.

3: Yeah, exactly, they also include experiences or exposure to violence such as physical, sexual, and emotional abuse or neglect. The more ACEs an individual has experienced, the more vulnerable they are to being targeted by a sex trafficker.

1: This is exactly what we saw in Sofia’s case. Her father died at a young age, leaving her with an absent mother who neglected to provide the basic needs for Sofia and her brother. Nobody was looking out for Sofia, making her an easy target for Ulises and his family.

2: Why is it usually a woman is portrayed as the sex trafficked victim?

3: Unfortunately, there is a prevalent gender hierarchy within Mexico referred to as “*machismo”*. The *machismo* mentality is an aggressive masculine pride that hypersexualizes and inferiorizes Mexican women. In its most basic form *machismo* dictates that women are here to do nothing more than stay at home and serve their men.

1: Because of this mentality, it has historically been more common for women in Mexico to be victimized. However, in recent times there has been an upsurge in reported cases of male sex trafficking victims.

3: Men usually don’t speak up because society imposes this mentality that boys and men are never the victim, but these predators are searching for *anyone* that is vulnerable and is seeking help.

1: Which is why it is also very common for indigenous and mestizo women living in poor underserved communities, like Tijuana’s barrios or *colonias*, to become victims as well. Pimps often woo these individuals with nice places to stay, gifts, and food ; trapping them under the guise of protection and continued financial support.

**Social Media/Internet**

2: But you guys mentioned that sex trafficking is a billion dollar industry. I can’t imagine something on that scale only existing through word of mouth.

1: And it doesn’t, the internet and the advent of social media have both done a lot to increase its reach within society. [[7]](#footnote-7)

3: If you look at the grooming stage in itself, the majority of traffickers use Instagram, Facebook, Twitter , and other platforms to befriend and victimize these girls. Briana took the time to provide us with insight on some of the specific tactics these traffickers use.

**\*Insert audio of Briana, 24:00\***

**A lot of times, it starts as a relationship. We will see an older male that will pursue a female. They are looking for someone that is vulnerable, complaining about their parents, look like they may not have a lot of friends, they find out who they are hanging out with? Are they alone at the bus stop? Do you look confident? Do they respond well to attention? How do they respond to “Hey beautiful”? Starts as a boyfriend trying to get to know you, what are your hopes and dreams, who are your family and friends. The goal is isolation: to try to get them to not care about their friends and family as much. They introduce them to their way of life, get them to go out more, introduce them to parties. There’s intimacy involved, then at some point, they flip the switch. They can be nonchalant or physically forceful about having sex with someone else. If they refuse, then there are threats, usage of blackmail, etc. The coercion begins.**

1: And on top of all of that, these sites are also frequently used to facilitate the buying and selling of victims as well.

2: But aren’t these sites equipped with ways to prevent that from occurring ?

3: For the most part, the ways in which sites like Facebook and Instagram monitor trafficking can only go so far. For example when it comes to explicit posts (i.e., child pornography, explicit captions/posts that advertise) these can be flagged and taken down swiftly, but these traffickers know this and are therefore using more deceptive tactics online. [[8]](#footnote-8)

1: So they then have to rely on other users reporting any suspicious activity that they see.

2: I see. It’s crazy to me that in an age where you can use technology to do so many things, these social media companies , or any tech related companies in general, haven’t figured out how helpful monitoring direct messages could actually be.

1: Helpful, yes. But to the rest of the world not involved in trafficking, these safety precautions may just come off as very intrusive, so I don’t know how easily they could implement that kind of feature.

3: But beyond that, even if a trafficker’s direct messages were monitored by the company, most traffickers use Apple products so that they themselves aren’t trackable. [[9]](#footnote-9)

2: Apple’s involved too ?? There’s no way these traffickers, like Ulises’ older brother, own iPhones and are still able to get away with their crimes.

**Technology**

1: Well, there actually is. With services like iMessage - which often facilitate trafficking activities - Apple allows its users to fully encrypt their messages, so Apple itself can’t see your messages.

2: So even if Apple wanted to help law enforcement they couldn’t ??

3: That’s not entirely true. Apple has access to each user's encryption key , so they *could* hand access to messages over to law enforcement upon request. HOWEVER, the encryption key really only exists if, and only if, the user participates in iCloud backups.[[10]](#footnote-10)

2: So if a trafficker did something like back all of their messages up to a computer or chose to not back up the phone at all, law enforcement would lose out on a host of incriminating evidence ???

3: Exactly.

1: And the sad truth is, in Tijuana in particular, even if these companies handed over the information, police involvement in sex trafficking is well documented, so it would not be surprising if that information was completely disregarded.[[11]](#footnote-11)

2: \*sigh\* I don’t mean to sound cynical, but it just seems like everyone that could help has an excuse as to why they can’t, and that’s heartbreaking. Like who is *actually* trying to help these victims?

1: You know when I first started doing my research I thought the same thing, and for a minute there weren’t any tech savvy companies working to confront traffickers through their most elusive front. But then I found out about Spotlight.

2: Oh I’ve heard of that ! but all I know is that Ashton Kutcher had something to do with it.

3: Yeah ! So basically Spotlight is an app that uses data analysis to help speed up trafficking investigations.

1: Instead of having law enforcement agents manually sifting through classifieds and forum posts that advertise sex work, this app identifies all of the suspicious ads that involve minors or sex trafficking, matches images to current missing people, and creates potential victim profiles, so that individual cases are easier to track.[[12]](#footnote-12)

2: Finally a positive. But you all mentioned earlier that corruption in Tijuana often prevents any of the physically life saving work from being done. Are there really no laws in place that would push a more powerful entity like the FBI?

**Laws and Policies**

**\*add Chosen Ones, 36:50\***

**Lines: (In Spanish)**

**Sofia: “Why don't you tell my mom where I am? She can go to the police.”**

3: In this part of the movie Sofia tries to seek help from the police, only to find out that they’re on the sex traffickers side and will not aid her in escape. Even those that live around the brothel are aware of the illegal trafficking of these young girls, however they stay silent for fear of getting involved in the danger and violence that surrounds the sex traffickers. This is a constant problem that occurs in Mexico where police are involved and bribed into turning a blind eye.

1: From what we know, there is a dramatic need for more laws and regulations regarding sex trafficking in Mexico. Though some states have implemented attempts to limit this enterprise, the same cannot be said for others, therefore leaving holes that sex traffickers can utilize to their advantage.

2: Has the United States done anything about this?

3: There have been efforts made to address the issue of sex trafficking but government ineffectiveness and rampant corruption have made it really difficult to give aid to the areas that need it most.

1: As of this moment, Mexico is on the Watch List of the U.S. Department’s Trafficking in Persons Report which means they do not meet the minimum standards of the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2003. [[13]](#footnote-13)

2: What kind of standards do they fail to meet?

3: For example, although the Mexican government has demonstrated increasing efforts to combat the issue, there has actually been a deterioration in the quality of aid surrounding this issue . The government obtained fewer convictions, identified fewer victims, and provided limited specialized services for trafficking victims than the previous year.[[14]](#footnote-14)

1: That’s why sex trafficked victims try to seek refuge from the US and apply for a special type of visa that allows them to remain in the United States for up to 4 years *if* they assist law enforcement in an investigation of human trafficking. It is a specific kind of humanitarian visa for victims of human trafficking in the US who are not US citizens.

3: Known as the T-Visa, this special visa was created as a result of The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 - which was established during Bill Clinton’s presidency.

1: In addition to the temporary legal stay we discussed earlier, the T-Visa provides victims with a path to citizenship, and affords them the opportunity to have family members of their home country join them in the states. It also allows them to be absolved of any crimes related to illegal activity they may have been coerced into as a sex trafficking victim.[[15]](#footnote-15)

3: Going back to Sofia’s story. While Sofia was trying to escape from the sex brothel in Tijuana, one of her friends, Esmeralda, told her that a girl that used to work in the brothel was rescued from sex trafficking because her pimp smuggled her across the border to work in a brothel in La Mesa. **8:42** One day she managed to escape and she was able to find help from a lawyer who is now helping her apply for a T-Visa so she can work as a house cleaner instead.

2: Wow she’s so brave! It's amazing that she was able to apply to this T-Visa, it seems like great aid from the US.

1: Although it sounds amazing, there were a lot of changes made to the T-Visa application after Trump’s presidency began in 2016. Since then, various policies have made it difficult and risky for sex trafficked victims to even *apply* for the T-Visa due to fear of deportation.[[16]](#footnote-16)

3: During Trump’s presidency the rhetoric surrounding immigration started to change dramatically.

**\*Insert Trump describing Immigrants as animals\*\***

1: Although Trump’s cabinet made human trafficking the focus of their human rights campaign...

**\*Add Trump speaking about human trafficking\***

1: ….He completely misrepresents what sex trafficking looks like in the real world. He continuously makes hypocritical statements concerning the US’s involvement in aiding sex trafficked victims, when in reality he’s creating stricter immigration policies and making it hard for them to seek refuge.

3: According to the US Citizenship and Immigration Service, the applications for T-Visas are 10 pages long and come with a $1000 filing fee.

2: That’s so much money just for an application, how can these poor victims obtain this much money? Shouldn’t there be some type of waiver considering their situation ?

3: There is a fee waiver for applicants, but there has been a substantial decrease in approved fee waivers. Additionally, - as explained by the President of the Human Trafficking Center, Martina Vandenberg - the government has started sending back visa applications and asking for things like proof of residence.

2: How unreasonable is that?! There’s no way victims would even have copies of an apartment lease readily available. It’s almost like these policies were made to invalidate their traumatic experience and deny the sex trafficked victims any aid.

1: That’s just the half of it! Even if a victim were able to provide all of the required documentation, the USCIS has reported that the current wait time for a T-visa is between 15 and 22.5 months. In prior years, the wait time was less than 12 months.

3: The worst part of this T-Visa situation is the concept of an NTA, or Notice to Appear. Martina Vandenberg explained that since 2018, in cases where applications were denied, the applicant was then sent a notice that required them to show up to a deportation court.

**“Any denial is a deportation notice, that is why I have not filed a T-visa since November 2018.” claims Martina Vandenberg. (podcast)**

1: Additionally, since Trump's policy change, the USCIS has shown a decrease in approved applications. Now as little as 35% are approved. Coincidentally, federal prosecutions of sex traffickers have also decreased by 20% since then. [[17]](#footnote-17)

3: Not only does all of this make it harder for victims to come forward, it all makes it a lot more difficult for law enforcement to investigate sex trafficking rings.

2: If anything, they’re regressing any improvements made on human trafficking issues! You’re right escaping seems a lot less plausible than it sounds. So how does Sofia escape from her captors?

**Biology**

3: Sofia’s “escape” is not a happy ending… She is “rescued” from Ulises only to find herself as a house slave indebted to his malicious family. After that, she lives in Ulises’s house and suffers from a lot of mental and physical trauma that leads her to stay silent for over 3 months.

2: Woah I thought Sofia would have a happy ending or at least truly be rescued and set free to live her own life.

3: Sadly, that is usually not the case.. Many sex trafficked victims are either killed, or threatened into not speaking a word of their experience for the rest of their lives. Also, a lot of these victims are enslaved in these brothels for years until they get old or are too weak to work.

1: Sex trafficked victims must cope with so many biological repurcussions after their experiences. Regardless of whether or not they are saved from the trafficking ring, some of these effects may haunt them for the rest of their lives.

3: One of the lifelong afflictions that victims may suffer through is the contraction of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV or AIDS. With all the trauma that victims face, sexual health may be the last thing on their minds.

2: Wow, that’s so crazy. I wonder what kind of sexual precautions they are even allowed to take.

3: Their options are very limited. Most sex trafficked girls are so young that they are unaware of what sex is, let alone the risks of unprotected sex. In the movie, Sofia’s first couple of days at the brothel consisted of being taught what sexual intercourse is and how to keep herself safe by learning how to use a condom.

2: What happens to the girls that are never taught this lesson?

1: Girls that are unable to use protection are at great risk of contracting diseases. One disease that is particularly detrimental is HIV. The first couple of weeks after being infected, the individual may feel flu-like symptoms such as headaches, fever, and muscle soreness. After these subside, no other symptoms occur again for years.[[18]](#footnote-18)

2: Oh so after that, they’re okay?

3: That’s the scary part. That is actually the period of time where that individual’s viral count is at its highest, therefore they are more highly infectious.

2: Wow, with the amount of people that victims are forced to interact with, HIV must spread so quickly.

1: Exactly. The sex trafficking business plays a huge role in the HIV epidemic. Over time, HIV causes so much damage to the immune system that it leads to an acquired immunodeficiency syndrome more commonly known as AIDS.

2: But wait, if things like HIV and AIDs are common in sex trafficking victims, wouldn’t traffickers bring them to hospitals ? I feel like traffickers see their victims as an investment, so wouldn’t they want to make sure they were in good health if they started showing any type of ill health? To me it just seems like more victims should be getting rescued because of exposure to the healthcare system.

1: I’m going to generalize here, but I really do not think traffickers think that highly of their victims. They’d much quicker let their victims suffer and die, than bring any “unnecessary” attention upon themselves - like showing up to the hospital with a sick young girl.

3: But even if they did, these girls would commonly be brought to wildly uninformed healthcare systems, and their chances of rescue would be slim to none.

2: What do you mean ?

1: Well there is this common, yet inaccurate, belief that sex trafficked victims are trapped in brothels and do not leave, and it is one that seemingly extends to the minds of health care providers as well. But according to a study conducted in the US, over 88% of sex trafficked victims meet with a health care provider. From those that were seen by a medical provider, less than 40% asked them about their living circumstances.

3: In other words, even if a victim meets with a health care provider, it’s not guaranteed that the healthcare provider will have the training or confidence to identify them as a potential victim of sex trafficking.

2: Knowing that the people who most commonly interact with victims of trafficking, aside from the predators, are health care providers and yet the victims aren’t saved upon contact is crazy. It seems like a terrible mix of inadequate training, a lack of resources, and a barrier of mistrust. [[19]](#footnote-19)

3: Exactly, health care providers play such a crucial role in identifying these cases , rescuing victims, and initiating their healing process yet they are often ill equipped.

1: And this lack of understanding and awareness extends beyond rescue. Let’s think about a victim’s mental health for a second.

2: Aside from the horrific, physical injuries that victims must tend to post-victimization, I can only imagine the immense psychological trauma survivors deal with.

3: Exactly, I - personally - feel like the mental effects of something as tragic as sex trafficking aren’t discussed enough.

1: And even beyond that, I don’t think the mental effects are addressed correctly.

2: In what way?

1: For example , studies have shown that victims of sexual violence experience the most severe forms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder[[20]](#footnote-20) - meaning that they go through debilitating re-experiences of their trauma, they may struggle with severe aggression or detrimental behaviors, and they commonly experience deeply negative emotions about themselves ; no longer seeing themselves as the victim, but as someone to blame for their experience.[[21]](#footnote-21)

3: And despite these effects being widely researched, the hospitals and clinics that are supposed to aid victims in their recovery have yet to implement trauma informed psychotherapy. This inadequately addresses this level of the disorder.

1 : Instead, a lot of the time, these women are subjected to large doses of medication to cope, despite research already proving that the healing that these medications provide are purely temporary - once the treatment ends, relapse is almost inevitable.

2: Oh yeah I learned about that in a college course I took once. With many mental health disorders, and especially when it comes to PTSD, evidence-based psychotherapies aid in stabilizing and/or improving symptoms upon completion. [[22]](#footnote-22)

3: See and that’s assuming that the survivor is a cookie cutter patient ; cooperative, engaged, and willing to do all that is asked of them. But that’s not always the case.

1: Aside from PTSD, a study conducted in the U.S, with over 1,700 maltreated children , found that the abuse endured often leads to hyperactivity in the amygdala and parahippocampal gyrus which causes both a desensitization to threatening cues and a heightened risk of sex trafficking victims developing several psychopathologies. [[23]](#footnote-23)

3: Additionally, the aforementioned hypersensitivity also makes it likely that they’ll more readily “act out”, than seek or positively respond to treatment. Which is why victims are often labeled as difficult or a lost cause ; an unfair and inhumane judgement all across the board.

2: It’s very clear to me that sex trafficked victims should be treated in a more holistic manner through psychological and physical treatments that keep their respective experiences in mind. Are there any organizations in Tijuana that can help sex trafficked individuals in this way?

3: Unfortunately there aren’t many refugee houses since funding for sex trafficking victims is scarce in Tijuana. However, there are definitely passionate advocates such as Alma Tucker that founded “The Garden House”. She takes a multidisciplinary approach to the group home where the victims get music, art and yoga along with medical treatment and therapy.

1: However, this is just one resource! There are so many victims in Tijuana and there definitely should be a greater demand for types of organizations to help sex trafficked victims.

2: We’ve discussed so many ways in which victims are being neglected both through the duration of their suffering and within recovery, but what I really want to talk about is how we can prevent the continued suffering of victims post-trafficking and - more importantly- how we can put an end to sex trafficking in the future.

1: As far as prevention goes, there should be more awareness within the family and the different communities about the ways that sex trafficking can present itself. It isn’t always as obvious as suspicious men coming up to young girls in the street. It can be an anonymous person on the internet that enamors and brainwashes a young girl.

3: Yes, exactly. It is so so important to monitor the technology use of young girls and teenagers to make sure that they do not get entangled in these horrific schemes

**Briana: Show kids how these stories happen, show them how someone was groomed, how someone was tricked. There has to be monitoring of cell phones for younger folk.. Such as not having a cell phone at night.**

3: And although that advice is more pointed towards parents that care, it can still be applied to the general public.

2: Just because one adult doesn’t care, doesn’t mean that we all don’t have to.

1: Right , that advice applies to caregivers, teachers, friends, counselors, and anyone else that is a part of that child’s life. You might not be able to snatch phones as easily as a parent would, but coming to the child as a concerned, judgement-free confidant could really save their life.

2: Is there anything that health care providers can do to help victims?

1: As discussed earlier, Sexually Transmitted Diseases - including AIDS- are big risks for sex workers. Therefore a way to combat the transmission of sexual diseases is to make preventative vaccinations more available to those that need it. Therefore health care providers can implement this vaccine when a victim comes for a checkup. Although this solution does not combat the root of problem, it is a viable solution for the mean-time while more concrete ways are determined to halt sex trafficking in its tracks.[[24]](#footnote-24)

2: By distributing these vaccines to sex traffickers, doesn’t it seem like you are on their side?

3: Not at all. It can be compared to how the United States implemented the Syringe Services Program. Of course, the most effective way for individuals who inject drugs to avoid the negative consequences of injection drug use is to stop injecting. However, many people are unwilling or unable to do so. Therefore, SSP has provided a range of services such as access to and disposal of sterile syringes and injection equipment.[[25]](#footnote-25)

1: Yes exactly. Of course the most effective way to halt the spread HIV/AIDS within sex trafficking victims would be to stop sex trafficking, but since concrete solutions have not yet been implemented, the best course of action would be to assist in their sexual health and safety with the use of preventative vaccines.

2: And then as far as technology goes, I know we discussed Apple’s iPhone encryption earlier and how it functions as an unfortunate gift to traffickers, is there really no way that Apple could turn it into a traffickers worst nightmare ?

3: There is a way, actually. If Apple were to shrink the amount of encryption that it provides its users, it would broaden the companies access to any private information stored on people’s phones - and by default expose any dealings that traffickers facilitate on these phones.

1: However, the current issue with employing an action like that, is figuring out how to do so without sacrificing the personal privacy of everyone else.

2: Oh I see, and I can’t imagine what way Apple would even tweak the level of encryption to a point of exposing traffickers without facing backlash from the general population.

1: It’s truly just about reaching some type of compromise.

3: But not all hope is lost ! As Apple spends time trying to figure that out, in addition to Spotlight, there is another software product called Safer that detects the images of child sexual abuse on their platforms using “PhotoDNA”. This is a system developed by Dartmouth College and is used by large companies including Facebook. The goal of this software is to train machine learning algorithms to flag potential material for review by experts. [[26]](#footnote-26)

2: Although these solutions may sound too large for any, one person to accomplish, there are still so many ways that we can help.

3: Yes, The first way you can help is by being aware. Look out for individuals that have unexplained bruises or injuries, are paranoid, anxious, depressed, never alone, and appear to be in a relationship with someone who is overly dominant or kept a secret.

2: If there is an opportunity for you to be alone with that person ask them questions about their job and whether they get paid for employment.

3: If you suspect they are a victim of human trafficking, take the following actions:

* Ask the person if you can help them find a safe place to go immediately.
* If they need time, create an action plan with them to get to a safe place when they are ready. Call and report to the human trafficking hotline at 1.888.3737.888.

2: These strategies should be implemented with the goal of helping innocent girls like Sofia.

**\*\*Cue Music\*\***

1: Before we sign off, we’d like to thank this episode’s sponsor: New Hope Foundation International. An organization that brings awareness to sex trafficking - and other critical human rights issues- through education, service, the creative use of media, empowerment, and hope.

Once again,

3: I’m \_\_\_\_\_

2: I’m \_\_\_\_\_

1: And I’m \_\_\_\_ . Thank you for listening to the Hidden Truth.

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