



POLARIS PROJECT

FOR A WORLD WITHOUT SLAVERY

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ABOUT POLARIS PROJECT

Polaris Project's vision is for a world without slavery. Named after the North Star that guided slaves towards freedom along the Underground Railroad, Polaris Project has been providing a comprehensive approach to combating human trafficking and modern-day slavery since 2002.

Polaris Project is one of the largest anti-trafficking organizations in the United States and Japan, with programs operating at international, national and local levels through our offices in Washington, DC; Newark, NJ; Denver, CO; and Tokyo, Japan. Polaris Project is one of the few organizations working on all forms of trafficking and serving both citizen and foreign national victims of human trafficking.

Polaris Project's comprehensive approach to combating human trafficking includes conducting direct outreach and victim identification, providing social services and transitional housing to victims, operating the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) serving as the central national hotline on human trafficking, advocating for stronger state and Federal anti-trafficking legislation, and engaging community members in local and national grassroots efforts.

Since its founding, Polaris Project has been the recipient of numerous awards and honors for its achievements including: Ashoka Innovators for the Public, Marie Claire's 10 Best Charities, the 2006 Justice for Victims of Crime Award given by the Department of Justice, the DO Something BRICK award, the Washington Area Women's Foundation Leadership Award 2004, and honors from Lifetime Television, Body Shop, and CNN.



Polaris Project President, Katherine Chon with President Clinton at the Do Something BRICK Awards Ceremony

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WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

Human trafficking is the modern day practice of slavery. Also known as trafficking in persons, human trafficking comprises the fastest growing criminal industry in the world, based on the recruitment, harboring, and transportation of people solely for the purpose of exploitation. Every year traffickers generate billions of dollars in profits at the expense of victimizing millions of people around the world.

Victims of human trafficking are people forced or coerced into labor or sexual exploitation. Labor trafficking is widespread in variety of situations that encompass domestic servitude and small-scale labor operations, to large-scale operations such as farms, sweatshops, and major multinational corporations. Sex trafficking is one of the most lucrative sectors regarding the illegal trade in people, and involves any form of sexual exploitation in prostitution, pornography, bride trafficking, and the commercial sexual abuse of children. Under international law, any sexually exploited child is considered a trafficking victim, even if no force or coercion is present.

An estimated 17,500 foreign nationals are trafficked annually in the United States alone. The number of US citizens trafficked within the country is even higher. An estimated 200,000 American children are at high risk for trafficking into the sex industry each year.

[\[Browse our collection of survivor testimonies\]](#)

Despite this staggering reality, governments around the world are only beginning to address the problem. In most countries, traffickers operate with almost total impunity even in the most severe cases. A lack of awareness in the public exacerbates inaction on the part of authorities. Take a stand and join us in leading the anti-trafficking movement forward to end the modern practice of slavery. Learn more and [get involved by signing up](#) to receive regular updates about human trafficking, Polaris Project, and ways to help fight modern-day slavery. We need your support to help end the exploitation of victims of human trafficking.

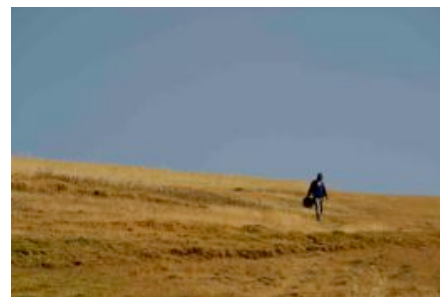
UNDERSTANDING HUMAN TRAFFICKING

MYTH #1: Human trafficking is the forced transportation of people across borders.

Reality: Forced transportation in the absence of slavery-like labor or commercial sexual exploitation is usually considered the crime of kidnapping. Human trafficking



Traffickers exploit men, women and children through labor and sex trafficking operations.



Most victims lack social networks, making it very difficult for them to escape the cycle of oppression.

is modern-day slavery through labor or commercial sexual exploitation, and does not require transportation to occur, though transportation may be involved.

MYTH #2: Trafficking victims are only foreign nationals.

Reality: Both the U.N. Protocol and U.S. federal law use definitions of trafficking in persons that do not require crossing of international or state borders. Many trafficked persons are victims of internal or domestic trafficking - trafficking within the borders of a single country, and are themselves nationals of that country.

MYTH #3: Poverty and inequality are the causes of human trafficking.

Reality: While poverty and inequality are important factors in making certain populations more vulnerable to being trafficked, they are not the primary cause of trafficking. Trafficking is a criminal industry driven by 1) the ability to make large profits due to high demand, and 2) negligible-to-low risk of prosecution. As long as demand is unchecked and the risks for traffickers are low, trafficking will exist regardless of other contributing factors.

Blaming poverty and inequality alone is not only inaccurate and disheartening, it tends to deflect blame from the key actors that perpetuate trafficking - the traffickers themselves and their customers.

MYTH #4: There's not much I can do about such a huge issue.

Reality: Together - we can make a huge difference! We were founded by regular community members like yourself, as were historic organizations like the Underground Railroad. Organizations like Polaris Project live and breathe based on the contributions and dedication of community members. Making a financial donation, a gift of time, goods, or services, or helping to raise awareness are some of the things collectively that help victims everyday. Please join us and be welcomed into the growing movement to combat slavery today!

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DOMESTIC TRAFFICKING WITHIN THE U.S.

Victims of human trafficking in the United States also include U.S. citizens and residents trafficked within its borders. Much like the majority of other countries affected by human trafficking, the U.S. has a large internal or "domestic" component of human trafficking for the purposes of both sexual and labor exploitation. One of the largest forms of domestic sex trafficking in the U.S. involves traffickers who coerce women and children to enter the commercial sex industry through the use of a variety of recruitment and control mechanisms in strip clubs, street-based prostitution, escort services, and brothels. Domestic sex traffickers, commonly referred to as pimps, particularly target vulnerable youth, such as runaway and homeless youth, and reinforce the reality that the average age of entry into prostitution is 12-13 years old in the U.S. Recent cases have also demonstrated that labor trafficking of U.S. citizens occurs in locations such as restaurants, the agricultural industry, traveling carnivals, peddling/begging rings, and in traveling sales crews.



Sex trafficking victims, on average, are first exploited by their trafficker at the age of 13.

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INTERNATIONAL TRAFFICKING

Human trafficking affects every country around the world, regardless of socio-economic status, history, or political structure. Human traffickers have exploited the many benefits of globalization, creating an international market for the trade of human beings, which has grown into the second largest criminal industry in the world. One of the most common images of human trafficking relates to victims who are trafficked across international borders, often foreign nationals of the countries they are trafficked into. However, significant trafficking also occurs domestically, within a country's own borders, where victims may be residents or citizens. While the factors that lead to an individual's victimization are wide and diverse, an accurate understanding of the scope and prevalence of human trafficking in any country acknowledges victims of all forms of human trafficking - both within and across a country's borders.



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TRANSNATIONAL TRAFFICKING INTO THE U.S.

The United States is known as a destination country for transnational trafficking networks that bring foreign nationals into the U.S. for purposes of both sexual and labor exploitation. Foreign national trafficking victims in the U.S. are primarily from Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Africa. Sex trafficking cases of foreign national women and children brought into the U.S. are known to occur in a wide variety of locations in the commercial sex industry, such as massage parlors, hostess clubs, commercially-fronted brothels, residential brothels, escort services, and strip clubs. Labor trafficking cases of foreign nationals brought into the U.S. occur in domestic work environments in private homes; small independently-owned family businesses such as restaurants or nail salons; peddling and begging rings; and larger-scale labor environments such as agricultural farms or large sweatshop-like factories. These cases involve both documented and undocumented migrant workers, and they can occur in both legitimate and underground industries.



Transnational traffickers exploit the vulnerability and instability inherent in being moved to a foreign country.

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