

Not Alone: Working Together in the Fight Against Human Trafficking

What is recruiting?

Evelyn Chumbow: I just remember one day coming back from school and my uncle and his wife telling me that oh, there's a lady that wants to adopt me and take me to America. So I was excited. I didn't know that I was going to be sold into you know slavery by my own uncle.

My uncle took me to my trafficker's parents house for the mother to examine me. And I specifically remember my trafficker's mother saying to my uncle, "Isn't she a little bit too young for the job?" and I was trying to think like what job are they talking about? I'm going to America!

So my trafficker, she used one passport and brought 12 of us into the United States. I was taking care of two kids, cooking, and cleaning, no school, nothing. I slept on the floor. There were days that I'll go without eating because I didn't know how to cook, I was nine.

So she wanted me to do all this work that I didn't, had no idea. So she'd get like very abusive and I have scars that are still on my body and you know scars all over to just remember those days of you know being trafficked. It was horrible.

A lot of the time, us as victims we don't know that we are victims of human trafficking. Like I just thought that I was going to be adopted by this woman and be like a big sister to her kids. My mother to her was like "This is an opportunity, you to go to America. You're gonna be wealthy, you're gonna go to school, you're gonna be a lawyer, and you can help all of us."

That's always the mindset behind it, that's the vulnerability behind it, and that's the vulnerability for many victims of trafficking from another country. You know they just assume that coming to America you just get better opportunity and that doesn't matter how they come. The vulnerability is different for every survivor but for a child, we don't know much as a child.

So my cousin helped me escape and took me to one of my aunties and my auntie saw me in a very terrible mental state but she didn't do anything about it. She didn't report the situation. She also took advantage of me.

Bullock Texas State History Museum

I stayed with her for four – three years also no school, nothing and so I ran away from my auntie and went to a Catholic church. I met a priest and I told the priest about my story and from there you know law enforcement people that work for a non-profit that you know confirm and say I'm a victim of trafficking.

So my life now, I'm an activist. I do work in a law firm as a project assistant. They let me do what I love which is share my experience and educate the world about the issue.

There were girls that were trafficked from Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria to Kuwait. They saw my number, they called me and they were like I saw your story on BBC is that where I can get help? And I did help them. I connected them with the state department.

You have to speak up for the leaders empowered to know that this is wrong and to help us to get rid of it. Just keep helping people. I want to help people.