

Not Alone: Working Together in the Fight Against Human Trafficking

What is sex trafficking?

Allison Franklin: A series of events, childhood sexual abuse had launched me on a journey of self-destruction. You know I was a victim and a sex slave long before I was ever trafficked.

I can remember distinctly the day that I encountered my trafficker. I had sold drugs. I was in a neighborhood that was highly controlled by gangs in Houston, Texas and certain gang members, they would be ordered to kidnap me, beat me, rape me, force me to prostitute. I was walking on the service road and a person that had kidnapped me before and just done horrible things to me, sure enough he got me.

He started pistol whipping me over the head and then here comes my knight in shining armor. He asked us to separate. He told me that I shouldn't be out there. I was too pretty to be out there. He could protect me if I would just come home with him and so I left. I left immediately. What I didn't know though is that the grooming process had already begun.

During actively being trafficked, it was one of the most horrific experiences. For me, he was the most brutal monster I've ever known. He's beat me beyond recognition not to mention all the the verbal and emotional abuse, right. So just degrading me and just completely stripping me of my agency, controlled every aspect of my life, isolated me from every single person.

When I got out of the life, I can remember sitting at McDonald's for like an hour because I didn't know what I wanted to eat. I hadn't ordered my own food in eight and a half years. And that is exactly what what my life was with him — never knowing when he was gonna abuse me and hanging on every moment for him to be kind. Right, that's trauma bonding. That's Stockholm syndrome.

So I was not rescued, I was not extracted. Instead, I cycled in and out of our prison system. I'm selling drugs for him, I recruited other women and men. All the while, right, which is part of the manipulation and control, insulating himself from any type of criminal justice involvement. So, the other part of that life is being re-victimized by the very institutions that are supposed to help, right, and protect you. So I'm forced into systems that are ill-equipped to deal with my complex needs. I had been sent to domestic violence services because that was the misidentification.

Bullock Texas State History Museum

It wasn't until my ninth felony pending, I took a drug charge for him. I had the ability to get connected to meaningful rehabilitative services and that really is where the process started. But what if I had gotten that on the front end, instead of the back end? You can't arrest people out of this issue to keep them safe.

I don't want someone else to ever have to go through what I went through. The calling in my life is to help those that have been impacted by trafficking. I currently serve as an advocate at national, state, and local levels to fight human trafficking.