

Not Alone: Working Together in the Fight Against Human Trafficking

Why are healthy relationships important?

Sophia Strother: I knew something was wrong, I just didn't know what it was.

Especially sometimes when you're being brought in by a parent, or family, or relatives you don't really know that it's trafficking. My entry into being trafficked was the age of 13 and it was through a parent that utilized me to secure drugs and funds for her.

My mother would have me go and ask for money. Just I need you to get 20 dollars, I need you to tell someone that our lights are being cut off when they weren't. And then it was you know introducing me to young men to gain a relationship with them with her knowing that I would have to have sex or do some type of favor for them in order to get the funds and then she would leave to go get high. I didn't even realize my mom was on drugs.

I was so naïve to her lifestyle and in my mindset I'm doing this because we needed to survive — the lights will be cut off, we need food, my mother's been gone, I have to get things for my siblings. And so I was embarrassed and I didn't want anyone to know the truth, especially about any sex that I had for money.

So, I unfortunately got pregnant by a man that used to sell drugs to my mom at the age of 14. It wasn't of my own accord. I had my son, my first child when I was 15 years old. So, I actually reached out to my grandmother, god rest her soul, and I said, "Nana if you don't get me, I'm going to die here." And on October 21st, 1995, she sent for me to fly with my son to leave.

Literally I was born Sophia Antwonique Strother and my mother renamed me to 'currency' and it just became that that's all I was. I was a transaction and I was sick and tired of being a transaction.

And even after coming out, it's been a journey of like what is my name, who am I? It's not something you just get out from the physical environment, you can be caged in the mental environment of being trafficked for years.

When you come to a point of realizing how valuable you are, you like to show value.

Bullock Texas State History Museum

I'm in a place where I'm working on my third book, learning to exhale and really sharing different ways that allow me to stop to catch my breath about everything that has happened.

So I'm really hoping by being transparent, by being raw, and by being honest that I can really empower others to know that you're worth everything that was taken from you and more.

And so again, I just feel like I'm worth sharing so that others can see that they too have value.