



Human Trafficking Update

January 2019

EDITORIAL

We Can't Afford to Politicize Human Trafficking

As I write, we are in Day 23 of a federal government shutdown, which pivots primarily on whether Congress' budget will include \$5 billion to build a wall between the United States and Mexico. As part of their arguments, supporters of the wall point to the human trafficking crisis, claiming that a physical barrier around our nation will help to reduce human trafficking here at home.

I've been an advocate against human trafficking for about 8 years now. I've read several studies and reviewed hundreds of data points. I've read hundreds of articles, books and personal stories. I've attended conferences, participated in training sessions, and been fortunate enough to interview several leaders in the northern Virginia area.

There are lots of solutions that are being brought forward. Not one of those solutions has ever been to build a wall between the U.S. and Mexico.

That's because human trafficking is just as much a U.S. issue as it is an issue for every other nation. It's home grown. It's local. It's the desire of traffickers to

have a share of the \$15 billion industry that trafficking represents. It's the exploitation of vulnerable people - mostly women and children. It's a complex economy, with multiple buyers and sellers, and an endless supply of victims. It's built on a complex, multifaceted analysis of psychology – who will buy and how you reach them, who can most easily be isolated from the people who love them.

I'm not writing today to advocate for or against a wall. But I am writing to call foul on using the issue of human trafficking as part of that battle. Because to use trafficking as a talking point in this debate, in this way, only serves to confuse people on what human trafficking is, who is affected, and how to break the cycle. It is a step backward, not forward, in the fight against trafficking.

So let's focus on facts. Fortunately for us, last month the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime released its [Global Report for Trafficking in Persons for 2018](#).

Here are a few important data points:

- The number of detected trafficking victims over the last few years is increasing, with dramatic increases in the Americas.
- About 76 percent of victims identified in North America were citizens of the country in which they were victimized. That includes the United States.
- Sex trafficking continues to be the primary form of trafficking in the United States. About 65 percent of victims detected in North America are women. Another 20 percent are girls.
- Information regarding the citizenships of persons convicted of trafficking was not available for the United States. Data from Mexico and Canada indicate that the vast majority of the traffickers are citizens of the country of conviction.
- Victims from Central America and the Caribbean accounted for just 9 percent of the detected trafficking flows in North America in 2016. Cross-border trafficking flows within North America comprise about 8 percent of the total, mainly referring to the flow from Mexico to the United States.

This means that the wall as a solution to human trafficking focuses on just 8 percent of the victims, and completely overlooks the other 92 percent.

So where should we focus? Here are a few ideas that many advocates highlight:

- We arrest the traffickers – not the victims.
- We train professionals in the air, on our trains, on our buses, and in our hotels how to recognize trafficking and what to do when trafficking is suspected.
- We educate our teachers on how to talk to children they feel may be at risk.
- We build confidence in our children, instilling in each and every one of them a fundamental sense of value and self-worth.

- We reduce the number of Johns through rehabilitation, and by driving a baseline of respect for each and every person as a blessed, beloved child of God.
- We practice a philosophy of open hearts and open minds – which is a necessary part of the foundation of healing.

Let me be clear. We must find solutions that stop the human trafficking victimization of everyone. That includes those who are transported across our borders, as well as our citizens and those who are here legally. But solutions don't start by pointing the finger at other nations and saying the problem is their fault. Solutions start by taking a good, long look in the mirror, and recognizing our own accountability.

Human Trafficking Awareness Program

DATE: Saturday, January 19, 2019

TIME: 10 am – 1 pm Eastern

PLACE: George Mason Regional Library, 7001 Little River Turnpike, Conference Room, Annandale, VA 22003.

Attend the NOVA-HTI Justice Summit!

The Northern Virginia Human Trafficking Initiative will hold its Justice Summit April 26-27, 2019 at the Cascades Overlook Event Center in Sterling, VA. The event's theme is "creating and equipping abolitionists to fight human trafficking in Northern Virginia." Registration ranges from \$39-\$59.

Learn more and register:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/nova-hti-justice-summit-tickets-52102046624>

Human Trafficking Update

A regular newsletter created by the

Human Trafficking Task Force of the Annandale United Methodist Church

Submit story ideas to Kristine Grow, Editor, krstngrow@gmail.com

National Human Trafficking Hotline

1-888-3737-888

Have a Special Teen in Your Life?

Encourage them to attend the **Just Ask Youth Cares** conference!

The conference is designed to inform and empower teens from across the DC metro area to take action in the fight against human trafficking. Designed specifically for them, conference tracks will teach them how to protect themselves and their peers from trafficking.

DATE: Saturday, February 2, 2019

TIME: 9:30 AM – 4 PM

PLACE: Hilton Springfield; 6550 Loisdale Road; Springfield, VA 22150

The registration fee is \$16.00 for students and chaperones of groups of at least five students, and \$30.00 for parents and other adults. Fees are non-refundable.

For more information, go to <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/just-ask-youth-cares-conference-on-human-trafficking-for-teens-tickets-53478467536>

Georgia Mobilizes Against Trafficking

The state of Georgia has about 3,600 child victims of human trafficking annually. Sounds like a lot. But how do you put a number like that in context?

This year to bring that data point home, Georgia held a press conference on the crisis on January 2 – kicking off National Human Trafficking Awareness Month. It then mobilized a 72-bus caravan – each bus representing 50 children who have been victimized. The bus caravan resulted in a mile-long billboard against human trafficking.

To learn more and see the video, go to <https://stoptraffick.com/>

