

SLAVERY NO MORE 2012 GLOBAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING CONFERENCE

August 10-11 ~ LOS ANGELES, CA

Prevention and America's At-Risk Youth

Jocelyn White: We are going to transition now to talk about prevention. I'm going to welcome back Sandy Morgan from Vanguard University. We just love her. We're a huge fan of her, because she has experience both domestically and internationally. Shortly after her, she's going to be joined by a dear friend of ours and a partner with Slavery No More, April Steele from ChildShare, who is going to talk about our foster care system and how we can expand our eyes in understanding what prevention truly looks like. Will you please give a warm welcome to Sandy Morgan.

Sandy Morgan: I have 15 minutes to tell you about prevention in the area, particularly focused on children here in America. I brought with me as kind of a launching point a presentation I recently did with our Juvenile Justice Commissioners in Orange County. I am not a legal professional. I do this, because I think that we sometimes underestimate what a voice we have. Our Commissioners want to hear from the community, so I took my little tiny bit of expertise, put it into a PowerPoint, and presented. This actually reported on our Justice Summit that we held last October with 40 professionals from juvenile justice organizations from the Beach Cities to Las Vegas.

We identified seven gaps in helping prevent and doing intervention, and one of the things at the top is a secure, safe house. Of course, we've all talked about that a lot. We've talked about funding but number three community engagement. That is something that every single person can do something about. We want to focus on that. The rest of these if you want more information, I'm happy to share that with you.

The *Trafficking Victim's Protection Act in Minors* we've talked about this morning. Just remember that when we're talking about kids, we don't have to prove force, fraud, or coercion. They're under 18. When we're looking at prevention strategies, I also want us to think about prevention and justice in different terms. When we say justice, many people immediately jump to put the bad guys in prison for life. That's not the kind of justice that is going to do prevention. The justice that I'm talking about, remember the push and pull presentation this morning? I'm talking about the kind of justice that would ensure that every child gets to start at the starting line that I started at. If they're parents are in jail, or they are in a foster care situation where they've had 15 placements in three months, how are we going to ensure justice. That it's fair, that they get to start at the same place as your daughter.

Teaching kids is part of that but also changing the mindset in our juvenile justice system is also part of that. Juvenile justice and criminal justice systems are not the same. How many of you knew that? Criminal justice is all about punishment. Juvenile justice our first priority is rehabilitation, so our focus in juvenile justice with our commissioners is to look at who this commercially exploited child victim actually is and change our paradigm, so we don't see these kids as throwaways or bad kids that need to be locked up but as victims who need

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help. We redefined their experience by how we label this. One of the things that's the most important when it comes to training first responder law enforcement is that they begin to see that this child is not a perpetrator but a victim. This is important. That means that we have to convince them that this is part of a bigger picture.

This is from a nursing training that I do, and it's been developed under a federal grant. It is a continuum that shows the experience of the majority of our kids that end up in this particular situation. What I want you to look at is how difficult it is to work with them. We've heard from some practitioners, because they mix up love and sex because of the abuse they may have experienced and probably did. But at some point, we move across the line of just sexual abuse and into commercial sexual exploitation. When we look at that term commercial sexual exploitation, we need to remember it means somebody is selling them for a commercial purpose. It's about big business.

As a pediatric nurse, one of the things that I try to explain to policemen when I do training and to other professionals is that these kids are not finished developing. I love it that we can take pictures with MRI machinery of kid's brains. This is a picture of a brain that is fully developed. This particular part here, the prefrontal lobe is where your executive decision making is housed. This green part, the limbic, that's more your emotional stuff. The prefrontal lobe is the last part to completely mature. For a girl, that's usually between 18 and 21. When she's being offered Gucci bags and iPods and shopping sprees, and she gets to leave a really awful situation at home, she is making her decision right here in this limbic place not with executive decision making where she can look ahead to the consequences.

For a boy, the literature, and I'm sorry guys, but the literature shows that between 24 and 26 is the age before your brain is done. That kind of explains why car insurance companies won't rent you a car unless you're over 25, because we wouldn't give a big, expensive piece of machinery to someone who can't make good decisions. This is just a piece of prevention is for us to be able to understand how these kids think and understand how they process and judge and the whole issues with emotional balance.

I don't want to go into all of this right now, but I want you to understand who this victim is whether girl or boy. The literature, and Debra Boyer did a study in Seattle on kids who have been picked up for juvenile prostitution. 14% were boys. How many of us are looking for the boys that are being commercially sexually exploited? My very first victim was a boy 14 years old. His own mother and stepfather were selling him for drug money. Gangs are using little boys to make money, and many gangs have initiation rites where a 14 year old who wants to be in the gang, because he needs the protection has to go out, dress in drag, and turn a trick. What are we doing about that?

We need to understand how they think and why they are so vulnerable. There's a lot more literature out there than (Al kym 00:10:01). The whole idea, if you've raised a teenager, you've heard them say no one understands me. Nothing bad is going to happen to me. Everybody else is doing it, and I'm okay. Right? You've all heard that. The impact we've

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heard quite a bit today about the impact of trauma, and yesterday when Harmony closed with the story of induced helplessness. If you missed that make sure you talk to her, go to her website, go to one of her trainings. It's so important for us to understand what happens when kids go through chronic trauma.

Chronic trauma can be something that is happening in the home. They don't have any ability to overcome it. I had a little girl in Santa Ana say that she wasn't even upset about the fact that she was being sold on the streets. She was 14. Because she said, "*You know what? It's been happening since I was a little kid. At least now I'm getting new shoes out of it.*" That's a chronic helplessness.

Amelia Frank Meyer spoke at our Vanguard Global Center for Women and Justice Conference last year and really impacted me. I need to read this quote, because it's so powerful. "*We're undergoing a fundamental shift in child welfare in our country which is moving away from the old way of diagnosing, medicating, and blaming victims to creating safe and permanent spaces for children who are victims of trauma to heal and work through their grief, loss, and trauma.*" We're not going to blame the victims. We're actually going to try and help them recover what they've lost. I went to a funeral recently with two friends. One of them had just lost her father, and we celebrated a man who took her to the beach and to the mountains and taught her to ride her bike. But my other friend next to me was crying. I'm like, "*Did you meet Cliff?*" "*No.*" "*Why are you crying?*" "*I never had a dad like that. I went to school in the same dress for three weeks before anybody noticed. I didn't have that.*" And she was crying, grieving for the lost childhood she had. We have to recognize those kids.

I was so pleased. I expected Harmony to talk about Maslow's hierarchy yesterday, and my challenge to us as we develop prevention strategies is not to let the pimps and the author of this particular article is R.J. Martin. When I showed this and mentioned this guy's name to the Juvenile Justice Commissioners, one of the commissioners raised his hand, and he said, "*Is that like a parody? Is it a joke?*" "*No. I am deadly serious.*"

If we're going to be effective in prevention, we need to be just as smart as the pimps. We need to offer before they're victims to meet their physiological needs, their safety needs, their belongingness and love needs. That's where prevention strategies will be the strongest. My background is healthcare. I'm a Registered Nurse. I want to see commercial sexual exploitation of children and all human trafficking framed as a public health issue, so we begin to look at prevention strategies first. The old proverb that "*an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,*" is very, very true. It will be much cheaper to rescue a child before they become a victim. This is super, super important.

There are some wonderful resources for you. I want to give you a couple of things to look at. The national plan, if you don't know how to start to do prevention for sexual exploitation of children, the national plan to prevent the sexual exploitation of children developed by the National Coalition to Prevent Child Exploitation. It's available online. You can download that. You can go to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and download

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resources to do internet safety. The wonderful thing is when you start teaching kids about internet safety in the schools, all the adults around them learn what they're supposed to be doing to protect their kids. Protection is really important in prevention.

I discovered in the healthcare workshop that I was part of that many of you do not know that there are resources available too that are very attractive, already printed, and guess what? You paid for them with your tax dollars. These are available at the HHS website which is www.rescueandrestore.org. They are available in different languages, postcards, posters, all kinds of resources. PowerPoint's that you can download to use for teaching in your own community. If you need resources, please come and see us at our table back there. Pick up a save the date card. Our next conference is Cyber Exploitation, and of course, because it's me, the first word prevention, protection, demand reduction. Ernie Allen, Lisa Thompson are some of the speakers that will be there. Thank you.

Jocelyn White: Thank you so much Sandy. I appreciate you being a part of this conference. I've certainly learned a lot from you. I'm going to go ahead and welcome our next guest. I know I said a little bit about her a little bit ago, but she's from ChildShare one of the organizations that Slavery No More is very fond of. She's going to talk about a piece that we mentioned a little bit yesterday and that was our foster care system. This is a very important subject, and I don't want to eat her time. I'm going to go ahead and introduce April Steele from ChildShare.

April Steele: Thank you for having me today. Let me give you just a little bit of my background. I am an attorney by training and worked in the foster care system as an advocate for children, also as a juvenile defense attorney and juvenile prosecutor. I kind of have worked all over the board. When we talk about risk for youth, at risk youth. I think those are two different things at times and then children in the foster care system.

By show of hands, how many educators do I have in the room? And how many social workers do I have in the room. Let me talk to you about some of the 450,000 that we have in the foster care system in the United States. We're going to break that down a little bit. By numbers 450,000 in the country. About 50,000 in southern California. Those children range all over the place. This is what we know. Of human trafficking victims in the United States, and I know you've been educated to know yes they're in the United States as well. About 50% of those are minors. Of that 50%, 70% of them are in the foster care system.

Why does that happen? You see what happens is a child is removed from a home by somebody that we call social services and in that system we say we're taking them from their biological families, because they've been abused, neglected, and that's all kinds of abuse, psychological, physical, sexual, neglect. They come in the system, and we have this idea that we can do better. We want to protect them, and it starts with a good mindset. It is a good thing to protect children. We bring them into a system that is really ill equipped for the amount of children we have.

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Then we've got all these children, and they're sitting here and what do we do? We start parsing them out by zip code or by alpha order or however each county wants to set them up to a caseload of a social worker. That social worker's really responsible for managing this child's life and finding them a place to go. The challenge is we don't have enough places for them to go, so many of these children, especially the older ones, end up in what we call group homes. Back in the day they may have been called orphanages. Today we call the group homes. They may be a traditional sort of a group home that you would think of that's maybe run by social workers and an administrative team and looks like a dormitory, or they may be actually a physical home. That physical home may be very large with a parent figure in that home, and they may take in up to ten children.

This is where I want you guys to pay attention, especially if you're educators and social workers. This is where we start to see the system really break down. You can start to look for some of the warnings signs for children, especially the older children in a trafficking component. What we see is some people become foster parents or licensed care givers for sinister reasons. Because the social service system is so overwhelmed, it's very difficult for people to have good eyes and good ears into those homes. What happens is you get ten girls living in a home, a parent figure, and maybe social services comes around every 30 days if you're lucky. Maybe 60 or 90 in actuality. These children, especially the older ones, have already had parental rights taken away. They're really is no one in their life looking out for them. That makes them especially vulnerable.

If you start seeing things like, and you been told about these things, the fancy handbags, a lot of spare money, or all of a sudden they've got nice clothes. These are things to start looking at and start asking questions about, because if you are in the foster care system you don't have access to those kinds of things. That's a red flag for you as you're just in your everyday life those are things to look out for. What happens is these kids get brought in, and they become enticed. They are offered ways to work their way out of the system. That becomes prostitution and sexual exploitation and many other things.

When you lose the eyes and ears of the community around a child, we make them especially vulnerable. It is difficult to imagine that in our neighborhood, the neighborhood here or the neighborhood of Pasadena or the neighborhood of Westwood, it's difficult to imagine these things are happening your neighborhood. I'm here to tell you they are, and it is a huge problem. My gut instinct is that it's even a bigger problem when we even know, because it is so silent and so sinister and so mismanaged.

What we can do to begin to recognize those things and what is happen in the world of prevention and what we can still do. The way to fundamentally change the prospects for a child that's in the foster care system is to put them in a safe and loving family. You see the social service system is never going to raise children, because systems don't raise children. People raise children. If we really want children to be raised up and be safe and be comfortable with themselves and have a hope and a future, they need to have a family. They need to have someone who knows their name. They need to have somebody who knows

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their circumstances, and they need that loving parent that's going to come around and help guard them from the many pitfalls that are out there for them and that are enticing to them.

We work in the community to find those families. There's a huge lack of parents who will bring in children into their home that are not their biological children. We desperately need them in our community and in our country even more so for the older children. It's difficult to ask someone to bring in somebody that they don't know that's maybe 15 or 16 years old. Yet if we want to stop these cycles, that's what we've got to have. It is happening. That's the preventative part of this. There are families that are stepping forward. There is change that's happening in this community. It's very slow, but it is taking place.

What is being prevented right now is also the need to continue to prevent. Every year about 20,000 children exit the foster care system never having found anyone permanent to call their own. All of those children exit at extreme risk. Within two years, 70% of the girls will be pregnant. 30% of them will be homeless. 70% of the people that are sitting in our jails have spent some time in foster care. Part of that is because we're just victimizing over and over and over and over again. We're setting these children up for colossal failures.

For the girls, especially, I think we don't give them very much opportunity. If you're going to pay the bills, and you have not made it through school, and you've been living in a group home where no one's really equipped you for a hope and a future. You don't have a whole lot of other options other than to look to something like prostitution. I had a client that came through the system, and like so many girls, she came into the system when she was a little bit older. She was 12 years old, and because there was not a home waiting for her, she went into a group home. She moved around from home to home to home as is very typical.

She did that for about six years. She bounced around. The whole time that she was in that she was in and out of prostitution. One of the things that the state that I was working in required was that the attorney's actually go visit the children in the homes that they were in, so I would do that. If I saw those red flags, those things going on, I would make the call. We'd try to move her. That was disruption after disruption. When she was 18 years old she left the system, and she did the one thing that she knew how to do. She found her way to a pimp, and she paid the bills by having herself trafficked throughout the Metroplex area.

When she was killed two years ago, I called the medical examiner, and I said, "*I don't think this was an accident. I don't think that this was a suicide. I think that we have a trafficked victim.*" And he said to me, "*April she was a foster kid. Who cares?*" I know that sounds harsh, and it is. The reality is that is the situation that we've put these kids in. That is the situation that we have destined for them as a society. He was right. Who cares? Why spend the money on the autopsy? Why take the time to look into that, because who cares? There wasn't anybody. That was the statement that we gave her over and over as a society.

The preventative part of this is for us to kind of reach into our gut and say okay not convenient to open my home, but if we are truly going to be part of a solution, it's something

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we need to consider. It's something that we need to at least spend some time saying could I make a difference in that life of a child?

You see the statistics fundamentally change for a girl. If a girl comes into your home even at the age of 12 or 14 and is sexually active whether by choice or by force, and you say maybe there's a different way to live life. Maybe there's a different way to value your body. 75% of those girls will change that behavior and stop. Just with the investment of one adult figure that's positive in their life. We really have the opportunity to make great changes, great strides right in our community, in this very issue by looking and seeking and finding ways to move these children out of these group situations, to reduce their vulnerability, to reduce the pressures on them, and to give them a hope and a future that allows them to be restored to wholeness. Thank you.

A large graphic of the word "NO" in a red, double-lined outline font. The letters are tall and thin, with a slight shadow effect.A large graphic of the word "MORE" in a grey, blocky, sans-serif font. The letters are thick and solid.