



## Advocating in Washington D.C. for Trafficked Children

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*“There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children.” ~Nelson Mandela*

As with writing academic papers and designing research studies, clarity of intention and purpose is essential when meeting with legislators about proposed amendments to existing law or gaining their support of important initiatives. Recently I had the opportunity to visit Washington DC with Trafficking in America Task Force, a non-profit with the mission of raising awareness about the domestic sex trafficking of boys, as well as providing resources to support education and healing of impacted males. The complexity of child sex trafficking has been largely hidden due the depravity of this crime against humanity and the multiple parties that profit substantially from the selling of children’s bodies. It is a multilevel

criminal industry with buyers from every walk of life that holds their victims silent and invisible. An important piece of legislation that is currently being reviewed by Congress is Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act (CDA) of 1996 which has to this day provided immunity to businesses such as Craigslist, Facebook and the notorious Backpage for allowing third-parties to sell children for sex on their platforms. The CDA was initially set up to protect children from pornography on the internet, but has since become a safe haven for traffickers. It’s hard to stomach how the interests of business are valued more than the holistic well-being of our children. One of the meetings we attended on this topic was with Senator Walden, along with representatives from Shared Hope, Rotary International, and Courtney’s House. From multiple meetings

with legislators, we, along with many partner organizations, were seeking to have specific language included in Section 230 that protects children from the dangers of trafficking. This isn't the same circumstance as AT&T or Verizon not being responsible for the conversations that take place over their phone lines. There were also coalition building activities that explored further development of training programs and resources for high-risk children. Ultimately all children, regardless of geographic location or socioeconomic status are high-risk for trafficking in today's complex, high-tech world.

Many discussions supported the ongoing need for skillful healing modalities for survivors. Trafficking in America Task Force is particularly advocating for long-term, culturally sensitive trainings. We are in early stages of creating a curriculum based on these guidelines specifically for trafficked boys. Additionally, this summer I'll be leading three trainings in a therapeutic meditation protocol called iRest for sex trafficking survivors in India and Nepal for partner NGOs: Kolkata Sanved (India) and Shakti Samuha (Nepal). Informed by my studies at Pacifica's CLE specialization and my extensive background in holistic practices, including meditation and therapeutic yoga, my graduate work and research is largely focused on looking beyond the symptomatology of trafficking to root causes while working with organizations, notably in Nepal, and bringing lessons learned back to domestic efforts. The contributing factors of sustainability, including sanitation, medical care, education, employment, water and food security need to be addressed by a long-view approach. The often short-term individualistic paradigm of the West curbs success. I believe with multidisciplinary and multinational partnership, we can be

successful in our efforts. Without such, environments from which trafficking arise will continue to maintain the status quo of inequity and grave abuse of children.

To learn more, please contact [samantha.kinkaid@gmail.com](mailto:samantha.kinkaid@gmail.com) Also visit [www.traffickinginamericataskforce.org](http://www.traffickinginamericataskforce.org)

## References

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