

The STOPLight

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In 2002 our organization changed its name to Adults Saving Kids. Prior to that we were called A-STOP (Alliance for Speaking Truths On Prostitution), STOP (Speaking Truths On Prostitution), or Grassroots Ministry Alliance.

Adults Saving Kids

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The mission of Adults Saving Kids is to prevent commercial sexual exploitation, bringing honor and accountability to all relationships.

HOW S.T.O.P. came to be

I never wanted to get involved with prostitution. In fact, I tried to stay away from that whole arena. I didn't want to know any prostitutes or be affected by what was happening out there.

Regardless, prostitution grabbed me and shook me hard, like King Kong playing catch with me on top of the Empire State Building. I found that I was utterly helpless in the face of the devastating hold prostitution had on a family member. I discovered how feeble the system is in doing anything about people caught in the grip of prostitution. *I discovered how lonely it is to even try.*

The devastation of people's lives and the pain experienced by participants and family shocked me. I couldn't believe that all this could be happening right here in my own society.

And yet, after searching around and turning over many rocks, I found there really are people — important people — doing something about prostitution, and that gave my family and me a spark of hope.

Hurt and horror did not create S.T.O.P. Those things have always been there.

S.T.O.P. grew from three separate roots.

First are a number of people who have either experienced the monstrous effects of prostitution or who have listened and decided to fight its oppression. There are people who understand that the cost of prostitution in youths' lives is far too high and believe that significant steps must be taken. It is time to claim these people's commitment and energies so we can grow in numbers

and impact.

The second root producing S.T.O.P. is the significant efforts being made in a number of cities to counteract prostitution. In the Twin Cities there are the efforts, for example, of Lutheran Social Services of St. Paul on the streets, Family & Children's Services' Pride program, Project Offstreets, and WHISPER. Being a community-based volunteer group, S.T.O.P. can work in tandem with such organizations to learn from, solidify, enhance and multiply their efforts.

Thirdly, S.T.O.P. has come into being because of growing public concern for sexual assault, domestic violence and child sexual abuse. All these formerly grassroots movements have come to some degree of sophistication. Hot-lines, crisis centers, shelters, interviews, treatment procedures, legal adjustments, special training, etc., though often insufficient, have all become a part of the scene. They have opened dialogue about hidden areas of people's lives which previously seemed impossible to confront.

Once the conspiracy of silence is broken, truth opens the possibility for dealing with what is there, even in the forbidden realm of prostitution.

We live in an inquisitive society. Even truths about prostitution cannot be hidden forever. The myth that has portrayed prostitution as an *acceptable career* and an *adult choice* has started to crumble, and we're beginning to get the real picture.

We have seen sexual abuse for what it is and what it does. We have seen how many people running from sexual abuse inadvertently end up in the arms of the sex industry. We can see how vulnerable runaway and throwaway children are when they get out on the street, and the lack of provision for these children. We can see how clever and destructive are those who have decided to profit from the misfortune of others. We can see how entangled a person becomes who is caught in this web of so-called love: abuse, violence and drugs.

Despite all this knowledge, we as a society and as individuals really haven't mustered up the courage to do anything about it.

Throughout this country people in prostitution are viewed as bad or different. *This gives us license to keep our distance and this attitude leaves the victims no space for recovery.* Professionals such as doctors, judges, police and pastors, if they say anything, often ask prostitutes "Why don't you just get out of it?"

Blaming prostitutes and expecting them to see alternatives and feel powerful enough to pursue them is unrealistic. Such attitudes further entrap these victims.

One of the goals of S.T.O.P. is to dispel myths and end misconceptions about prostitution; misconceptions which prolong the conspiracy of silence and condemnation, which, in turn, close off healthy options.

The primary goal of S.T.O.P. is to end the cycle of abuse inherent in prostitution.

Various surveys of people in prostitution show that well over half were sexually abused before entering prostitution. Once involved, the abuse worsens and the damage goes deeper. The whole scene of pimps, johns, prostitutes and children of prostitutes is filled with abuse.

The *abused* becomes the *abuser* and perpetuates the cycle. Untreated child prostitutes go on to be untreated adult prostitutes.

This cycle must be interrupted. The *abusers* must find healing and recovery or the travesty continue. Johns (customers) and pimps must face significantly severe consequences of the devastation they perpetuate. They must be worked with to help them change their mindset and pursue a lifestyle which does not destroy others or foster new problems—for themselves *and* their families.

It must be emphasized that S.T.O.P. is *not* a hate movement. S.T.O.P. seeks to create a place where people can consider how former abuse may have affected them and to make them aware of what they can do about it.

Firmness and decisive action to accomplish these goals can be exercised in a spirit of caring. Laws need to be changed. Blind spots need to be confronted.

For all this to happen there must be a growing conversation about these issues created at all levels of our society. Starting in Minnesota and connecting with other parts of the country through a newsletter, educational efforts and a resource center, S.T.O.P. will be instrumental in generating this discussion.

As S.T.O.P. grows and gains the volunteers and support it needs, it will achieve an ever greater capacity to raise and address these questions and provide resources, references and support for those concerned with coming to terms with the truths about prostitution. •

by Al Erickson

Al is a former missionary in Papua New Guinea, North Dakota seminary principal and pastor in Los Angeles. He is now an inner city neighborhood volunteer and spawner of cross-cultural ministries. Al and his wife of 31 years, Ina, (a registered nurse) have 5 children.

Lutheran Brotherhood has generously provided the seed money to assist S.T.O.P. in the production of this newsletter.

Book Review

Identifying and Combating Juvenile Prostitution: A Manual for Action by Marcia I. Cohen. A joint publication of the National Association of Counties and the University of Oklahoma National Resource Center for Youth Services, 1987, large format paperback

Identifying and Combating Juvenile Prostitution: A Manual for Action is an illustrated workbook to help social service, community and law enforcement agencies to cooperatively plan and develop solutions to the problems of juvenile prostitution. The five chapters include descriptions of victims of prostitution, how to define the problem in your community and assess the need for action. Models of effective intervention programs are shown and details on how they were successfully implemented are included. The two appendices contain references, a bibliography, and an extensive nationwide resource directory of organizations dealing with exploited youth.

The format is highly readable and has large-size quotes throughout. My first skim through the book picked out just the quotes, starting with “*The juvenile prostitute is not seen by society as a worthy victim, while the sexually abused child is. We must realize that they are one and the same.*” Another among them is “*Public servants often refuse to look at the issue of prostitution especially in communities with strong moral standards where they won’t admit that this goes on.*” These and many other quotes provide a stark glimpse at how far-reaching the problem of juvenile prostitution is.

I feel this manual is absolutely essential reading for anyone involved in state, county and city social service agencies, law enforcement bodies, the juvenile justice system and all agencies providing counseling to families and children in the area of prostitution and sexual exploitation.

Identifying and Combating Juvenile Prostitution: A Manual For Action is available from:

National Resource Center for Youth Services
The University of Oklahoma
Botkin Bldg., Third Floor
131 North Greenwood Ave.
Tulsa, OK 74120
Phone: (918) 581-2986
The cost is \$15.00 plus \$2.50 postage and handling.
Make check payable to University of Oklahoma.

Survivors’ stories dispel myths surrounding prostitution

“When I was thirteen, my father started pimping me to his friends down at the bar.”

“I was so naive about adult relations that I literally did not know what the men wanted.”

“I was sold to a pimp when I was thirteen years old.”

“I was so young, and this man was hurting me. I was laying there crying and whimpering and he did not care.”

These are the voices of survivors of prostitution. When we begin to listen we begin to understand. We start to see, as they see, the connections which bind up prostitution, child abuse, and rape under the name of violence, and we come to an understanding that these forms of violence are parameters of a world in which men’s desires become women’s reality. These women are talking and they need to be heard.

Two such survivors are Evelina Giobbe and Carolyn Brown.

Brown appeared in the award-winning documentary “We’re Here Now,” and has spoken on television and given talks on the topic of prostitution.

Giobbe, who is currently a faculty member at the University of Minnesota in the Women's Studies Department, is founder of WHISPER, a national support network for survivors of prostitution.

The main focus of WHISPER, besides outreach and advocacy, is education. Giobbe believes that it is important to dispel some of the myths surrounding prostitution.

"This is not something you choose to do; it is something that is done to you. The average age of entrance into prostitution is fourteen and the majority of these girls are women of color with no job skills and a history of childhood abuse, rape and battery."

Besides racism, classism, and sexism, Giobbe cites a lack of educational opportunities for women as a problem. "It's not a woman's choice to work the streets if she is given other choices."

Carolyn Brown adds that "for every girl out on the corner, there are three men behind her with a boot in her ass; the man who taught her she was nothing but a sexual object, her pimp who beats on her and the drug dealer who keeps her in debt."

Giobbe believes that the function of prostitution is to allow unlimited access to women and children for sexual use by men. "This is not merely economic exchange. This is an ongoing sexual assault on a daily basis."

Both women feel that the church has an important role to play if anything is to be done about prostitution, and yet often, according to Brown, the church does not want to hear about uncomfortable issues like prostitution or abuse. "I grew up in a Lutheran church, was confirmed, taught Sunday School and sang in the choir.

Then when I began having hurt and pain they didn't want to see me."

Brown, who was sexually assaulted by both her dentist and a school counselor, says that her church did not know how to deal with and simply turned its back on her.

"I found American Indian religion where I got a great deal of acceptance and, more importantly, respect from the men."

In spite of this, she believes that the church can lead on this issue.

Giobbe feels that the church should be involved in this issue for the simple fact that "if the church doesn't start to be the one to say that a woman has value as an eternal being, and that women and children have souls and are not simply disposable objects to be bought and sold, then no one will. The church is called to heal."

Giobbe sees part of the reluctance of people to reach out to victims of prostitution as one of attitude. "Having the right pastoral approach is important."

Brown states that it is important to look at people and their problems as a process. "These people didn't just appear out of the ground. Someone taught them this. If people are told all their lives that they are nothing, they are not going to create anything wonderful to help the world. Nobody told Jesus Christ he was a nothing or a nobody. They tell me kings came to see him when he was

a child. He didn't just appear one day and start his ministry. It was a process. Charles Manson didn't just appear. He was born to a prostitute and raised on the streets. He hardly knew his mother. He's the end product of a process of throw-away children."

One person who is reaching out is Lutheran pastor Al Erickson who has started a ministry called Grassroots. Grassroots seeks to re-root churches in the community by working with and training people to help themselves and to become leaders in their own neighborhoods.

Part of the problem, according to Erickson, is that too often churches are not part of the community. "Trying to lob help over the wall doesn't work. We have to dialogue with wounded people. We have to be good listeners and not do things for people but empower them to take control of their lives."

Brown encourages Christians to reach out to those who are not like them.

"A lot of Christians just want to be with their own kind. These are not separate people. These are not people with green skin, tails and horns. These are loving, caring human beings with families, feelings and with pain. And more sinned against than sinning."

by Mikkel Beckmen

Originally published in The Concord, a publication of Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary, November 8, 1989. Reprinted with the author's permission.

'Your sister is a prostitute'

When I heard those words...

Immediate, silent, anguished cry of denial.

A rush of questions: Who said? Since when? Where is she? Who is forcing her? Is she ok?

On the outside everything continues unchanged. But inside—hurt. For her. For me. For our parents.

Inner searching, weeping, asking. How could something this earthshaking, this gut-wrenching, this heart-breaking happen and I not know? Were there signals I couldn't see? Were there pleas for help I didn't hear? What could I, should I have done to prevent it? Is it all my fault? Why couldn't I protect her from this ugliness?

Deep sighs and silent prayers.

An urgent, compelling need to learn more about prostitution. I'm so naive, so far removed from life on the street.

I made one phone call. (In my case it was a crisis intervention hotline. In many areas there is a United Way "first call for help" type of phone number or some other center for referral. If you don't know what it is in your town, call the public library's reference desk to find out.)

The support group I was referred to was made up of friends and family members of prostitutes.

Most were parents; some with children still missing or still on the streets. Some whose daughters were getting out of prostitution. Others whose loved ones were ‘survivors’ leading healthy, productive lives.

Questions tumbled out amid tears. How can I help her? What should I do if I meet her on the street or if she calls? I don’t want to put her in danger or push her away. I want her to know I love her.

What a release! What a lightening of the load! What a relief to talk freely, openly, about such a painful, misunderstood subject. The warmth, the empathy, the caring and sharing among group members helped take away the feelings of helplessness and isolation; tempered the despair with hope; gave me permission to grieve, to be angry, to acknowledge my ambivalence. I also learned more about prostitution than I ever would have chosen to know.

I want you to know that help is out there for you. You are not alone in wanting and needing and deserving help. Keep looking until you find it. If you run into an obstacle one place, try again from another angle. Persist. *Insist*. Your sanity, and possibly the life of a loved one caught in the abusive cycle of prostitution, may depend on it.

by JM, Minneapolis, Minnesota

The Love Factor

by Al Palmquist, Thomas Nelson, Inc. publishers, 1982 ISBN 0-8407-5798-0 paperback

reviewed by Dave Lemen

The Love Factor is a riveting story of a young girl caught in prostitution and her long road to recovery through faith in Jesus Christ and with the assistance of people who cared about her, such as Al Palmquist, a Minneapolis police officer. The story is fictional in the sense that it is based on actual circumstances in the lives of four different girls.

From the first paragraph, Palmquist captivates the reader with his innocent, uninitiated perspective as he describes meeting Kimberly for the first time. He gives the reader a glimpse of the home life that influenced her to run away, then describes the tactics used by her first pimp to psychologically enslave her.

The reader’s spirit soars when Kim is brought to the warm Christian love of a safe house, then plummets when she is abducted by another pimp and subjected to prostitution once again. Seven years pass with no word from her. During this time Palmquist sets up his ministry, Midwest Challenge, a group of Christian halfway houses for street kids. Then, on a tip from another prostitute, he travels to New York City in search of Kimberly.

The book concludes with sound advice to both parents and teens to help them avoid a similar tragedy in their lives and families. It is an excellent book for parents to give to their teenagers, because it spells out the dangers of running away from home, and shows how much of a difference they can make in the lives of an at-risk peer simply by caring.

Your insight requested

One of our goals is to let people know what is now being done in the battle to stop prostitution. If you work with people involved in any aspect of this cycle of abuse, we need your insight.

Tell us what your program is all about; who you serve and how. Tell us what kind of information or training you may be lacking in your efforts to cope with the issue. Are you trying to influence legislation? How and at what level? Do you work in law enforcement? How do you deal with offenders —pimps and johns as well as prostitutes? The questions seem endless.

We feel that much is currently being done to combat prostitution but not enough people are aware of it. Please let us know by writing to the address below or by calling Al Erickson at (612) 871-2298. We appreciate your help.

About The STOP Light

Purpose

The STOP Light is an educational tool that illuminates the realities of prostitution and provides resources, support, and hope to people of all cultures; and openings for action to families, survivors, people on prostitution, people vulnerable to recruitment, communities affected by prostitution, and the organizations in a position to work with these groups.

Submissions

We reserve the right to select, reject, and edit any material we receive. Submissions must include your name and address; anonymity will be honored when requested. Previously published material will be considered if source name and address is supplied and/or written permission to reprint accompanies the material. Articles published are not necessarily the opinion of the Adults Saving Kids Board of Directors or *The STOP Light* editorial committee. Any references to specific treatments, programs, or organizations do not constitute endorsement.

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