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POLICY_&_ADVOCACY_IN_ACTION
EPISODE 31-_LETS_TALK_HUMAN_TRAFFICKING
JANUARY 17, 2020

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Donna CART Captioner: Captioner is standing by.
>> Hello and welcome to Policy and Advocacy in action. A channel

of NRCDV radio. My name is Miriam Durani and today I will be speaking to Mia Hasek [phonetic] Hasick the Human Trafficking Program director from the program Tapestri in Georgia. We will be talking about all things human trafficking during, of course, January, human trafficking awareness month.

Thank you, Mia, for joining me today. Let's get right to the questions. So, Mia, can you tell us a little bit about yourself, your role at Tapestri and how Tapestri works with survivors of human trafficking?

>> Sure. And thank you so much for having me on this show. So, I am the anti-human trafficking program director here at Tapestri. I initially started in 2008 as a caseworker. I work directly with victims of human trafficking at that time. And then later on, I did training. And now I am in charge of more administrative side, supervision of other case managers as well as a training component.

But just a little bit about Tapestri. We are a non-profit social service agency and we work with survivors of human trafficking, domestic violence and -- excuse me -- and domestic violence within the refugee and immigrant community. We initially started as a coalition of different resettlement organizations back in 1996 to directly respond to the needs of domestic violence survivors specifically coming from refugee and immigrant communities. Fast forward to 1998, we adopted the name Tapestri. And then in 2002, we were officially a stand alone 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

So as you can probably gather, we initially started as a domestic violence program, but we quickly learned that there was another aspect to the story that we were hearing. When the federal definition of human trafficking came out in 2000, we realized that some of the individuals we were serving through our domestic violence program were also victims of human trafficking. So officially in 2004, we started our anti-human trafficking program through which we provide training to law enforcement, social service providers, students, faith-based communities, anybody and everybody that's interested in learning how to identify potential trafficking cases as well as we started providing comprehensive case management to foreign national survivors of human trafficking.

>> Wow, thank you so much, Mia, for all the work that you do and all that Tapestri does. So can you talk to me about what human trafficking actually is and how prevalent is this?

>> Sure. Since we work with foreign nationals, we utilize the federal definition of human trafficking which is using force, fraud or coercion to recruit, harbor, transport, obtain or employ a person for labor or services involuntary servitude (indiscernible) bondage or slavery. And sex trafficking is a commercial sex act induced by force, fraud or coercion in which the act involves a minor. And so essentially, if you have a minor under the age of 18 that is engaging in any type of commercial sex act where something of value is exchanged for that act, that individual is automatically deemed or seen as a victim of human trafficking or more so specifically sex trafficking. Whereas when you look at labor trafficking, regardless of the age, you have to show that there has been force, fraud or coercion being used to induce somebody to perform

some type of service or labor. So that can be any type of industry, that can be a one-time service or that can be a labor that, you know, spans over many years.

Your second question being how prevalent is it? There is a lot of data floating around about the number of trafficking cases out there, but it is actually quite hard to estimate the real number. The numbers we go by are the numbers that are given to us by the United States government. And that puts on estimate of approximately 600 to 800,000 people each year within the United States that are engaged in some type of human trafficking labor or induced into labor or sex trafficking. Whereas when we look at individuals coming from outside of the country into the United States for the purpose of, you know, labor trafficking or sex trafficking, we're talking about anywhere between 14 and a half thousand to 17 and a half thousand individuals.

>> That is a lot of individuals. I can't even imagine who is not being counted. That is absolutely wild. You know, I know from your explanation of how human trafficking is defined, that can get a little complicated. Are there any myths that you hear of or that are common about human trafficking that you think is important to dispel?

>> Absolutely. There are many myths out there about human trafficking. And some of them are a result of the media. Not so much the media -- but I would say maybe even some of the movies that have been little more dramatic in a sense, if you will. Of course, some of the movies do, in fact, depict some of the trafficking situations. But there are, you know, situations where you might not see any force being, you know, used in a trafficking case. Form individuals that Tapestry serves, we have mostly seen coercion being one of the main driving factors where one individual did not escape their situation.

So being afraid of what is going to happen to them or your family if they attempt to leave the trafficker. Another myth that, you know, we see is that, you know, survivors of human trafficking will immediately bond with a social worker and will identify as victims of human trafficking. And that's just not the case. Most often it takes a very long time to build that trust with the survivor to actually get somebody to come forward and say, yes, this is actually what happened to me and -- to realize that what happened to them was not their fault and that they do, in fact, meet the definition of human trafficking.

>> Thanks, Mia. You know, I know you talked about how hard it is for someone who is being trafficked to actually disclose that and gain the trust of an advocate or a social worker. So how do you actually go about identifying survivors?

>> Sure. Well, like I mentioned previously, we utilize the federal definition of human trafficking. And just to make it a little bit easier, we also use the AMP model which is action means purpose. That can be easily found on the internet. Basically, we look at what is the action that was used to kind of lure the individual. That could be anything from recruitment, harboring an individual, transporting, providing or obtaining an individual through the means of force, fraud or coercion. And then what is the purpose? The purpose being either involuntary servitude [Indiscernible] bondage or slavery. But just to go back to building that trust, we do not expect to find the answers or to have fit somebody

into every one of these categories. The action means and purpose in the initial screening or in the initial ten screenings. So it's really critical to build that trust in order to screen somebody for human trafficking.

I will also say that the national human trafficking resource center also has a -- has many different screening tools available with specific questions for specific industries. So an individual that may have been referred to me, let's say the potential case of sex trafficking, I would not use questions that were related to agriculture. So it's really important to listen and to have more of an open discussion when conducting a screening because you never know what an individual will identify. Like an individual of sex trafficking may, in fact, identify more so with labor.

>> That's really interesting. I think it's so important to think about all the different ways that someone could be trafficked. You know, that's such a great advocacy tactic to just be open to, you know, everything that someone is experiencing. You know, I know you touched on this a little bit. But in terms of the cost of labor and maybe sex trafficking. So if a survivor of human trafficking is already being screened for, you know, say domestic violence or sexual assault, how do you screen for human trafficking? Do you think it's important that you screen for multiple identities that that survivor has? How does that all work in practice?

>> Absolutely. Even when we do a screening for human trafficking and we are a human trafficking program, we also do a screening of domestic violence. Just because, you know, different crimes and different situations that an individual may have to lived for -- lived for, excuse me, may warrant additional resources and services. An example of this would be let's say I'm working with a survivor of sex trafficking and I'm providing services that's more tailored to sex trafficking experience, they may also have experienced domestic violence within their lifetime or even after they were out of their trafficking situation. So they might need services such as assistance with temporary protective order, custody battles, divorce, things of that nature.

So it's really important to have access to screening tools across multiple forms of advocaizations. [phonetic]. So for us, you know, that -- let's say we have a domestic violence case and the husband is forcing the wife to -- you know, to work at a factory, then we would stop and ask, well, does she really have a choice? Has there been force, fraud or coercion utilized to keep her compliant? What is he doing with the money? Does she have access to the money? Can she quit her job and she wanted to do so. Looking at what freedoms have been taken away from somebody and really, you know, if they meet this definition or maybe they need, you know -- their situation is more so in line with another crime, well, there might be resources available to better meet their needs at another organization or a program.

>> That's so important. I think it also just shows, you know, how creative advocates are because so many survivors have so many different needs and there are so many different ways. I think it just -- you know, I feel like you are just highlighting how really what survivors need are just options.

So I know you talked about what some of the challenges survivors

have with disclosing of, you know, what happened to them, maybe with our freedoms being limited. So what are some of the biggest challenges that you see? You know, do you have any ideas how to overcome those challenges?

>> Sure. Well, you know, I think each individual has their own challenges already discussed. The self-identification which is critical which really prevents people from, you know, seeking help. Screening is instrumental in this field. Other challenges include even accepting services from service providers. Because, you know, especially the foreign nationals that we have worked with, they often think that there is going to be a cost to a service. So it's really important to say that, you know, all services are free and that they are not going to incur a debt as a result of receiving services from our organization.

Some of the bigger challenges or bigger picture challenges out there, of course, are housing. Even looking at the domestic violence field, there is just -- not enough shelters available for emergency placement for the victims of domestic violence and even more so, you know, for victims of human trafficking.

Now, for us we might choose to place a survivor in a domestic violence shelter. But that is limited to some individuals. What do we do when we have a male survivor of labor trafficking whose only option may be to look at a homeless shelter? You know, that's not always the best option.

So I say all of these things because housing continues to be one of the greatest needs that we have out there. So, how can we resolve this challenge? I would say that we really need to look at non-conventional housing options. Like working through -- utilizing even Airbnb for some emergency stay if the individual is not in crisis. Working with landlords to get them to rent apartments to our clients even if they don't have the documentation or the best credit. Working with settlement organizations to kind of piggyback off of the partnerships that they have already developed when it comes to housing. And, of course, working with the continuum of care to really highlight some of the housing challenges that we are seeing.

So, and lastly, I mean, there are many different challenges that we could discuss. But I would also like to highlight finding employment. Some individuals might have convictions on their records. They may have a felony. Make it extremely hard to find employment or even get through that background check. We really need employers that are willing to overlook that. And we need state courts to help us with vacating convictions. I know that New York has a great court. But some of the other states are very much behind when it comes to that.

And, of course, when we are looking at employment, we are also looking at, you know, the individuals that we work with, they might not -- they might have specific skills. So in addition to receiving help with employment, you know, we need to really think about education and job training to really assist somebody in becoming independent and self-sufficient down the line.

>> Thank you, Mia, for pointing all that out. You know, I think it's so important because when a landlord is assessing a rental application, they may see things that they don't like. And employers are looking at one's history, they may see things that make them nervous and they may not realize that someone

is a victim of human trafficking. Someone may have all these multiple identities and all these reasons why things happen to them. So I think that's a really important point and thank you for pointing that out. We know that housing is a challenge for everyone and I can't even imagine what it is like if you are facing all these hurdles.

So, just from your experience -- I know you've been on Tapestri for a little while and have had that direct service experience. Do you have a story of a client or someone that stays with you? It could be for a positive reason or negative reason? Something that you think about with the story?

>> Wow. There are many stories that I, you know, think about throughout the years. But I can maybe talk more so in general terms of a pattern that kind of stays with me because so many individuals that we have served kind of follow the same pattern of recruitment. And that is, young females in a smaller villages of Mexico being approached by young, attractive males who pose as they are interested in a romantic relationship with them. So, they go so far as to meet the victim's family members. Introduce the victim to their parents. And then all of a sudden, you know, the trafficker tells the victim that he's going to have to travel to the United States to do some work and that she could accompany him to the United States and also find a part-time job in order to help her family in, let's say, in Mexico.

So she agrees thinking that they are in a romantic relationship. She -- she thinks that she is doing something, you know, in order to help her family members in her home country. But then once she ends up in United States, once she comes here, the first night that she arrives, she is told that she has a quota of sleeping with 20 men each and every night. And in one particular case, the one that resonates the most with me, it was a case of two sisters that were brought to the United States by two cousins who romanced them and promised them, you know, a better life and great relationship. Once they arrived here, they separated them and they used that separation to control them and keep them compliant and pretty much forced them into prostitution.

So the case of the two sisters will forever resonate with me. And just the re-unification of two of them when the traffickers finally went to jail and when they could, you know, see each other and spend time with one another was definitely a memorable moment in my mind.

>> Well, Mia. Those are patterns are enough to keep anyone up at night. Thank you so much for sharing that. I think it's so important to be aware of and think about the ways that human traffickers use power and control to get victims to do what they want.

You know, I know we don't have very much time left, but I just wanted to close by asking you, do you have any advice for anyone listening to this podcast today, what are some things that people can do to help survivors of trafficking? How do you prevent it? What do you do if you are just a person wandering around in the world?

>> Sure. If not been in this field, I would say educate yourself. Really spend some time doing some research. Get to know what trafficking really looks like. You can visit the OVC training technical website. They have an

amazing training video called "Faces of Trafficking". You never know when you are going to come across a potential victim that, you know, that you can help get out of that situation. You can also donate to Tapestri's organization or volunteer your time. You can check out a list of great organizations that our freedomnetworkusa.org. It's kind of like a national coalition across the United States with some really amazing service providers. You can also team up with them and help within your community.

As far as prevention, I think what really would be helpful would be for, you know, traffickers to be tried as traffickers. Not to go to lesser crimes. Would also say we can place higher fines and businesses for participating in exploitive practices. And we can address vulnerabilities that lead to human trafficking. Such as homelessness, poverty, displacement as a result of war, addiction, so on and so forth.

>> Thank you so much, Mia. For sharing all of that. I hope people visit the resources that you mentioned. It's so great to get educated on all these issues and just figure out ways so you can help in your community. And knowing that that's how you help victims of human trafficking as well. Thank you so much for your time. I'm looking forward to hearing more from you soon.

>> Thank you.

>> Thank you so much for listening to our broadcast today and to our guest Mia Hasek. To learn more about Tapestri, visit Tapestri.org. That's T-A-P-E-S-T-R-I.org. To hear more of NRCDV podcasts and additional resources, you can visit NRCDR.org. You can also follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter at NRCDR.

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