

TESTIMONY #1 (victim's father)

I will never forget the day they took my daughter away.

I was in the garden tending my plants and feeling the hot sun against the back of my neck. I had my worries, but I was trying to leave them with God. Precious, my daughter, was inside the house, washing the dishes before the long walk to school.

They came with the same story – about the money I owed. And I pleaded with them again. I told them that I just needed one good growing season. One year of escape from drought and I could pay off my debt for the land. They wouldn't listen. They were loud and rude and said I had already had too many chances. They went into the house and grabbed her – my angel – my first born. She looked so smart in her school uniform, but so very afraid. As she struggled, her eyes were pleading with me to do something. Her mother came outside and was wailing, pounding on my chest and arms with her fists; begging me to do something. And I just stood there. God, why did I just stand there?

The tears rolled down my face as these despicable men drove off with my girl – my pride and joy. In that moment I remembered the day she was born; when I held her in my arms and promised to always protect her.

I'm not a stupid man. I hear stories. My sister thought she saw my Precious in the city on the street corner. She couldn't be sure. This girl was covered in make-up and a short skirt; acting like she was on drugs and flirting with men in cars. Could that be my Precious? The math student? The one who loved to help me in the garden?

It's been 4 years.

Every day I drag my tired old heart to the edge of our village where you can see the road to town for a long way off. And I wait. I hope. I pray that my girl will come to me so I can have another chance at being her father.

(based on a story from northern Uganda)

TESTIMONY #2

I was the quiet one in the family.

My brothers were always outside – kicking a ball or climbing a tree. My sister was sociable – meeting with friends; always talking. I preferred to be by myself. I could spend hours under a tree, making up stories of places far away or singing a song to myself. I just liked feeling peaceful.

One day my father's cousin came to our home. I had never met him before. I was 14 and I remember noticing how hairy he was. I treated him politely. That night he came to my

room and commented on my lovely face. Already I felt dirty from the way he was looking at me. And then he raped me. I was mortified, scared and angry, but I could not push him off of me. I tried to tell my mother about it the next day, but she silenced me and told me never to disgrace our family. It happened again, and again, until finally he left our town.

At 16 I was in the fields alone when our neighbour's son attacked me and raped me. I knew there were demons inside of me that were calling out to men. I didn't know how to get rid of them. I couldn't sing anymore because I was too evil.

When I was 18 I met the man I was going to marry. He came to our house to settle the bride price. He was hairy too, and his teeth were stained. I tricked him on our wedding night so that he believed I was a virgin and didn't take back the money from my parents. I tried to be a good wife. Our home was spotless and I never cried when he forced himself into me. I would just send my mind to a faraway land. I tried to ignore the demons, but they must have called out to the shop-keeper down the street because one day when I went to buy meat, he grabbed me and forced me to have sex with him. His wife found out, and the religious leaders were called to bring me to the temple.

I stood there, humiliated and alone while they talked to a man they called "Teacher" about the law, Moses and stoning me. Then the Teacher looked at me. And he saw me. It was like he saw right inside of me. For once a man looked at me and saw me – not as a thing to be used, but as a person. It was like he didn't see me as a fallen woman or an adulteress or an evil, demon-possessed woman. He just looked at me like I was a person. And he set me free. I was free to be myself again. When the demons left me, I found my voice and I started to sing again.

(based on the women from John 8:1-11)

TESTIMONY #3

I met my boyfriend in the marketplace. He told me I was beautiful. He was well-dressed and had a nice smile. We dated for a month and then he told me he wanted to marry me. My boyfriend told me his friend had a company across the border, in Greece, and if we worked there for 3 months, we could save money for the wedding and a house. I was so happy, and could not believe my luck.

My boyfriend took my passport and all the necessary papers and told me he would take care of everything. I trusted him completely and I was excited to be going on an airplane. We took the plane and instead of arriving in Greece, we landed in Dubai. I had never been abroad before, so I was really confused. I asked why there were Arabic signs everywhere, and he explained that we had a stopover for a few days in Dubai. We went to a hotel and he left to go meet a friend.

Two hours later a man came to my room and told me I was being moved to another hotel. I kept telling him that it was a misunderstanding; that my boyfriend was coming back and that we were going to Greece. The man told me my boyfriend had sold me to him. He had all my documents and I was now his property. I was shocked and confused.

The next day I was moved to another hotel and “clients” started coming to me for sexual services. I had to make \$500/day no matter how many clients. I usually served about 30 – 40. My body was no longer my own.

My boss was so violent. I couldn’t move or think. This went on for weeks – a continuous hell. I was living between clients and tears. That was the rhythm of my life.

(based on a story from the International Organization for Migration)

TESTIMONY #4 SHONA’S STORY

Shona is 17 years old and grew up in northern Canada. She was and is loved by her family and for the most part had a great childhood. She loved to dream about her future, traveling and seeing other parts of the country and meeting new people. Shona did reasonably well in school but when her Granny, in whom she most confided in passed on, her grades and friends were not very important anymore.

Many visitors came to Shona’s community for the beautiful wilderness that surrounded it and they often asked for guides from town to help them. One evening Shona was walking to the store and a really great looking guy a little older than she asked for directions and then after talking for a bit asked if he could buy her something to drink so he could ask her more questions about her community. Rick was really nice and by the end of their conversations she felt she could talk to him about anything and he really seemed interested in her.

A couple weeks later she met him again and he talked about his job in the city and how if she wanted to come visit she was welcome. Wow, a chance to get away for awhile!

Shona told her parents some story they believed and headed on the bus to the city. Rick was so nice, showed her around and then introduced her to some of his friends where she did some drinking and tried some drugs, Rick took care of her and she felt so wild and that she was really living unlike her friends back home.

A few days later Rick, who she now considered her boyfriend who said he loved her, was not so nice to her. He told her she had to have sex with a few of his friends to make up for all their drugs she had used. When she said she wouldn’t do it he beat her up and told her he couldn’t wait to tell her family what she had been doing in the city and how much of a slut and addict she was. He would not let her go, demoralized, beat, and raped her then put her out on the street.

At the back of her mind, where Shona was still the 17 year old girl who loved to dream started to escape in her mind to dream again, a dream of a different sort....

(based on a story from Manitoba)