

Brenda's Story

My name is Brenda. It took me some time to realize who I was and what my name was. The reason for that is it was just too painful to be me so if I become someone else I didn't have to recognize the pain Brenda was going through.

I was born in Chicago, USA to a fifteen-year-old girl named Ernestine. She died six months later and I was left in the care of my grandmother. They would take advantage of me when she was drinking. The earliest I can remember of being molested is when I was four or five years old. By the time I was nine I had become numb to the abuse and had decided to become a prostitute. I saw prostitutes working in front of my grandma's house out of the window and to me they looked shiny. All I ever wanted to be was shiny but the molestation had taken that shine away from me. So I promised myself that I would make them pay for it that way.

When I was fifteen I was working near the Gold Coast. During the twenty-five years that I worked as a prostitute I was taken to many different places and cities and states, even outside of America. My first experience of travelling without permission was one night when two pimps pulled up while I was coming out of a hotel. One got out and told me I was under pimp arrest as I began to struggle. He grabbed me while the other man got out of the car, unlocked his trunk and threw me in. When they opened the trunk, I was met with a large stick. I thought I was going to die. They told me that they would now represent me. If I didn't work for them they saw no reason to keep me alive. I worked for these two creeps for a month and then they picked up another girl the same way.

I escaped after six months. I was terrified whenever I saw a car that even looked close to the car I was thrown in. I started working in massage parlours to feel safer and to have some security from the pimps on the street. I soon found out the massage parlours and strip clubs had their own kind of pimps – the ones who hide behind the desk and say they're employers. I didn't mind that I had to give a percentage of my money to the establishment and that I wasn't allowed to leave the premises when I was on call. What did disturb me was the way they moved us around like cattle. You never knew where you would end up. It was also normal to wake up and find the girl next to you was gone. You knew not to ask where she was or give any information that you knew she was there.

The last I dealt with that organization was 1982 in New Orleans. I ran away with a guy to California. I was still involved in prostitution but just at street level. The first time I wanted to stop was after I had a baby. I was referred to The Salvation Army. I stayed there, got clean and came back home to Chicago. After a year I relapsed and started working the streets again. That was in 1994 and I worked the streets til 1997.

Trafficking can occur internationally or even right here in the USA; right here in our own backyards. As an advocate I see and hear of trafficking happening in our everyday communities with our young women and girls. It doesn't have to be done across borders. It can happen across a state line or a community line. If a person takes a woman from point A to B with the intent of prostituting her body, it is trafficking.

The Salvation Army "PROMISE" (Partnership to Rescue Our Minors from Sexual Exploitation) Program, USA. (www.sapromise.org)

Father Shay Cullen's Story

Father Shay Cullen has devoted his life to fighting trafficking. For him, it is his vocation in life. But he recognized that a group is stronger than an individual – and this led him to set up the Preda Foundation in the Philippines.

He tells of one of his many encounters with traffickers.

"When I take a walk in the Luneta, the mall, walk the streets in Makati or Pasay or even in Malate Park, sooner or later a pimp will sidle up and, mistaking me for a tourist say, "Want a girl, Joe?"

I look disinterested and ignore the pimp.

Then he says with a broad smile, "Oh! Maybe a boy. I know lots of nice young boys, clean, friendly, you want?"

Again I look away, pulling a face of disinterested disgust, hardly saying a word.

The pimp looks puzzled for moment and then says, "You like them young, Joe? No problem. I can get you twelve, thirteen, fourteen year old, you want? You can do anything you like, F--- them, anything. A thousand pesos, two thousand for a virgin and for the pimp five hundred,"

I ask him, "Are you the pimp?"

"Yes, that me," he replies. "I can get them now, they are over there." He points to a pillar holding up the Department of Tourism building where two small children had emerged from the shadows and were caught in the bright lights.

Sometimes I played along with his offer, asking more questions and the whole world of child sexual slavery came spilling out. Some people won't believe it happens so casually, with no fear of police either. That is why I decided to bring along a miniature video recorder and record the

offers of child sex, which is in itself a crime that could get a pimp a sentence of eight years in jail.

One day, on the street in a nightclub area with my Filipino friend, I was offered children for sex. "Where are they?" I asked.

"I will show you," the pimp said and we got into a taxi and were brought to a back street. We were shown into a room where there were about eighteen young girls. This was a child brothel.

The manager gushed with excitement and glee at the prospect of a sale.

"This is Maria, she is fourteen and you can have her all night long for P2500. This other one is Judith, fifteen, P2000 only. If you want a young virgin, she will cost you P3000, but you will have to come back, they are very scarce nowadays," he said, as if talking about a rare fruit that spoils easily.

Then he sent out for his best human merchandise, a small girl who was sleeping after entertaining her last customer in an upstairs room.

She looked frail and exhausted. I was witnessing chained slavery, hardly any different from that of the slave sales of the last century. We both made our excuses and left. I had my miniature video camera running and the batteries had not run out as had happened on previous occasions.

Later, we realized that it was too dangerous for us to try and rescue the children ourselves and I wrote up the report giving the names of the suspects, or their aliases, and the address that we had carefully noted.

I sent it to the high police official in the Department of the Interior, offering to cooperate and hoping they would call and discuss the crime we witnessed, identify the suspects, give a statement and ask for the videotape.

But nine months later, nothing. Silence total and absolute. The children are still in that brothel and many more like it."

Father Shay Cullen, Preda Home for Children Upper Kalaklan, Olongapo City, Philippines (www.preda.org). Story printed in Chalke, Steve. (2009). "Stop the Traffik." Lion Hudson plc.

Lindita's Story

When I was a senior in high school here in Tirana, I met a boy who did not go to my school. He was kind, attractive, and treated me well. After a time, we fell in love with each other – or so I thought at the time. He was my “first love” and I hadn’t had much experience with boys romantically prior to that.

After dating for a time, he convinced me to go to Belgium with him. He said that he could get a good job there and told me about what a wonderful place it was: how clean, how beautiful, and how many opportunities there would be there for us. He proposed to me, and our plan was to leave Albania illegally (since we would not qualify for visas) and get married once he found work there. I was in love, and I believed him.

Once we got to Belgium, however, he totally changed. He became abusive of me and violated me many times. He threatened my life and the lives of my family members. I did not speak the language there and was totally dependent on him. I had nowhere else to go and was afraid. He trafficked me for six months. I don’t want to talk anymore about that time. It was the worst period in my life. It is now in my past and I have closed that door behind me.

I was able to find a shelter there with people to help me return to Albania. I wanted to return to my family here, but my father would not accept me and was abusive of me and my mother.

My mother decided to leave my father to help me, even though this is something unheard of in Albania for a woman to leave her husband. Women here can’t really find work to support themselves and have to rely on their fathers or husbands for their livelihood. My mother gave up everything for me and for this I am grateful.

After living in a shelter for as long as we were allowed, my mother and I are now living together and trying to support ourselves.

Taken from Chalke, Steve. (2009). “Stop the Traffik.” Lion Hudson plc.

Maria’s Story

I started living on the streets when I was eleven years old – my father threw my brother and me out of the house. He never worried about us – he was always taking alcohol combined with drugs. On the streets, I met prostitution and crime. One always dreams about being somebody, and that having material things makes you somebody. I never imagined that, wanting to improve my living conditions, I was going to end up losing my dignity.”

Maria Fernanda, Interviewed by the UNODC Country office in Colombia. Published in Chalke, Steve. (2009). “Stop the Traffik.” Lion Hudson plc.

Neary's Story

Neary grew up in rural Cambodia. Her parents died when she was a child, and, in an effort to give her a better life, her sister married her off when she was seventeen. Like so many trafficked people, Neary also thought she was starting a new chapter in her life and that things were looking up. Neither of the girls suspected that Neary's marriage was a sham, and that her days were numbered.

Three months later, Neary and her husband went to visit a fishing village. Her husband rented a room in what Neary thought was a guest-house. She had been looking forward to it – it would be a like a honeymoon, a break from the monotonous slog of her everyday life.

But when Neary woke the next morning, her husband was gone. The owner of the house told her she had been sold by her husband for \$300 and that she was actually in a brothel.

For five years, Neary was raped by five to seven men every day. In addition to brutal physical abuse, Neary was infected with HIV and contracted AIDS. The brothel threw her out when she became sick, and she eventually found her way to a local shelter. She died of HIV/AIDS at the age of twenty-three.

Story taken from Chalke, Steve. (2009). "Stop the Traffik." Lion Hudson plc.