

Angela Guanzon, Survivor Advocate

When I was a young girl in the Philippines I wanted to be in healthcare. We are poor and can't afford healthcare and medicines and know that healthcare is a way out of poverty. We do 6-month contracts, that means after 6 months you have to find another job and when you reached the certain age and you didn't get hired as a regular employee you will be jobless so if I didn't get out of the Philippines I would either have to be married or I would be jobless. And I wanted to have a better life that can support my family if I get married. I was given the opportunity to care for my aunt in her 60s. She had a bedsore from diabetes, and I would comb her hair, bathe her, and provide for her needs. This gave me a feeling of doing good and being able to help others.

So, when I heard from a friend of a friend about working as a caregiver I grab the opportunity. We assumed it was going to be a good thing that would allow me to continue helping others. She had me take classes through a private school for Taekwando and they gave me a certificate and a black belt to come to the US on a sports visa.

Took the caregiver program and doing the work to come to the US. When I arrive in the US the woman said that I owed her 12,000 dollars and she needed my passport to get it stamped and I would work for her for 10 years. When the Licensing Division came and inspect us, they required the facility to have 8-hour shift only and a time sheet for every shift. So, my trafficker wrote down time sheets with her family members name and we were told to tell them we only worked 8-hour shifts and we had to move our stuff to the patient's room, so it didn't look like we lived there. She took us to get an ID and a social security number. We were taking care of people who had private insurance in a nursing home setting, the facility is only licensed for 6 patient but we have 8.

I didn't know about any of the US laws and thought I was working off the debt to bring me here. I got into Resilient Voices and realized there were a lot of us from the Philippines and CAST has clients mostly

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from the Philippines, Indonesia, and Mexico but we talk to each other and help each other out so this is probably just the communities we know and not the reality of people being trafficked in California.

Resilient Voices and the National Survivor Network have 74 people in the state of California who were trafficked in California. We were trafficked in nursing homes, fields, hotels, and all throughout the state. We are from 18 to 82 and we are male and female clients. Some of us were trafficked from as young as 2 and into our 82.

Within the US human trafficking narrative, the overarching theme is domestic, sex-trafficked women and children, in need of rescue; ignoring the complex intersections of this pertinent issue. As you attend your next in-service, webinar or conference on human trafficking, I implore you to consider the following scenarios that correlate to existing supply chain realities. I would like to read you an Op-Ed wrote by our former policy chair:

I want you to think about Ranbir (the brave warrior) age 12, in India, carrying 20 bricks on his head in the brick yards. These bricks were bought to build the building you are sitting in, and his labor is paying off family debts from employment schemes. You get uncomfortable hearing the stories of sexual exploitation, shift around in your seat and fidget with your jacket. The jacket you wore was made by Zahra (flower) a 15-year-old girl in Malaysia who is not allowed to leave the sweat shop where she sews. Her mother died in a fire a few years back when the doors to the shop used to be chained shut. As the Power Point continues and the clicking of the remote moves the slides ahead on the display, your phone beeps. Bolanile (joy of this house) started working in the tunnels of the Congo mining ore, after his 7-year-old brother collapsed digging the tunnel itself. All the ore needed, for the computer used in the training and the phone that keeps you accessible, were harvested by child labor and non-ethical practices. All electronics companies cut corners and profit from exploited labor.

You need a break from this conversation and step over to refresh your coffee. Osmin (godly protection) is proud of the fact that you enjoy his labor! At age 5 he started picking the beans in the fields of Hondurtas, like his parents. They are poor and cannot afford schooling, so the privilege of working to maintain their food is his joy. You see the salad ready for lunch: bright greens, delicately crisp. Metzli (god of the night, moon and farmers) knows the value of working hard to get the fields picked. His family meets the bus outside of their village and crosses into the US every day to work. US labor laws don't apply to bussed-in migrants being exploited for day labor.

The next time you hear about the horrors of sex trafficking, please remember the labor of kids, who don't receive national attention, made that training happen. Unlike sensationalized media stories about sex trafficking, we don't see labor trafficking as a crime that could happen to "our kids" and it doesn't get equal attention. This needs to change. Building a wall won't stop the exploitation woven into an economy dependent upon trafficked labor. The demand for cheap goods competes with corporate thirst for maximum profits, and both come at the expense of the poorest and most marginalized. You cannot address a problem, when you conveniently ignore your own complicity. The cost of "cheap" is exploitation. Your smart phone, name-brand shoes, trendy fashion wear, high-priced latte, and even that chocolate bar come with generations of abuse, debt bondage, chattel slavery and unsafe working conditions. We barter the humanity, of those we don't think about, for added convenience in our high-tech, over-scheduled, fast paced lives.

Labor trafficking is not as simple as one might want it to be. We cannot ignore the ways in which we harm individuals across the globe and pretend it doesn't happen in our backyards. We can and must do more to protect the labor that goes into everything we consume. California had a chance with AB 865 to address training that impacts foster care families in California to train them on labor trafficking and how

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it effects their kids—the labor piece was removed. We keep assuming it doesn't affect us. We are here in this state doing the work to raise the awareness of how it impacts the state and how we can do better.