

Human Trafficking And Child Pornography

By: Eric Ryan Smalley

In today's society, human trafficking has become the largest manifestation of slavery. Every year, 50,000 women and children are trafficked into the United States. However, when people think of the term "slavery", they think about the time of when African Americans were forced into labor. But today, "slavery" goes much deeper than that. These "slaves", predominately women and girls, are sold into the sex industry. From prostitution to pornography, these innocent people are being forced into making money.

Even though prostitution (a form of trafficking/slavery) is a major issue in the United States, one I find even more harmful is the production of pornography involving children. Sadly, this is an industry that is a multimillion dollar network of individuals openly advertising their desire to exploit children. This form of trafficking is becoming easier and easier to access. And the way its accessed today is through the internet. This has become the best avenue for traffickers to transport, distribute, receive and advertise their child porn. People who are apart of this industry are usually in the market of additional child pornography.

What opened our doors to this type of abuse? Was it going on before the internet? Adult pornography was deemed illegal back in the 1800's. In the *Com. v. Sharpless*, it was argued to be protected by the First Amendment. However, child pornography is not entitled to protection under the First Amendment. But yet, obtaining child pornography is easily accessed just as easy it is to be produced. The vast majority of child pornography prosecutions today involve images contained on computer hard ~~drives~~ ^{drives,} computer disks, and related media. So no matter what, children are being sexually exploited and abused in the use of pornography.

Whether its being done in the home or elsewhere, by known relatives or strangers, a child somewhere is being subjected to sexual abuse and is being exposed to the World Wide Web for anyone to view. Every instance of viewing images of child pornography represents a renewed violation of the privacy of the victims and a repetition of their abuse. Not only are children ^{being} sexually violated by the perpetrator, they are being violated by anyone who views the

images, too. Imagine everytime someone downloads child pornography and repeatedly views those images, that child is being victimized everytime it's viewed. The child being displayed as a sexual object takes away from their dignity and innocence. The child becomes forever scarred by shame and hopelessness. And lastly, the child is either a victim of Human Trafficking or a victim by a family member or family friend. In either way, the child is a victim.

I am a registered sex offender. I had a victim in 2010 and did prison time for it. Now, 10 years later, I am once again in jail for possession of child pornography. It was my first time viewing the child porn. At the time, I wasn't sure what my first thoughts of what I was viewing was going to be. Was I going to enjoy it as I did with adult porn? Or, was I going to dislike it? My answer came almost immediately when I viewed the content on my cell phone.

First, watching the content on my phone of adult men sexually exploiting young girls reminded me of what I did to my victim. Even though I did not video record my offence, I felt guilty for even wanting to view it. Second, it made me think about what if I had video recorded it? How many times would I or others victimize her by watching it over and over? Likewise, I was victimizing a child I don't even know everytime I viewed that content. When you combined the first and second things I mentioned, we get the third. And the third is, I felt disgusted for having child pornography in my possession. I felt disgusted at myself and at what was being viewed. In the end, I deleted all I had and asked God to forgive me.

My dream/goal is to one day be an advocate to stand against child pornographers and to get ALL child porn data permanently ~~deleted~~ ^{deleted} and to take down any producers of child porn to prevent anymore exploitation of children. All producers will have to surrender any device (cameras, thumbdrive, computers, disks, etc.) to be destroyed and to never be able to be used again. Any fundings collected will go to organizations for missing and exploited children. And children who are victims of sexual abuse will never pay for counseling or medical costs.

I've done many wrong things in my life. Things I regret and wish I could take back. But, unfortunately, I can't take them all back. But, it doesn't mean I can't create a better future. I want to help where help is needed. I want to see those who have suffered from sexual abuse, live in victory. It's not just about me and my future. It's about the future of innocent children being rescued from abusive slavery.