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Rise, Unite, Support: Doing “No Harm” in the Anti-Trafficking Movement

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ABSTRACT

Awareness regarding domestic sex trafficking has increased rapidly over the last decade. However, as general awareness increases so too does the interest of multidisciplinary professionals and concerned citizens who, while well intended, cause significant strain on the anti-trafficking movement. Drawing upon personal, professional, and academic research expertise in the areas of runaway, homeless, and street youth, as well as domestic sex trafficking, this article provides insight into the current struggles within the anti-trafficking movement. It serves as a cry for those who wish to join the anti-trafficking movement to create contexts in which survivor-leaders are recognized and treated as competent leaders and in which current efforts are intentionally supported. Furthermore, it serves as a call of encouragement for survivors to unite; to stand up for themselves as individuals and as a collective group, and to recognize and utilize the full potential of their malleability, strength, knowledge, and passion.

Representing the decade’s largest social-justice movement, public attention to the issue of domestic sex trafficking (DST) has risen significantly over the last ten years. With this, there has been a marked increase of those who have joined, or who wish to join, the anti-trafficking movement. However, while such multidisciplinary and citizen involvement has been somewhat beneficial – at times assisting in the awareness of DST and positive political and/or direct practice change – it has also caused struggles and unintended harmful consequences to DST victims, survivors, leaders, and to the anti-trafficking movement as a whole (Countryman-Roswurm & DiLollo, 2015; Countryman-Roswurm, 2014; Lloyd, 2013; Sex Trafficking Survivors United/STSU, 2013). Therefore, it is urgent that those involved, or interested, in the anti-trafficking movement pause, listen, reflect, and consider a plan of change. It is imperative that together *WE* - professionals, concerned citizens, and survivor-leaders – consider an intentional plan to rise, unite, and support one another in a manner that not only does “no harm,” but empowers resilience, recovery, and vitality for all.

Who am I to Say?

Although I am merely one voice declaring this call to action, I do so boldly, for great reason, and with significant thought. I do so as a social worker - a street outreach worker, a case manager, an advocate, a community organizer, a human-rights activist, and an educator - who, expanding over nearly two decades, has spent more than half of my life dedicated to serving in the anti-trafficking movement. I have served and walked alongside hundreds of victims, survivors, and survivor-leaders. I have provided thousands of awareness, training, and keynote presentations; developed research-based assessment and direct-service intervention programs, organized multi-disciplinary community action groups, and advanced public policy.

Even more credentialing compared to that of my academic or professional expertise, I pronounce this change of action in the anti-trafficking movement as a woman who, while appearing to have the life of an average middle-class Caucasian, am a descendent of the Blackfoot Tribe and a product of generational demoralization. Conceived, born, and bred, in a life of trauma caused by addiction, neglect, abuse, abandonment, suicide, and life on the streets; I closely know and understand what it means to live life from a place of loss, abandonment, loneliness, isolation, hopelessness, and desperation. Yet, as a survivor, a thriver, an overcomer, a leader - I also deeply know and understand what it means to live life from a place of hope, peace, community, and prosperity.

Collectively, my diverse professional and personal life experiences serve as the foundation for my commitment to serving some of the most marginalized women and children in our society; and to creating contexts in which all men, women, and children can live holistically healthy lives. It is from this social location that I cry out for potential “allies” in the anti-trafficking movement to co-create contexts in which survivor-leaders are recognized and respected as competent leaders; and in which current anti-trafficking efforts are intentionally supported. Furthermore, it is with this integrated life script that I encourage survivors to unit in solidarity; to stand up for themselves as individuals and as a collective group, and to recognize and utilize the full potential of their malleability, resilience, strength, knowledge, and passion.

What’s Holding *US* Back?

While not exhaustive, within the current climate of our country’s anti-trafficking movement there are seven primary issues at-play that are preventing forward movement and sustainable systemic change towards this cause of humanitarianism and justice:

1. Pride, privilege, and power.
2. The manner in which sex trafficking is defined and depicted.
3. A disconnect between human trafficking and other social justice issues.
4. A broad exploitation of the issue of human trafficking as a whole.
5. Continual exploitation of survivor-leaders.
6. An increasing strain on time and monetary resources.
7. Ineffective “awareness” and “rescue” efforts.

Pride, Privilege, and Power

Much of the unintentional harm in the anti-trafficking movement is caused by individual and structural pride, privilege, and power (Countryman-Roswurm & DiLollo, 2015; Countryman-Roswurm, 2014; Lloyd, 2013; STSU, 2013). If one is not carefully reflective in order to intentionally adjust practices regularly, justice and social services work - that which often includes “being needed” in order to “rescue” those who are vulnerable or marginalized - does nothing more than fuel such detrimental “ego”. Never have I seen this more true than in the anti-trafficking movement where, operating from a place of some sort of omnipotent “allied savior,” those with a “rescue complex” act haphazardly, proclaim each “rescue” or service act, compete for recognition of their efforts, and are unable to receive input or criticism from survivors (Countryman-Roswurm, 2014; Lloyd, 2013; Salvation Army, 2014; Sangalis, 2011; STSU, 2013; Soderlund, 2005). Thus, as humorously articulated by David Thaler (2013) in his analogical article “*Being an ally and being called out on your privilege,*” it is important to understand that “being an ally is not something you are” but rather, “something you do.” And “how you respond to...criticism is what makes the difference between self-identifying as an ally, and actually being an ally.”

The Manner in which Human Trafficking is Defined and Depicted

The way in which DST is often defined and depicted by media outlets and uninformed social groups creates categories of worthy versus unworthy victims. Language, and the definitions regarding DST, shape mental paradigms that influence the treatment of victims and survivors. Thus, obtaining a broad and rich understanding of DST lies at the foundation of engaging in effective anti-trafficking efforts.

DST contains elements of psychological, physical, and sexual violence and is defined as “the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act” (Trafficking Victims Protection Act/TVPA, 2000). This includes survival-sex/rape – the “exchange” or the

“acceptance” of sex acts in order to meet one's own basic needs (e.g. food, clothing, hygiene, shelter, etc.) or for other survival purposes (Countryman-Roswurm, 2014; Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014; Lloyd & Orman, 2007). It involves the most horrendous, unimaginable acts of abuse including tactical and repeated exposure to drug intoxication, beatings, physical mutilations, and rape (Boxill & Richardson, 2007; Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014; Countryman-Roswurm, 2012; Lloyd & Orman, 2007). And in the name of sexually gratifying another who, by day, often holds a respectable role in society, DST reduces a person to a commodity that can be stolen, exchanged, sold, or purchased (Malarek, 2009; Raymond & Hughes, 2001). Regardless of one's criminal background or age, this is abuse. DST is exploitation.

While terminology around the issue of DST of minors has continuously shifted over the last decade, from terms such as teen prostitution to domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST) and/or the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC), the DST of juvenile offenders and/or adults is rarely addressed. These populations, seldom reflected in the majority of sensationalized “human trafficking awareness” campaigns that far too frequently include images of physically restrained blond-haired blue-eyed little girls, are seen as delinquents, criminals, or promiscuous sex workers. The truth is that the abuse of one's status, resources, and power to exploit and sexually perpetrate against these populations remains the same. Thus, it is critical to understand that while not all sexual exploitation is “prostitution,” “prostitution” is sexual exploitation (STSU, 2013). Even in cases where it appears the woman or child “choose” to engage in DST, one must examine the accessibility of viable options and ask, “*What is choice if there are no sustainable alternatives?*” In the answer to this question lies the truth that DST is never a victimless crime and there are no unworthy victims.

A Disconnect between Domestic Sex Trafficking and other Social Justice Issues

The issue of human trafficking does not occur in isolation - separate from other social concerns. Rather, DST is a societal human rights injustice - one with strong roots that have been and are developed, influenced, reinforced, and entrenched throughout our country's history with slavery and the continuance of racial, gender, sex, age, and class inequality (Boxill & Richardson, 2007; Dworkin, 1997; Marr, 2013; Wilberforce, 2007). One small snapshot of this discrimination and disparity can be seen through the way in which our society has legalized businesses of the commercial sex industry, often making profitable the selling and purchasing of sex for Caucasian business men, while demonizing the African American street pimp (Countryman-Roswurm, 2006; Farley, 2007; Stark & Whisnant, 2004). Illuminating this further is the way in which survivors of sex

trafficking are often arrested for “prostitution,” while those, primarily men, exploiting the survivor through the purchasing of sex, is mildly fined or released altogether (Malarek, 2009; Raymond and Hughes, 2001). An additional example is the way in which the DST of women over the age of eighteen is merely deemed as prostitution and is rarely considered as trafficking (HB 2034, 2013; TVPA, 2000).

“Isms” such as these aforementioned create a context ripe for the misuse of power and control for the purposes of human trafficking. Thus, if our country is to ever eradicate the horrendous human rights violations that exist through DST, it is essential that we are willing to face the uncomfortable and heart-wrenching truths about trafficking and the unpleasant extent of the exploitive culture in which we live (Boxill & Richardson, 2007; Hardy, Compton, and McPhatter, 2013). We must examine, and address, the complex and multi-faceted environment in which trafficking exists – one which includes racism, classism, ageism, sexism, and heterosexism. We must examine, and address, issues that are connected to the exploitation of women including, but not limited to, issues of pornography, addiction, education, vocational training, and access to equal employment opportunities (Countryman-Roswurm & DiLoll, 2015; Countryman-Roswurm, 2012; Dworkin, 1997; Williamson et al., 2012). We must dissect and examine the full nature of the abuse included in DST. We must assess the very complex and specific ways in which human commoditization and exploitation occurs. Then, we must evaluate our individual and collective roles in the continuance of such abuse.

While this connection of human trafficking to other social issues may cause some to feel overwhelmed, the recognition of multifaceted complexity should serve as an invitation for all multidisciplinary professionals and concerned citizens to explore and apply their personal gifts, skills, talents and passions in unique and diverse methods. If you are interested in combating DST, it is not necessary that you haphazardly take to the streets like vigilantly law enforcement or street outreach personnel. Rather, you can do so by speaking out against injustices in a variety of contexts, committing to serve as a court advocate or long-term mentor, training high-risk populations a life-skill or trade, organizing a collection of diapers for teen mothers, acting as a respite family for someone who has adopted from the foster care system, etc.

Broad Exploitation of Human Trafficking as a Social and/or Political Issue

We live in a culture that is inundated with messages of beauty, sex, and power. In the context of such climate, the issue of human trafficking has become a titillating topic of curiosity for a larger public. Thus, as a topic that “sells”, DST has been commoditized, commercialized, exploited, and used as propaganda through various forms of social media, faith-movements, political campaigns, new

not-for-profit developments, and short-term business ventures (Countryman-Roswurm, 2014; STSU, 2013).

With this, often those who crave the attention of others magnify and sensationalize the issue of DST in order to promote themselves, be rewarded for, or somehow profit from their “abolitionary efforts.” Groups are organized to purchase trendy anti-trafficking t-shirts and run races in the name of “freeing slaves.” Yet, while positive results of awareness may come from activities such as these, such efforts often only further feed into the stereotypes and misrepresentations of trafficking survivors, does not directly impact victims and/or survivors who are in need of holistic health and/or recovery services, and rarely improves the political or legislative system. Rather than mobilizing people to address the systemic injustices that create a breeding ground for human trafficking, exploitive activities such as these often only further glamorize and normalize the issue of DST (Countryman-Roswurm, 2014; Lloyd, 2013; STSU, 2013). Therefore, before engaging in anti-trafficking efforts *WE* must ask ourselves (Countryman-Roswurm & Patton, 2013):

How does this action or inaction impact the individuals who have been victimized or who have survived trafficking?

Does this effort mobilize people to address the systemic injustices that create a breeding ground for human trafficking?

Exploitation of Survivor-Leaders in the Anti-Trafficking Movement

Despite having experienced traumatic life challenges (i.e. military combat, sexual assault, suicide, homelessness, addiction, gang-life, domestic violence, labor trafficking, various forms of sexual exploitation, etc.), survivor-leaders are those who survive, thrive, overcome, and prosper to a degree in which they are able to lend a helping hand to others like themselves (Countryman-Roswurm, 2012; Lloyd, 2011; Marr, 2013). With an understanding that this process from victim to survivor to leader is often cyclical, and not a straight-line trajectory, survivor-leaders often partner with others in an effort to assist those facing similar experiences to achieve a life of recovery and health. All the while, regardless of a cycling of restoration, survivor-leaders are critical to the success of the anti-trafficking movement. They offer experiential insight and widespread guidance (Countryman-Roswurm & DiLollo, 2015); and enable multidisciplinary professionals and concerned citizens to more effectively engage in prevention and intervention efforts.

Unfortunately, and particularly within the anti-trafficking movement, the invaluable role of the survivor-leader is habitually discredited, taken-for-granted, and/or exploited (Countryman-Roswurm, 2014; Lloyd, 2013; STSU, 2013). Often “rescued” as a result of justice, social service, and/or faith-community first responders and providers, survivors feel an indebted commitment to those who acted from this place of elevated power. Thus, survivor-leaders serve as easy targets for further exploitation by well-intended advocates, first responders, treatment providers, and researchers. While in a state of vulnerability, they are often manipulated, misled, bullied, shunned, isolated, and further exploited for the benefit of others (Countryman-Roswurm, 2014; Lloyd, 2013; STSU, 2013). As multidisciplinary professionals and concerned citizen groups struggle and compete to secure the name-recognition, status, and finances that will support their continued efforts, they look to and encourage survivor-leaders to tell their “stories” to local and national media outlets; to community donors at large fundraiser events; and in the name of (re) election during political campaigning.

In the name of offering the public an inspiring story that will assist in the garnering of resources to support continued “rescue” efforts, survivor-leaders are utilized as “stars.” However, they are rarely genuinely lifted up, respected, treated as equal partners, or supported and followed as competent leaders (STSU, 2013). Rather, the voices of survivor-leaders are guided and directed in a manner that impassions others but, while praised one minute for courageously sharing their personal experiences, are ignored and even stifled if used to speak out against the unethical practices being used in identifying or serving those at-risk of subjugated to DST. Furthermore, such survivor-leaders are frequently manipulated and guilted into doing their work for free or without appropriate compensation.

While providing a “face” to the issue of human trafficking may secure or elevate an organization’s funding stream or propel a rising politician’s career, without the appropriate relational support and/or health and wellness resources, the survivor-leader is often left further wounded and isolated. Thus, in the name of good works, those who do not understand or appreciate the full and true nature of sex trafficking abuse, or the contexts that allow for the true empowerment of healing, end up doing more harm than good. Even worse, those who call themselves the “rescuers,” the “abolitionists,” and “advocates” become just another face of the perpetrator, pimp, john, trafficker (Countryman-Roswurm, 2014).

With this in mind, I ask multidisciplinary professionals and concerned citizens active in the anti-human trafficking movement to reflect upon their personal and/or agency conduct and consider the following questions (Countryman-Roswurm & Patton, 2013):

How long should a survivor-leader work solely for the mere gift of knowing they assisted fellow victims and/or survivors on the road to recovery, health, and prosperity?

When has a survivor-leader, who has committed their life to anti-trafficking efforts from multiple perspectives, and who has done so to a degree in which every aspect of their life is engulfed in human trafficking, earned the “privilege” to be paid with more than a mere donut, coffee, or perhaps, on a good day, a gift certificate that will in no way come close to allowing them to provide for their own family?

When are the “dues paid” to the degree in which a survivor does not have to live from a place of victimization and indebtedness?

What actions or credentials are necessary for survivor-leaders to not only be used as storytellers, but also followed for their expertise and leadership capabilities?

And before engaging in specific interventions or anti-trafficking efforts ask yourselves:

Who benefits more from these actions - me, my agency, or the victim/survivor/survivor-leader? What are the costs?

Does this further promote the prosperity of this victim/survivor/survivor-leader?

In what ways might it cause them harm?

Consider that in the same way that any minority population must be in the forefront of leading a movement towards their own civil rights, so too should survivor-leaders be at the head of the anti-trafficking movement (STSU, 2013). They must not be left to feel isolated once rescued. They must not be used as propaganda (Countryman-Roswurm & Patton, 2013). They must not be steamrolled in their efforts.

Increasing Strain on the Anti-Trafficking Movement’s Time and Monetary Resources

The strain on time and monetary resources of those who serve in the anti-trafficking movement is closely connected to the aforementioned issues of

exploitation of both the anti-trafficking movement as a whole, as well as, individual survivor-leaders. For example, while it is encouraging that multidisciplinary professionals and concerned citizen groups (including that of the faith community) show concern about the issue of DST, such groups frequently act as though they are no more than fascinated, voyeuristic parties, who unintentionally drain limited resources of time and money from those committed to serving in anti-trafficking efforts (Countryman-Roswurm, 2014; Lloyd, 2013; STSU, 2013).

Consistent adamant and demanding requests for information or consultation from survivor-leaders and those engaged in direct-practice are at-times unfeasible. After all, such requests are rarely made with a commitment for resource exchange. Rather, they typically come in the form of a new group or organization that unintentionally moves from being “simply interested in learning about the subject” to starting their own new mission or social media activism network. Thus, instead of obtaining support after providing free “consultation,” survivor-leaders are often steam-rolled by the very start-up organizations they inspired. In the name of addressing the social injustice of DST, such requests and new developments do no more than take away and compete with the limited resources available to support the anti-trafficking movement. More so, while public awareness, training, and education is necessary and at-times even critical, it is important to acknowledge that for every hour spent providing “awareness” to just another “interested group,” is one hour not spent providing a prevention group to children and youth, engaging in a therapeutic-relationship with a survivor of DST, providing trauma-informed identification and intervention services who are currently serving those at-risk or subjugated to DST, developing and proposing more effective anti-trafficking legislation, etc. If we are to increase the impact of the anti-trafficking movement and truly create societal contexts that reduce the demand and empower the resilience and prosperity of all who are at-risk of and/or subjugated to DST, we must build upon and combine efforts and resources.

Ineffective “Awareness” and “Rescue” Efforts rather than Prosperity Promotion

Mainstream anti-trafficking “awareness” and “rescue” efforts not only appear unsuccessful, but at times, even harmful (Arnold et al, 2000; DOJ, 2012; Countryman-Roswurm, 2014; Fong & Cardoso, 2008; Salvation Army, 2014; Sangalis, 2011; STSU, 2013). Thus, with the acknowledgement that the anti-trafficking movement will soon be replaced with a new hot-button social justice issue, it is timely that *WE* utilize the energy mounting around the issue of DST and consider efforts that will more systemically improve our world. *WE* must work to create a large societal paradigm shift – one that reduces the demand and prevents

demoralization and traumatization among our societies most vulnerable (Countryman-Roswurm & Patton-Brackin, 2014). And *WE* must work to create contexts that promote resilience and prosperity for all people (Countryman-Roswurm & DiLollo, 2015; Countryman-Roswurm & Patton-Brackin, 2014; Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014).

What Can *YOU* Do?

Although addressing the aforementioned issues within the anti-trafficking movement may seem complex and insurmountable, change is achievable with purposeful personal and collaborative efforts led by multidisciplinary professionals and concerned citizens, as well as, survivor-leaders. Thus, respectfully, I present this cry and a call to rise, unite, support and do “no harm.”

A Cry to Multidisciplinary Professionals and Concerned Citizens

As a potential ally in the anti-trafficking movement, I thank *YOU* for your desire and/or commitment to combating the sex trafficking of *OUR* country’s women and children. *YOU* - whether a multidisciplinary professional (e.g. social worker, law enforcement officer, nurse practitioner, educator, etc.) or member of a concerned citizen group or faith community – and whether or not you are a survivor yourself - have an essential role to play in addressing the societal inequities and power imbalances that encompass the issue of DST (Countryman-Roswurm & Patton-Brackin, 2014; NASW, 2003). After all, it is only with the involvement of a larger majority that *OUR* children, youth, men and women can live in a culture in which humanitarianism and justice prevails. *YOU* are needed. *YOU* are appreciated.

With this in mind, as more individuals, agencies, faith groups, and other initiatives become involved in the movement against trafficking, I have recognized a great deal of counteractive action in the fight towards freedom for all. Far too frequently those who are well intended, unintentionally perpetuate trafficking by directly or indirectly creating contexts of un-equal treatment and exploitation against women who are survivor-leaders. Thus, in order that *WE* might discontinue such destruction, I ask that you consider your own actions with an open, honest, and truly transparent heart. In doing so, I ask that you step outside of yourself - the areas of privilege and/or power that you obtain - and consider this from the lens of someone who has faced extreme and repeated trauma. If you can reflect upon and integrate the following concerns and recommendations into your practice - you are a heroic partner - one who lifts up others, even when it means submitting to personal humility:

1) Look inside yourself. Explore the interplay between your personal and professional values and beliefs. Effective engagement in the anti-trafficking movement demands an honest, transparent analysis, and possible readjustment, of one’s personal values, beliefs, stereotypes, and life paradigms. If done in an honest and purposeful manner, such self-reflection and self-modification can form a strong foundation for intentional trauma-informed direct-practice, advocacy, and research efforts. Furthermore, it can lead to anti-trafficking efforts that support and empower equal access to the contexts and resources that allow for trafficking survivors to live, contribute, and even flourish within their own communities. Thus, in order that you might be more intentional in your anti-trafficking efforts, ask yourself the following questions:

Are all people, regardless of sex, race, religion, age, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, or educational attainment created equal?

Are all people, regardless of their life situation, deserving of respectful and just treatment?

Are all people, despite their specific obstacle, malleable to health and recovery?

Dig a little deeper and ask yourself:

What are you willing to do to ensure that all children, youth, men, and women are treated as with justice and equality?

What are you willing to give up to ensure such treatment?

What are you not willing to give up to ensure the equal and just treatment of others?

Would you confront the exploitive perpetrators even if it meant losing your own position of privilege or power?

Would you be willing to risk losing your professional position or your own pay in the name of justice?

If a victim became a survivor, would you put your practices into play to the extent that the survivor might actually thrive...possibly becoming more “successful” than you?

Would you join with survivors as equal partners in the fight against trafficking?

Would you readjust your positions or roles in order to make room for a survivor to lead the way - respecting and valuing their knowledge, gifts, and skills beyond their lived experience?

2) Put aside your pride. Recognize your own power and privilege. Address areas of blindness. Explore. Learn. Engage survivors as equal partners. And follow the personal and professional expertise of survivor-leaders.

Admittedly a strange source to acquire wisdom regarding one’s conduct and efforts in the anti-trafficking movement, Dr. Ian Malcolm, a character from the memorable film Jurassic Park (Universal Pictures, 1993) offers a succinct and brilliant summary regarding this piece of advice. Thus, I ask that you consider your level of sensitivity and/or respect for the unforeseen consequences of your actions as you reflect upon the following quotes:

“I’ll tell you the problem with the power that you’re using here, it didn’t require any discipline to attain it. You read what others had done and you took the next step. You didn’t earn the knowledge for yourselves, so you don’t take any responsibility for it. You stood on the shoulders of geniuses to accomplish something as fast as you could, and before you even knew what you had, you patented it, and packaged it, and slapped it on a plastic lunchbox, and now...you’re selling it.”;

“Don’t you see the danger...? ...You wield it like a kid that found his dad’s gun.”

While it is easy to get swept away by passion and/or a potential life “calling”, it is critical that those interested in joining in the anti-trafficking movement consider the fact that just because they “can” does not mean they “should.” Take the time to consider your motives, put in the time and effort required to more fully comprehend the complexities surrounding the issues of DST, and then follow the guidance of survivor-leaders who have experience in the anti-trafficking movement. Commit to earning the trust of survivor-leaders over time by actively

supporting their efforts, engaging in back-of-the-room leadership; and by giving of your time, resources, and skills in a manner that is guided by the survivor-leaders

3) First, “do no harm.” Surely, do not further exploit! In our voyeuristic sex and violence-obsessed society, the issue of human trafficking has become quite “the buzz.” On one hand, this has allowed for those genuinely committed to combating the issue of human trafficking to become a part of the movement in various capacities (e.g. demand reduction, prevention education, advocacy). However, it has also created the perfect platform of exploitation for those looking to artificially promote themselves and/or their careers (Marr, 2013; STSU, 2013). It has provided a stage in which in the name of “good works,” those who pose as partners in anti-trafficking movement inadvertently begin to resemble that of an abusive “boyfriend,” “pimp,” or “trick” (Countryman-Roswurm, 2014).

With this in mind, while it is tempting to start new efforts that will bring about praise and recognition, it is important that you do not act as a drain on the limited anti-trafficking resources. Join with others who have demonstrated long-term commitment to preventing and intervening in situations of DST and do not pull away from or duplicate services. Quietly support efforts that provide physical, sexual, emotional, mental, and spiritual treatment to survivors. Partner with others to convene, organize, mobilize, and educate multidisciplinary professionals and concerned citizen groups who wish to join in the anti-trafficking movement. Advocate for laws that more effectively prevent and intervene in cases of DST. And if you are ever gifted with the opportunity, engage in consistent no-matter-what kind of relationships with those who are at-risk of or who have been subjugated to trafficking in its various forms.

Loosen your position of power or status to partner and follow the leadership of survivor-leaders; compensate them appropriately, and respect their use of personal stories in a manner that is empowering – never provoking guilt or self-doubt.

If you are wearing an “abolitionist” shirt, but have not studied the abolitionary movement - take it off. Seek to understand the multi-faceted and complex historical nature of abolitionism. Consider the reason, cause, and un-intended consequences of your “abolitionary” action. Seek the input of minority populations and survivor-leaders alike in order to ensure that the messages you portray are not inaccurate or harmful.

If you are wearing an “abolitionist” shirt but see no survivor-leaders in front or even beside you - take it off. You may be well intended, but somewhere you lost your way. Invest more, seek to understand the issue deeper, engage the leadership of someone who has endured the atrocities of exploitation first hand. Please, I beg you, do not wear your shirt as a cheap badge of honor in a wave of our cultures

sex-obsessed anti-trafficking trend. This does not help.

4) Be the safe place and/or person who makes THE difference. Respond to the biopsychosocial AND spiritual being of survivors in a manner that promotes holistic health, recovery, peace, prosperity, and life-long wellness.

As social service, justice, and/or faith providers, there is a great need to move beyond the discussion of “rescuing” to that of empowerment, healing, and growth. After all, when the “rescuing” is done, what then? Will the “rescuers” allow for or empower further healing and growth? Will the survivor be able to thrive and prosper in a context that supports them to live their lives from a place of grace, mercy, energy, redemption, and love? Or, will they be merely sent back to the horrendous environments in which they originated? Even worse, will they be controlled and corralled in a manner that requires them to live from a place of emptiness and trauma - reminding them of “their place” and never letting them forget “where they came from?”

In order to reduce the likelihood of the later, it is critical that social service, justice, and faith providers within the anti-trafficking movement collaborate and intentionally organize and provide services in a manner that allows for biopsychosocial and spiritual wellness. This includes providing services that recognize and utilize individual strengths, resilience factors, and resources. It means providing services that are not only survivor-centered, but survivor-led. Furthermore, it means ensuring that, beyond professional services, survivors have the ability to be a part of a consistent life-long community, have access to job training and/or higher education, safe and affordable housing, etc. It means offering opportunities for survivors to thrive and prosper.

Much like recovery from a major physical injury, healing from the traumatic victimization of DST is a process that can require significant durations of time. Early in the recovery process intensive therapeutic intervention (Countryman-Roswurm & DiLollo, 2015) is often required but as progress is made, the need for formalized treatment changes. Thus, as multidisciplinary professionals it is important to realize that although we can wrap a myriad of services and supports to aid in the beginning of the healing process, the professional nature of our services and supports are limited and cannot provide the life-long setting for the healing process to continue and reach its culmination.

For this purpose, social workers in particular must work to engage outside supports that can connect with survivors in a very personal way. Local faith communities are an existing and natural resource that, if appropriately trained and equipped, can offer this support to survivors. Faith communities offer not only a natural fit for an environment in which survivors can explore and develop their spiritual selves that are central to holistic health and wellness (Zapf, 2005) but also

where survivors might develop meaningful, ongoing relationships that can create the context in which victory over trauma can progress. The faith community can offer opportunities for survivors to explore their spiritual beliefs, resolve questions that present throughout the lifetime, create a network of friends and pseudo-family that hold similar values and beliefs and even more so, obtain life-long opportunities to cyclically recover, develop, flourish, thrive, and lead.

Bearing this in mind, there are special considerations within the faith community. After all, as the spiritual component holds a space for great healing - so too is it a source of great pain. An untrained and uninformed group of well-meaning faith leaders can quickly harm a healing process and inflict deep wounds. I have far too frequently heard the words, “Please pray for her safety, for her to be returned unharmed,” from the same individuals and entities who, without consideration, exploit the “rescued” DST survivor in the media for the benefit of their own organization or efforts; kick a survivor out of their “program” because she can’t sit through an hour-long church service without smoking a cigarette; or over-ride the efforts of survivor-leaders rather than assist, support, join, and build up their efforts.

For many DST survivors, exposures to faith and spiritual practices have come in the form of a judgmental and controlling higher power - one who’s authority manipulated them into submission much like their abusive “boyfriend,” pimp, or trafficker (Countryman-Roswurm, 2014). Thus, when faith community leaders attempt to engage in authoritative, power-imbalanced relationships, it can contribute to additional pain and trauma. However, when faith community leaders intentionally engage in trained and informed practices with survivors - offering faith and spiritual practices that allow a sense of acceptance, forgiveness, peace, renewal, and love - a powerful transformation can occur. A victim can overcome. A victim can become a survivor-leader.

In sum, to care about those at-risk of or subjugated to DST means creating broader contexts in which survivors can explore their own thoughts, beliefs, morals, and values; realize, develop, and utilize their own gifts, talents, and skills; where they can speak up and speak out without fear of retribution; and where, rather than meekly follow the orders of others or step to the side only speaking when spoken to, be genuinely treated as leaders in their own communities (Countryman-Roswurm & DiLollo, 2015). If you disregard the importance of following survivor-leaders, than perhaps you should reconsider your intention in serving marginalized populations or engaging in social justice issues. However, if you value the true uplifting of those who have overcome, then as a non-survivor leader, I thank you for standing up for what is right and just. Thank you for acting in a compassionate and understanding manner for the least of these. Thank you for your commitment to partner and support in the anti-trafficking movement.

Lastly, if you yourself are a survivor in hiding, may you rise up.

A Call to Survivors and Survivor-Leaders

As a fellow survivor, whether silent or outspoken, I thank you for your courage to fight against your own personal experiences of abuse, exploitation, and sex trafficking. I appreciate your bravery to not only survive, but also thrive and prosper, despite the horrendous acts of violence you have endured. Whatever your level of direct involvement in the anti-trafficking movement - your experiential knowledge is greatly needed in this world in order to combat the cultural norms which fuel the continuance of this mistreatment of our country's women and children. Do not be afraid. Do not remain silent. Rise up. Ask yourself:

Should a little girl, abused by her father, stay on the ground when he slaps her there?

Should a little girl, molested by her grandfather, embrace that the only way to receive love is through providing sex?

Should a little girl, a casualty of behavioral health, abandonment, loss, succumb to a life of misery and shame?

Should a young girl, exposed to street life, give up on a dream to sleep in a bed of her own?

Should a young girl, sold as a commodity, fade into her life history that what can be stolen, may as well be bought?

Should a young girl, who has been raped, beaten, and choked until near death, wed the man who has done this to her?

No! This child - this woman - she represents you and me but more importantly, she represents all of those who remain ensnared in trafficking and other forms of exploitation. And we need you!

Do not feel overwhelmed - *YOU* are not alone! Join in loyal alliance with others who have survived atrocities. Be open to call upon others who may offer their assistance. All people are needed and in fact, critical in the anti-trafficking movement. There is no other way to address the many complexities which create the contexts in which trafficking continues in isolation from one another. Rather, in order to address any multifaceted social justice and human rights issues, such as

trafficking, people from all walks of life must join together and work in a like-minded manner.

Visualize a community - your city, your state, *OUR* country, *OUR* world - in which all people are treated with value, purpose, dignity, justice, and respect.

Envision citizen groups and multidisciplinary professionals intentionally collaborating for a greater good - effectively preventing and intervening in cases of homelessness, abuse, exploitation, racism, sexism, addiction, and trafficking (Wenzl, 2013; Wenzl & Wistrom, 2013).

Imagine a place where, in the name of humanitarianism, peace, and justice, people work tirelessly to equal the playing field between the most privileged and those who are at-risk for, or who have survived, the most unspeakable tragedies, including that of DST. Now, lead this possibility.

Wherever *YOU* are - no matter your role in combating human trafficking - *YOU* are a valued part of the solution.

Know who *YOU* are...who *YOU* are truly created to be. But, never forget where you come from. Although this may include tragic mistreatment - this does not reflect your significance. *YOU* are strong. *YOU* are capable. *YOU* are a great instrument for change. Some will judge you. Others will attempt to exploit you. And more will simply be deeply intimidated by the way you threaten their elevated sense of power through your fervent promotion of social justice. Be patient. Do not crumble. Do not cave. Connect with other people who see you as whole and healthy (Countryman-Roswurm & DiLollo, 2015; Countryman-Roswurm, 2014; Countryman-Roswurm & Bolin, 2014). Stay committed to the struggle.

As a survivor, may you be empowered to serve as a leader only in a manner in which you are comfortable. Never do anything that feels exploitative or traumatic to you (Countryman-Roswurm & Patton, 2013). Embrace and respect your feelings and internal guide. Feel the freedom and support to say, “no” - without justification. It makes you no less of a survivor-leader to take care of yourself and those close to you. It is only in your own healing that you can help to take care of those around you. Thus, in this breath, in response to your strenuous efforts and revisiting of traumatic stress, do not allow your own friends and family to become casualties in this war against trafficking. Furthermore, tread lightly in your own walk of empowerment so that you are sensitive not to exploit other survivors with whom you are blessed and privileged to travel beside in their own personal journeys of health and restoration.

Remember that the details of your courage - your recovery and redemption along with how you share your unique skills, talents, efforts, qualifications, and interests - are far more important than the details of your specific story of tragedy.

May you not ever allow anyone to keep you in “your place.” May *YOU* become hopeful and impassioned - reflecting back to *OUR* world your true value

and purpose. May *YOU* stand up for yourself and others who are marginalized. May *YOU* join in unison and authenticity with other survivor-leaders in efforts of combating social injustices beyond direct instances of DST. And may *YOU* serve as a leader in mobilizing your own movement towards justice, peace, and freedom for all.

I hold you in a place of deep appreciation, connectedness, and love.

Now Rise, Unite, Support!

WE all have our own stories. *WE* have our own identities. *WE* have our own gifts, talents, and skills. As *WE* rise, unite, and support one another in the anti-trafficking movement, it is critical that *WE* hold these unique characteristics and experiences close. *YOU* - whoever *YOU* are - never forget these things. Remember what it was that broke your heart and lifted your spirit in a manner that impassioned you to being a social worker or other multidisciplinary professional, concerned community member, or survivor-leader desirous of joining the anti-trafficking movement. On the days you feel overwhelmed, frustrated, or as though you are drowning in darkness and sorrow, consider these things that have led you to where you are today. Allow these things to sustain your intentional work to not only “do no harm,” but also do good, promote recovery, and empower prosperity. *YOU* are an ally. *YOU* are a survivor-leader.

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