

Addressing the abuser/ perpetrator/ buyers is the solution to end gender based violence – sexual exploitation / sex trafficking

By Shandra woworuntu

How we can achieve a global solution to combat human trafficking especially on sex trafficking which is the violation of human right? The answer is developing a framework to end the demand for both sex trafficking and prostitution, addressing the root causes of victimization and impunity, ensuring the application of the non-punishment principal for victims of trafficking and by adopting the National Referral Mechanisms developed by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.

This is my story and I put it in a poem to educate our community and society that sex industry is abuse and violence to women and girls. Originally, I curated for design and violence that's published by MoMA – museum of modern art in New York. I identified that I have to talk a bit deeper about it and I revised it in 2021 and I would like you all do something after you read this piece:

I'm a little girl dancing with butterflies in the garden. I hold a flower and lift up the corner of my tiny, floral-print summer dress while singing "Little butterfly where do you go?" I'm a typical 10-year-old girl who loves to play in the river, letting the current take me out to sea. Climbing to the top of an oak tree, looking down at what seems to be the bottom of the Earth, I reach out to grab the stars under the moonlight of the Indonesian night sky.

Everything is beautiful. Everything is perfect.

Suddenly I awake. Not in a garden or by the banks of a river, and certainly not in an old oak tree. Not even in Indonesia. I find myself locked in a cold, darkroom. Cigarette smoke burns my eyes. The smell of sweat on the sheet I lie on is repulsive.

From a dream to a living nightmare, in an instant.

Just months earlier my anxious fingers danced on the keyboard at the international bank where I worked. Then, my concern was the pulsing of the stock market's

heart. Exchange-rate speculation and currency exchange kept me awake at night. Now what keeps me up is fear.

I'm not alone. I scan the room and notice many of the other trapped women are much younger than me. I'm no longer surprised to see their bruised faces, fresh wounds, and pale complexions due to untreated illnesses and malnourishment. One of the younger girls starts sobbing. There's nothing I can do; there's nothing anyone can do. Unlike her, I've learned to cry on the inside, keeping my tears for myself. Be a good girl and say yes!!! to everything to save myself from the hunting knife and baseball bat. Once for a while, the traffickers will cut the skin on my neck.

And the guns. My traffickers think the guns are what scares us, what keeps us subservient. But for some of us, a bullet would bring relief. At least death by a bullet would offer a quicker, more humane death than the one we die slowly as sex slaves. Still, the guns are a symbol of control, an illusion of power.

The humiliation I feel from strangers gazing at my naked body forces me back to the dream. The memories of dancing with those butterflies keep me distracted, keeps part of me alive. When they put a gun to my head, I return to those butterflies, asking them to chase the fear away.

I feel so small. I am nothing. I am lost. My life is over.

What have they done to me? To be sold as a sex slave, deprived of food, locked in darkness, barely clothed...I am powerless.

My nose is filled with the residue of the cocaine they've forced me to sniff, the lingering odor of marijuana smoke hanging in the air, and the bittersweet traces of the crack I was made to smoke. My throat burns with the taste of stiff, cheap whiskey—one of the only things they offer to nourish my weak body.

Sleep-deprived and fading in and out of consciousness, I'm forced to serve any paying client—men old and young, fat and lean; their money unites them as buyers, reducing me to a commodity.

My name is Candy, why they changed my name? They put price tags on me, \$120, \$160, \$250, and \$350.

Candy, customer..... room no 2, Candy Dress up go for escort. Candy, massage room no 3. No one knows if I was triggered to hear "CANDY" No one knows, I say "NO" inside me. This body is no longer mine; this body is belonging to the customers who pay the traffickers. I walk with fear entering the room. I keep my fear inside me. The more I show this fear, the more abuse I get.

They throw me down on the dirty mattress; the stench of it has made me vomit more than once. Sometimes they turn me around and have their way with me; at least like this, I don't have to see the evil in their eyes. When I'm on my back, I blankly stare at the ceiling, allowing my tears to fall down the sides of my face while praying for the clients to finish quickly. I've become their human rag doll, one with a \$30,000 debt.

When they're finished, I'm moved to another room; maybe it's a hotel or an apartment building. All I know is that my captors' routine is to transfer me under a cloak of darkness. Always at night when the city seems so quiet, so distant.

I wonder: How many others suffer this same hell? How many more were lied to? How many girl and young women are hidden away and forced to give up tiny pieces of their soul one trick at a time?

And then—a glimmer of hope. A spark of courage ignites something within me. I am determined. I will find a way out. I will find my way home.

From a tiny bathroom window in a second-story apartment building, I jump. The fresh air. A split-second of freedom. I am that butterfly from my dreams.

I am free.

This piece is the life of people in the prostitution, most of them are victims of exploitation and trafficking, When someone is recruited for the sex trade, they have no choice because there is no choice. "THIS IS NOT A CHOICE"

Victims and survivors deserve EQUAL JUSTICE which is punishment of the perpetrators, prosecution of the sex buyers, traffickers, and their associates.

Victims and survivors should receive SERVICES to help and support them in their reintegration and social inclusion to fully experience the freedom to live with dignity, have the opportunity to work, and able to achieve their dream. We know we can achieve this through the EQUALITY MODEL.

We need global action, local action, and individual action. Together we will act. Yes! We will act together to eradicate commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking without forgetting the most important part, focusing on the elimination of demand that drives the commercial sex industry. This will comprehensively transform our society and women and children can live lives of freedom without the constant threat of exploitation and trafficking.

I am one of the millions of victims and survivors.

The question is: Will we let the abuse and violence continue?

Human Rights are not awarded but endowed to each of us as human beings, our dignity should not be taken by anyone.

Let's create our world free from human trafficking. Let's make our generation of survivors the last one and promise the next generation of girls that we will not stand for their exploitation and victimization.

WE NEED YOUR COMMITMENT, We need global action, local action, and individual action in ending trafficking and all forms of sexual violence and exploitation. We have strong international laws: the UN Palermo Protocol ratified by 189 countries, the Council of Europe convention, the EU Directive, as well as national and state laws, and yet, we still witness a very low number of inter-governmental partnerships, extremely low levels of prosecutions and convictions and victim mostly are undetected and unprotected. We must urgently implement policies and legislation to protect human dignity, punish perpetrators and bring justice and hope to victims.

Post pandemic, we need to continue our work to develop comprehensive proactive and interactive prevention mechanisms, including addressing migration, the demand, supply chains, trafficking for the production of pornography and child sexual abuse materials, and develop holistic comprehensive victim services. I want to ensure a victim and survivor centered, gender sensitive and trauma informed approach in all your national anti-trafficking work, to establish National Advisory

Councils of Survivors of Trafficking, to create and pass legislation to protect women and children, so that no more women and girls will have experience I have had.