

Article in commemoration of UN World Day against Trafficking in Persons - 2022

In 2013, the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) adopted Resolution A/RES/68/192 and designated July 30 as the World Day against Trafficking in Persons. This resolution declared that such a day was necessary to *“raise awareness of the situation of victims of human trafficking and for the promotion and protection of their rights.”* UN World Day 2022 is being held under the theme “Use and Abuse of Technology.”

“The Life of a Victim”

Help assist law enforcement Officers and other partners in identifying Human Trafficking victims and putting Traffickers behind bars.

“Latoya” was homeless by the age of 12 and had been coerced by her boyfriend “Shawn” into working as a sex slave. She was only allowed 4 hours of sleep a night, and her trafficker also made her addicted to crack cocaine. One day he approached her and told her in so many words, ‘I want you to have sex with this guy for money,’ Latoya said. “I was very uncomfortable and I kept saying no, I didn’t want to do it but he kept telling me, ‘If you love me, you’ll do this. It’s just one thing. Just try it.”

After nearly 30 more minutes of constant pressure, “Latoya” agreed to have sex with the man. What she thought would be a one-time thing became an everyday routine for the next few weeks. Night after night and bar after bar, “Latoya” would go out with “Shawn” while he advertised her to potential “suitors.” “Latoya” thought she loved him. She felt she could deal with the physical toll the trafficking took on her body. It turned out that the hardest part to deal with was the emotional and psychological effects according to her.

“Being able to sleep with that many people and live with myself and get up every day and keep doing it and just lying there being helpless was so hard,” Latoya said.

“When I first started working, I would have breakdowns in the middle of a session. I couldn’t do it. Until finally, I kind of just separated me and who I am when I’m working. Otherwise, I would go crazy. I would lose it. You numb your mind.”

“I remember one time, I was just outside smoking a cigarette and someone asked me for a lighter, and he had somebody watching me. I got beat for that later, and it was just because someone asked me to use my lighter.”

Because I wasn’t allowed to talk to anybody. When we went out, I had to tell him my order to tell the waiter. I couldn’t look at anybody. I had to look at him or the ground. And if you messed up in public, then you were going to get beat as soon as you got back home. And he’d make sure nobody heard. He’d turn up the TV. And if you cried or screamed or anything, then he would take you out for a drive, and you never knew if death was going to be an option. You never knew.”

Dear reader, These and other stories about human trafficking do not have to end in tragedy. Every contact made with a victim is an opportunity to take them out of the cycle of exploitation. Latoya's human trafficking story has ended, but her story as a survivor is being written right now.

IF YOU SEE SOMETHING! SAY SOMETHING!

The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Unit (ATIPU)

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