

CASE STUDY

KATE'S STORY USA

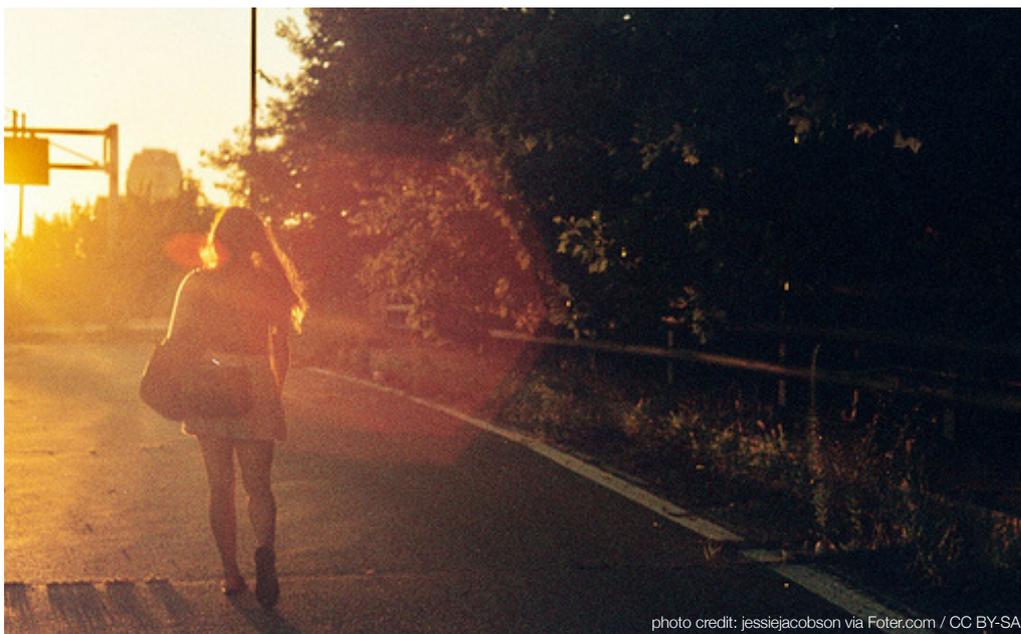
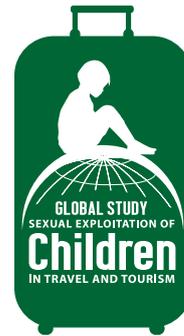


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I'm a survivor of commercial sexual exploitation of children. My very first memories are of my exploiter sexually molesting me and raping me. I was exploited from this time up until early adolescence, to support my exploiter's drug addiction. His primary clientele were truckers. I grew up along a major interstate, and so I could walk down a block from my house and see the major interstate there, and there were truckers all along.

I was taken to a truck stop, and this was always very much in the middle of the night, or my exploiter would bring truckers to our house. I was forced to drink, or I was administered drugs. We had a backyard garage, there were parties there and we actually had a mechanic's garage where you would go when you would need your oil changed. So I was put down there. And so men would come down, would rape me and then they would go back up to the parties, so there was always a lot of drinking and drugs around.

This went on for about ten years. I was around 12 or 13 years old when my exploiter left.

I was exploited in the late 70s-early 80s, but this is still going on. This happens all around the United States

It's harder for transient populations, including truckers, who are exploiting children to be caught because of the mobile nature of their job.

As a man you are supposed to have access to sex whenever you want. If you're traveling, this is a convenient way to do it. The thing though, to me, that's hopeful is that truckers, also, on the flip side have a particular ability to be able to help police. Because usually what will happen is down the line you'll see the car, you'll see the exploiter who will be sitting there while the trafficked people are going up and down, knocking on doors of the trucks. And what truckers are able to do is call the national hotline – the 1-888-373-7888- and give the hotline a license plate number.

At Truckers against Trafficking we hear stories of particular truckers being able to help take down an entire regional ring. So that is incredibly empowering and hopeful for me.

I think a lot of time the general perception of sexually exploited people is, well, there's the happy hooker. Or, there's the disposable child. Or the child is drug addicted. Or – the exploited person is smiling, saying he or she is having fun. But, what they

don't understand is when I was a kid I looked like I was having fun because I wanted it to be over with quicker. I knew what the person was paying for.

USE YOUR VOICE TO SAY NO

When you're purchasing sex, most of the people you are buying sex from have been sexually abused as children. And so you are perpetuating this sense of violence that you feel like, or, you've even been told that you have the right to do, but you really don't. This person is not an object. And at the same time you, personally have the power to stop that right there. Particularly if we look at the men who are most often purchasing sex – they're white, suburban, married, have children, very affluent. You are some of the most powerful men on the planet. If you choose to use your voice to say "No, we're not going to do this" that cannot only change one person's life - we can absolutely change the entire culture.

WHEN YOU ARE TRAVELLING, BE MINDFUL

One of the biggest things people can do is just to use your own voice. So much of trafficking and exploitation happens in public spaces, and we might be surprised by that, but in terms of my own story, I was taken to truck stops. People saw me. Granted, we looked like a father/daughter, we looked like a family, but at the same time the very fact that I was 4, 5, 6 years old at a truck stop, in the middle of the night, on a school night – that really should raise some flags.

KEEP GOING, YOU CAN RECOVER

I feel compelled to speak out and to do research and to use my voice. Because I know how incredibly lucky I am. That said, the process is very long. As much as this was such a difficult environment for me to grow up in, when I ultimately did leave – successfully, thankfully – it was incredibly hard. I was a stranger in a new city and I left everything I knew behind, even though living in that place was very painful. I moved to this new place where I really didn't know a lot of people and it just took a lot of time to heal. So once again, I was isolated – even though I was isolated by my own agency – but it's still isolation. And so it just took a very long time to recover and yet it was very possible.

Listen to your authentic voice. Who are you authentically meant to be in the world? I always knew I was supposed to be an academic. It was those things that I always knew were in my authentic being that I was able to do more and more and more. And now I'm getting my PhD.

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