

Human Trafficking Panel Highlight Scripts 2012

Amira Birger

“Women and men that I’ve worked with from ages six to sixty five, any woman or man that’s in prostitution that I’ve met, that I have personally worked with has experienced sexual abuse as a child, and started prostituting before the age of eighteen, which means they were not prostituting, they were victims of trafficking. Which then turned into prostitution, and then that word is still stuck with them for the rest of their lives.”

“I think that a lot of us come from brokenness already. So when a kid is acting out you want to justify that as a kid being a kid, or they’re a rebel, or whatever, and those kids that are acting out like that are the kids that most need the intervention. That need somebody to sit down and understand why they’re acting like that, ask them specific questions, and figure out what is going on with them, and I think we can do that by creating healthy families, which means giving parents education.”

“I know you guys are probably all thinking of somebody you can recognize right now that your thinking of that’s in your family or in your neighborhood that you’ve seen these kind of signs, but don’t know what to do about it. I always hear so much you know, “be the voice for the voiceless”, “be the voice for the voiceless”, but it’s not our job to be the voice for the voiceless, it’s our job to help them find their own voice. To empower them to find their own voices and to love them, because every single one of them has a light inside of them that’s just waiting to be lit.”

Melissa Brisbin

“Isolation is always key traffickers always isolate their victims, before they make them victims. So because of that one of the approaches that we take is a very relational approach to restoration. So the first thing that we try to do when we work with anybody is establish relationship. We try to earn their trust, because if you think about the culture that they’re coming from, and I think that this is important, to know the culture of your client, so that you best know how to serve them. If you think of the culture that they come from, they’ve had broken promise after broken promise, neglect, abuse, in a state of survival.”

“So one of the first things we do is try to establish some sense of trust, and I don’t know about you but, I come from an excellent family, and all kinds of blessings, but I’m not really open about my life. You know what I mean, but yet we expect them to just come and tell us everything we want to know like... almost an interview kind of thing. That’s not going to work, I mean it’s not, you meet people on the street, and you can’t interview them, and try to get them to tell you about their life, and things like that. So I don’t know why we translate that into social work, and expect it to work in that arena.”

“Our program is highly individualistic. We have twelve pillars of restoration, and basically that’s the whole skeleton of our program. The rest of it is handpicked, and designed to be particular to this person. I don’t know how many of you are parents, but if you are, and you have more than one child, can you parent them the same way? No, they’re highly individualistic people. I used to be a daycare teacher for two year olds, and I couldn’t handle one of them the same way. One of them, when she would act out I had to have her hold my pant leg, because if I put her in time out, within two minutes she’d be underneath the table, and the other one, he could sit in time out, and after a minute he was perfect again. Another one I had to tell him, “no more tickles today” and that was enough. You know each of them are so individualistic in the way that they handle growth, and discipline, and things like that and it’s the same thing with these people, they’re people, right? They’re not like a broken clientele where you address everything the same way. There are different things, the stories are very similar, but the trauma that they experienced is experienced differently for them.”

Jeff Shaw

“Why is good law and good policy important? And I want to say three things, one you’ve heard about the importance of good recovery, and good education, and awareness, and really for any of that to carry any weight, or to be accomplished in our society. We have to facilitate the recovery and reintegration of the victims through our laws and through our policy.”

“So definitions these are important to know. What constitutes human trafficking?”

“What we’ve said is an element of coercion or deception and ok great, “coercion or deception” what are those terms? Coercion comes in a lot of forms, we probably just think threat of death, or serious bodily injury that is true, actual violence threat of violence is coercion, but also something we know as blackmail.

Another is documents if the man, the pimp, the trafficker takes the legal documents social security card, driver's license, Visa, certificate of citizenship and holds those hostage to keep that woman under their control that's a form of trafficking.”

Dottie Laster

“Anything that I do with awareness and education and remember that a lot of things I say or write get cut out of stuff but, I always talk about, and I think that’s one thing especially with our office here we can repeat many times. Any minor in commercial sex is a victim of trafficking. Commercial sex is stripping, pornography, and prostitution. So whenever I do education awareness, like today, I make sure I say that at least once if not five times, because it takes a while before it sinks in.”

“So education and awareness that can be so many things, I like to make sure it gets where we need it in the community. So we can’t have our leaders in offices able to carry out laws and policy, if we don’t have community will to do so, but then when the victims wind up in places seeking help. We need those professionals to also understand, so I kind of look at education awareness on a couple of different planes. So for example if a trafficking victim presents as mentally ill and they wind up in a mental institution. Is the staff there knowledgeable of what to look for, what the indicators are. Where would they go if they think they might have a trafficking victim, and that’s something that needs to be built, whether it’s law enforcement, mental health, hospitals, a lot of my clients my victims have been through hospitals asking for help, and were misunderstood and actually not given help. Then I have a wonderful example of a nurse who actually was educated on this, who actually saved a victim herself.”