

# Human Trafficking and the Media

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# Media: What They Want

- “Can I film a rescue?”
- “Can I talk to a slave?”
- “Do you have someone I can interview who was a sex slave?”
- “We need pictures of the victim. Can you supply us a victim?”



# Striking a Balance

## Want

- Public awareness
- Respectful coverage
- Effective media strategy
- Stories of survival
- Agency recognized

## Don't Want

- Victim in danger
- Insensitive reporting
- Lack of control
- Re-traumatized victim
- Agency compromised

# Safety First

- Protect client
- Protect client's family
  - Protect staff



# The Conflict

- Agency wants “good press”
- Case details already in media
- Others taking credit for “your work”
- Media sees you and agency as non cooperative
- Identifying your services may put people at risk
- Law enforcement will lose trust if you talk about case

# Media Guidelines:

## Questions for Each Agency

- Does your agency have media policy guidelines?
- Does your agency acknowledge specific cases?
- Does staff talk to media or spokesperson?
- Is survivor mentally ready?
- Is survivor empowered enough to say “no?”
- Has survivor done too much publicity, feels burnt out?

# NGOs and the Media

- Identify spokesperson from your agency
- Provide media training
- Front-line staff should not be in media
- Develop relationships with reporters, writers
- Educate about issue and services, not specific case



# Case Study #1



- D.M.
- Eager to speak to media
- Interviewed by CNN, Channel 4 (London), HBO, *US News & World Report*, *Washington Post*
- Spoke at demonstrations, rallies
- Pursued civil claim

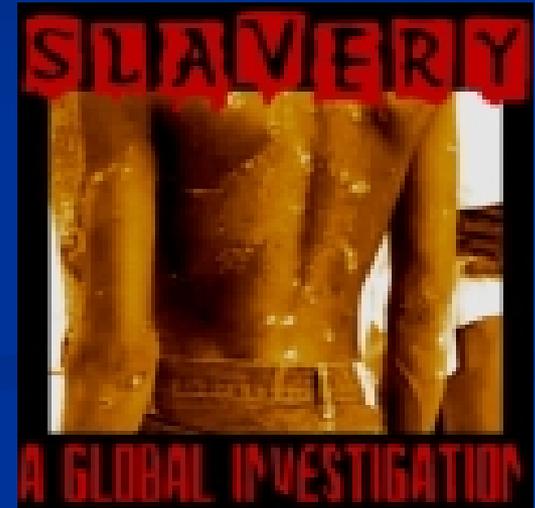
# Lessons Learned: Case #1

- No media during ongoing investigation
- Extra prep with client
- Prepared statements, written information easier to control
  - Testimony and hearings
  - Press release
  - Press conference



# Lessons Learned: Case #1

- Information can taint court hearing
- Media can reach home country; news travels fast
- Do not have control of final content; might be disappointed with portrayal
- Trafficked victim has right to change his/her mind



# Case Study #2

- Chandra Bulathwatte
- On ABC News few days after escape
- Case involves possible death threats
- Thought job was for three months, told must stay five years
- Little to no pay, no contact with outside, no medical attention, locked inside two years



# Lessons Learned: Case #2

- Coordinate with all federal and local agencies
- Need to explain U.S. media
  - May be sensationalized
  - May be out of context
  - Media independent (not state, not law enforcement, not services)
  - **People often think they must do media to get assistance**



# Law Enforcement and NGOs –

## Competing Goals



- Look for evidence
  - Outrage general public with details, photos
  - Build case
  - Help spread word
- Protect victim's identity
  - Assess safety at all times
  - Provide background on human trafficking
  - Talk about services, collaboration with law enforcement



# High-Profile Cases

- May involve:
  - Multiple victims
  - Lengthy investigation, then raid
  - Both federal, local law enforcement
- Lead law enforcement agency done extensive planning
- NGO may only know vague details in order to prepare



Agents took 16 Mexicans into custody in North Carolina  
(Courtesy WRAL)

# High-Profile Cases

- TV and print media are VERY interested
- Victims may be taken to hotel for interviews
- Every step taken to protect victims' whereabouts, well-being
  - DO NOT leak hotel location or provider information to press
- Do not discuss these cases at work, home, anyplace

# Case Study #3

- Long Island domestic servitude case
- Media involvement from beginning
- Photos showing victims, signs of abuse
- Photos of traffickers and family



# Lessons Learned: Case #3

- Results of media exposure in Long Island case
  - Raised awareness of domestic servitude
  - Good example of local, federal law enforcement working together
  - Disgust, outrage at abusive treatment of victims



# Lessons Learned: Case #3

## Key points to remember:

- Law enforcement furnished photos to media
- Law enforcement gave information to media
- Law enforcement described case
- NGO cared for survivors
- NGO did not seek publicity
- NGO received recognition after case was adjudicated

# Case Study #4



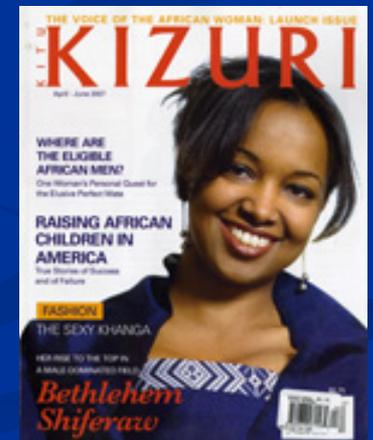
Theresa Mubang



- At age 11, Evelyn Chumbow trafficked by Theresa Mubang
- Mubang tricked many young girls
  - Work as cooks and maids
  - Never allowed to go to school
  - Verbally abused them
  - Beat them with high heel shoes, broom handle, cable wire, her fists

# Lessons Learned: Case #4

- Better after case closed
- Also use local media outlets and targeted audiences
- Well-prepared survivor walks away feeling better about media work
- Trafficking survivor may decide to become advocate



# Acknowledging a Power Differential



Dependent  
(Trafficker)



Dependent  
(Agency or Org.)

# Acknowledging a Power Differential



**Dependent (Trafficker)** → **Co-Dependent (Agency or Org.)** → **Independent (Self)**

# Eight Years and Counting...

- TVPA passed in 2000
- Human trafficking new issue to most people
- Most providers believed victims should not communicate with media
- Some providers gave media access to clients with negative effects



# ...And Now

- Some survivors feel ready to speak out about their experience
- Prepare, prepare, prepare
  - Different from rehearsing
- Know your media people
- Go slowly
- Control the environment



# Tips and Best Practices: Working with Media

- Ask to use silhouette, no photos and/or changed names
- Use radio to locate new victims
- Avoid media exploitation
- Think “media” with diplomatic immunity cases
- What is good for your organization or trafficking movement, might not be good for trafficking victim

# Give the Public a Call-to-Action



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**CALL the National Human  
Trafficking Resource Center:  
1-888-3737-888**

- **Be vigilant** – Best defense against modern-day slavery is vigilant public
  - Cases often reported by public
- **Volunteer** with anti-trafficking program (research, translation)
- **Donate clothes, equipment** – Most organizations accept clean clothes, old computers, old cell phones, etc.
- **Donate money** to women's economic initiative in developing country or U.S. organization
- **Help with publicity** – Spread word, tell others

# Recommendation:

- 1) National Center for Victims of Crime's "Victims Rights & the Media"
- 2) Safe Horizon's "Guideline for Collaborating with the Media for Social and Legal Service Providers Working with Survivors of Human Trafficking"
- 3) Ketchum's "Reporter Guidelines"



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