

BELLO CASE: DOMESTIC SERVITUDE

RECRUITMENT OF VICTIM 1

While visiting Nigeria, Trafficker recruits the first victim to move to the United States to take care of the trafficker's infant, promising to pay her, allow her to attend school, and send money back to her family.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES INFORMED

An acquaintance writes anonymously to Children's Services that victim is being abused.

EXPLOITATION

Victim 2's living/working conditions are the same as Victim 1's but she is told that she must work for at least three years before she can attend school.

ESCAPE

Using money given to her by friends of the trafficker, Victim 2 escapes by cab to a church, where the police and then the FBI are alerted.

ARREST

Trafficker is charged with multiple trafficking-related crimes.

2002

2003

2004

2005

2006

2010

EXPLOITATION

Using a fake passport the trafficker brings her to the United States, where the victim works seven days a week, sleeping only a few hours a night. She is not allowed to go to school and she is severely physically abused.

INVESTIGATION

Child Services visits Trafficker. Victim is hidden. Trafficker says that Victim is her cousin, performed only basic chores, and has returned to Nigeria.

ESCAPE

An acquaintance overhears Victim being beaten and arranges to help her escape.

RECRUITMENT OF VICTIM 2

Trafficker recruits another young woman from Nigeria. Victim's parents agree that she will not be paid, but that she will attend school.

FBI INVESTIGATION

FBI interviews Victim 2 and tracks down Victim 1.

A GEORGIA WOMAN induced two young Nigerian women to enter the U.S. illegally to care for her child, and then used physical violence and threats to force victims to work long hours without pay or adequate food.

Traffickers' Methods and Strategies

Recruitment

A Nigerian-born U.S. citizen, the trafficker used family connections to recruit the victims from her home country and promised them both the opportunity to receive an education in the United States.

Exploitation

She encouraged the victims to lie to immigration officials. Once in the United States, the trafficker used several common tactics to intimidate the victims: she restricted the victims' contact with other people, both in Georgia and back home in Nigeria; she claimed to have influence in the victims' home country and threatened to punish the victims' families; she used the victims' undocumented status against them by threatening them with arrest and deportation; and she threatened to, and often did, physically assault and torture the victims.

The trafficker abused the immigration process by using photos of the victims to procure fraudulent passports for both of them, changing Victim 1's last name and giving Victim 2 a British passport with an entirely fictional name. The trafficker had prior experience creating false identification, initially entering the United States with a falsified Belgian passport, obtaining two Georgia drivers' licenses and three social security numbers for herself,

and purchasing a home under a false name. Neither victim went through the process of procuring a work visa.

The trafficker had both victims "try out" for the job by working for friends who later assisted in bringing both victims to the United States.

The trafficker also employed calculated tactics to ensure the subservience and humiliation of her victims. In addition

PEOPLE INVOLVED

- 1 Trafficker
- 10+ Bystanders
- 2 Victims

to taking care of the trafficker's baby at all hours, cooking, and cleaning the house, both victims were forced to cut the grass using a knife, wash the backyard fence with bleach each morning, and wash every

bathroom in the house daily. They also had to sweep with a dust pan and brush even though the trafficker owned a vacuum cleaner, wash dishes by hand even though there was a dishwasher, and do laundry by hand even though there was a washing machine.

Case Resolution

The trafficker was convicted by jury of two counts of forced labor, two counts of trafficking with respect to forced labor, unlawful conduct with respect to documents in furtherance of slave trafficking, harboring undocumented immigrants for financial gain, and, two counts of unlawful procurement of naturalization. She was sentenced to 11 years in prison, and was ordered to pay \$144,200 in restitution. The case was brought jointly by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia and the Civil Rights Division of the DOJ.

Opportunities for Intervention and Key Sources of Risk to Traffickers

In the most frustrating failed intervention, several neighbors became suspicious after seeing Victim 1 working outdoors in the winter, and one neighbor reported the trafficker to the Gwinnett County Department of Family and Children's Services (DFACS). DFACS opened an investigation, interviewed neighbors, and even interviewed the trafficker in her home while Victim 1 was there. The trafficker falsely told the DFACS investigator that Victim 1 was a relative who had returned to Nigeria. The investigation was closed due to lack of evidence.

Victim 2 dropped the trafficker's daughter off at preschool each morning, where she regularly interacted with preschool employees. One employee noticed her bruises and saw her crying, and Victim 2 described the abuse. However, the employee did not call the police because she was a friend of the trafficker.

The trafficker went on vacation three times while Victim 1 was working for her, leaving Victim 1 to work for two friends and the trafficker's sister. Though the sister and one of the friends spoke Victim 1's language and heard of the abuse, neither reported the matter to the police. The trafficker's sister was also aware of Victim 2, helped Victim 2 secretly develop photographs of her injuries, and encouraged her to report the abuse to the police, though she did not call the police herself.

Conclusion

This case demonstrates the combined effect of a close-knit cultural community and the victimization of individuals who do not know their rights. On many occasions, Victims 1 and 2 had opportunities to call the police or reach out for help, but they were made to believe that they could not trust law enforcement. Their fears were also confirmed to them when bystanders—including at least 10 of the trafficker's friends and acquaintances—saw the victims in a state of servitude and yet failed to provide concrete assistance.

Though bystanders may observe the warning signs of trafficking and may even be informed about the trafficking directly by the victim, they are sometimes hesitant to act because of personal ties to the trafficker. Therefore in addition to noticing warning signs of human trafficking and exploitation, communities should be encouraged and incentivized to report abuse to the appropriate authorities, rather than expecting vulnerable victims to seek out help themselves.

Additionally, this case stands to illustrate the challenges that face victims even after they escape their traffickers. Victim 2 ran away from the home without knowing where she could find help, but fortunately was connected quickly to a non-profit that provides services to trafficking victims. Victim 1, in contrast, lived in fear of her trafficker until she was discovered by the FBI and assisted in the prosecution. Providing victims' services such as housing, legal assistance and counseling should be priority for local governments. ■