I'm going to be talking about human trafficking and modern-day slavery in the United States and around the world picking up on a lot of what Janja talked about in the first half. I'm going to go over some of the basics for those of you who didn't get here at 11 and didn't--weren't able to hear the first half. But just to give you an idea of my credentials. I've been researching--Oh, my name isn't up there. My name is Dr. Kate Transchel. Sorry. And I've been researching human trafficking since 1998 when I met my first victim of the sex slave trade in Eastern Europe. And I have--my husband and I have been going to Eastern Europe to such exotic places as Chisinau, Moldova, Transnistria, places you've all heard about [laughter]. Ukraine, you've heard of Ukraine but you've never heard of some of the places I've been. Going and talking, interviewing people who have been rescued from the slave trade, telling about their stories so I'll be talking--I'll be telling you some of those stories and talking about some of their experiences.
But just to kind of get us started, I wanted to bring in this quote from Sally Lieber. This is from 2005 and the problem has gotten exponentially worse since 2005. And she is saying here as you can read that the problem of human trafficking has reached into the neighborhoods throughout California. And the picture that you see on the other side of this slide is the poster for the national hotline. If you think--and by the time I've finished by presentation, you'll know a little bit more about what trafficking looks like. If you think you see a trafficking situation, whatever you do, do not intervene. Traffickers are very nasty folk. A lot of people have been killed or victimized trying to save victims. I've interviewed them, not the dead ones [laughter]. Do not insert yourself in a trafficking situation. We have a national hotline for that, the number is 1-888-3737-888, that number again folks is 1-888-3737-888. If you call, an investigation will be launched, you do not have to give your name, no questions will be asked. Excuse me and I'm recovering from colds so we'll see how far this goes.
Again, just to pick up on some of what Janja was talking about. There are numerous types of trafficking. The most predominant is sexual slavery; about 80 percent of the slaves today are sex slaves. Labor exploitation is growing rapidly, our demand for cheaply produced goods and cheap food fuels the slave industry. And in fact, if you come on Thursday, Justin Dillon, who has a website called The Slavery Footprint, he's going to be bringing a couple of iPads and you can type in what kind of products you buy, what kind of lifestyle you have, and what have you and you'll be able to see how many slaves are supporting your existence because all of us, if you eat chocolate, if you drink coffee, if you wear cotton, if you drive a car, you are supporting the slave industry somehow, somehow, so--but--so labor exploitation is huge and growing. Right now, probably about 20 percent of the slaves are for labor. Another large industry in trafficking are children who are forced to beg, many times as cute little snotty nose brats you see on the corners of the streets in LA or San Francisco who are asking you for a quarter. They actually have to turn in X number of dollars to their traffickers--ah thank you--or they get beaten or their parents are beaten or be used in some ways, so begging is huge the world over not quite as big in the United States, but it is going on here. Body parts, a lot of the research that I've done recently is about people who have been coerced or duped into giving up a kidney. I've actually talked to people who went in for a job interview. They were given a drink by their--the interviewer saying, "Oh just relax, it will come down, it will be great," and they come to with terrible scars missing a kidney and lifelong health problems. That's a huge industry and there's a big demand for illegal kidneys in the United States, in Israel and all over Europe.
Another growing industry is the trafficking of fetal tissue. It's less common here, although I suspect it happens here. If you can make money on it, you know, it's going on in the United States, but it's really big in Eastern Europe. Doctors, gynecologists will tell a woman that her baby is developing abnormally, that it should be aborted. They perform the abortion on a normal fetus and then the fetal tissue is sold to cosmetic companies because human fetal tissue is really big in the cosmetic industries in Eastern Europe. The last time I was there, a woman was busted on the border between Ukraine and Russia with 40 human fetuses and she was selling them to a large cosmetics company in Moscow, and then of course, babies for adoption oftentimes. Again, less so in the United States, although I'm sure it happens here. I haven't seen it. Women are told that the baby was stillborn and that they already disposed of the remains, when in fact it was a normal baby that then is sold for adoption, and oftentimes these babies come from Eastern Europe and they are sold to people here in the United States, so there's a huge demand for white children. They're much more so than for children of color and this also fuels the trade in babies.
There's 12 to 13 million slaves existing today, that's a very, very conservative number. The most accurate figures point to 27 million, and I suspect it's a lot more exist today as Janja mentioned, more per capita--more slaves per capita than any other time in human history. It--and that's about 32 billion dollars annually. It is the fastest growing illegal activity in the world today, 200 to 300,000 US children are sold into sexual slavery each year. I've been down to the border, and a lot of the gang violence that you see along the Mexican border these days are actually some of the drug cartels fighting turf wars for human trafficking. I've been on the other side of the border. It was funny, last time I was down in McGowan, Texas, I went down with a couple of people to check out the brothels on the Mexico side of the border and the US Customs guy said, "Hey, you don't want to go there," and I was like, "Oh how come?" "Oh, five people are killed yesterday," and I was like, "Well, I really want to go because it's part of my research." He goes, "Alright, well if you hear a shooting, duck." [Laughter] And I was like, "Alright." We didn't hear a shooting, thank God, but what we did see was an area called Boys and Girls Towns, "Come on in, we're having--we're talking about slavery." Yeah, it's enlightening. Anyway, what I did see down there were--there's an area called Boys and Girls Town. It's a--sort of a cynical name, and the brothels had U.S. runaway children who are trapped in sexual slavery on the Mexican side of the border. A tremendous amount of money is being made. As Janja mentioned, child sex trafficking is huge in the United States as well. Atlanta, Georgia is ranked 13th world wide as a destination for pedophiles.
It's also huge in California and in fact, Disneyland is one of the main places where children are sold. If you want to buy children, oftentimes the handoff will occur at Disneyland because it's not unusual to see an adult with 5 or 6 small children there, so that is--I've read accounts of children who are brought up from Mexico or Guatemala who were taken to Disneyland and sold to slavers. As we mentioned already, as Janja mentioned, the average cost of a slave today is about 90 bucks. I can get you--seriously, if in about 10 days to 2 weeks, I can get you a boy about--between ages of 14 and 16 from Ghana for 40 dollars. I could get you a woman, again it wouldn't take quite that long--I could get you a woman from Eastern Europe for about 150 bucks. Those networks are in place. They're in place here in the United States. I know how to find them. I'm not going to tell you how though [laughter]. And they change, they change a lot. And it's huge money. It's--it is an economic crime. It's a human rights abuse, but it's an economic crime. It is all about the money. There are huge amounts of profits to be made. The average cost of a slave is 90 dollars. The average profit of a sex slave in the United States or in Western Europe and that is profit. That's after you subtract the cost of the woman, the cost of the K-Y or whatever lubricants she needs over the course of the year, there's not much overhead. This women are kept in really nasty brothels usually it's a home in the suburbs with 4 or 5 mattresses on the floor. The johns buy what's called a ticket which is usually a condom, which it's his choice whether he wants to use it or not for 20 bucks or 15 bucks depending upon who's on the mattress. Curtains maybe, maybe not, in between the mattresses. So you subtract the overhead.
There's no medical treatment that goes in to taking care of a slave. There's no real housing cost or food cost to speak of, but you subtract all of those costs and that the net profit for 1 girl and 1 brothel in the United States is about $67,323 a year. So you invest 90 bucks and within a year you've got over $67,000, huge money. And the 27 million slaves in the world today as of--since 2009, only 4,013 convictions of traffickers have there been worldwide. So if you look at that, we can do better. We're not doing enough. We can do better and that's largely because nobody knows what they're looking at. I would bet--how many of you are from the San Francisco Bay Area or--okay, how many of you are from Southern California? Okay, I would bet that every single one of you has seen a slave. You just didn't know what you were looking at. How many of you have gotten your nails done in an Asian nail parlor? Alright, okay, yeah, how many of you have eaten in a Mexican cantina in a little back alley with really great tacos, but people don't talk to you? Yeah, you've seen slaves and it's happening here.
This quote is from the US State Department Trafficking and Persons Report. Janja talked a little bit about it. It's been--it comes out every year and this year, 2011, was the first time that the State Department has listed the United States as a source country, a transit country and a destination country, and I'll explain those in just a moment. We'll also explain now [laughter]. A source country is the country from which traffic victims are taken, so slaves are taken. We like to think that when you talk about source countries, we're actually talking about Vietnam or Mexico or Guatemala or some other place, no. Slaves come from the United States as well. A transit country is a country through which the slaves are brought. Oftentimes a transit country is a second country where the slaves are broken in, if you will. In my trade, I do Eastern European trafficking, the term is called “softening up,” and that's a period at least for sex traffic victims. The softening up period is about 2 weeks of sodomy, gang rape and all kinds of sexual torture until the spirit of the person is broken. Their sense of confidence and self-worth is destroyed. They're thoroughly terrified and there's no way they're going to try to escape from a brothel and the traffickers know this and they know that then can leave the girl alone with johns without fear of her running away. Now, she may throw herself out of window to try to kill herself. But she's not going to try to run away. So the transit countries are often countries through which slaves are moved to get to the destination country and the United States is this--one of the top destination countries in the world. It's ranked second behind Germany, right. So, it's happening here.
This is a very old map just to give you an idea. In 2003, these are places where slaves have been identified--that was in 2003. The problem has grown at least 200 percent since then, at least, and today, every single state has had reports of slavery. They've had--it's everywhere. It is everywhere.
Here are some maps to kind of show you how slaves are moved around the world. These are from my research. Again, I'm a Russian historian. I interview people rescued from the slave trade coming from Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Eastern Europe, and my women generally get trafficked to Western Europe to United Arab Emirates, some to the United States. You can see not a lot of my women made it over to the United States, although this is changing.
But if you look at the USA routes, you can see how many people are brought in to the United States. Some years ago, Madeleine Albright estimated that 50,000 people a year are brought into the United States specifically for traffic--for slavery. Most of those are poor women and children for sex trafficking. That was some years ago. I would guess--because it's an illegal activity and it's hard to judge how much. I would guess that the real figure is many times more than that.
Now, as I mentioned already, the Mexican drug cartels are getting involved in human trafficking and as you can see, the areas of influence along the border correspond to the areas of violence along the border and there are 3 main trafficking loops into the United States. Most of the people who are trafficked into the United States come from Mexico or South America first of all, then Asia, and then Eastern Europe, and then finally from Africa. We don't get too many from Africa, but there are 3 main trafficking loops that make their way into the United States. As you can see along the border, the areas are in the California border. They're usually brought in up through San Diego. They're brought up the north side of the state— I'm sorry, the west side of the state, up into Portland and into Seattle and then they come back down through the I-5 Corridor. Sometimes they bug over into Nevada down into Arizona, and then back over to San Diego, that's 1 loop. There's another loop that comes in through El Paso, up into New Mexico, heading up north and making the way back down through Texas and then back over to New Mexico. And then there's an Eastern route that goes up through—I don't know the Eastern States, up in to Connecticut, up in to New York and back down to Eastern Seaboard into Florida and that loop. Those are the 3 main trafficking loops. The traffickers have discovered that if you keep the women moving, the women and children moving—and this is largely sex slavery, to keep them moving, it's harder for law enforcement to find them and to bust them, although there are a lot of stationary brothels. Now they're usually in suburban neighborhoods. So if you see a house where there's a lot of men coming and going in the afternoon and they're not work men, you're probably looking at a trafficking situation. Call 1-888-373-7888, alright. If you see a-- 1 of those large vans—so I think I have a picture of one.
No, I don't, not yet anyway, if you see a large van like the bands tour in parked in the neighborhood for a week or 2 and there's no band playing anywhere, chances are what you're looking at is a mobile brothel. Call 1-888-373-7888. And if you're wrong, no harm done. If you're right, you just might save somebody's life. Statistically speaking--and we are talking about real lives, Janja gave a lot of information about child sex trafficking. According to the latest statistics from La Strada International, somewhere between 90 and 92 percent of all children who were trafficked--for sex trafficking, who were trafficked between the ages of 12 and 16 which is ideal, commit suicide within 7 years of being rescued, that's this--largely because they don't get any kind of rehabilitation. But even for those with rehabilitation the figures don't change all that much. So usually within 7 years of being rescued, almost 90 percent kill themselves.
From my research, my source countries are Moldova, Latvia, Russia, and Ukraine as you can see. The transit countries, the countries that they're “softened up” in are the Czech Republic, Serbia, Albania, Poland, Germany, Estonia, and Cyprus. And then these people are brought to Israel, the United Arab Emerites, Canada, the EU, Russia, Ukraine, and then finally to the United States. So those are again my people. I guess I’m sounding kind of territorial about them.
Actually, Friday night's movie is going to be very, very interesting because Mimi Chakarova herself is from Bulgaria. And while she was never trafficked, she could have been and her--the village that she comes from a lot of women disappeared from. And, in fact, there aren't many women in their 30's and 40's in that village anymore. Many of them have migrated out but quite a number of them were trafficked out. Well, how does the trade work? You have recruiters, those are people who recruit new slaves for the trade. They're the traffickers themselves. Those are the big guys who tend to mastermind the operation. They maintain the brothels. They're the money guys. They're the organization guys. And then you have the pimps, those are the guys on the street who were making sure that the girls don't run away, that the johns pay their money. They're the ones to beat the girls if they get out of line. Or the boys--and there's a big trade now in young boys. So these are the aspects of--or the players in the game, if you will.
As Janja mentioned, it used to be large organized crime organizations that got involved in trafficking and now because it is such a lucrative activity, more and more small time criminals are getting involved and so now trafficking networks tend to be small, informal, organized crime networks. Recruiters tend to be female. They tend to be friends of the victim or the survivor, family members or acquaintances. Trust is very, very high between the traffic—the recruiter and the victim. That's how they're able to recruit them. Oftentimes, it's women themselves who have been trafficked and their traffickers tell them, "Look, if you can recruit 5 women, we'll let you go," so they go to all of their friends and try to recruit them. A lot of time, it's family members. You've all read the cases. There was a woman in North Carolina whose boyfriend sold the daughter and--I mean that's very common.
Oh, here's a picture of a mobile brothel. I knew it was there somewhere. Sorry, it's been out of sequence.
Okay, Janja talked about the push and the pull factors. For those of you who didn’t get the--here at 11--or weren’t in the first half, push factors are factors that put people, women, children at odds, make them willing to take risks and end up in the traffickers net. Generally speaking, one of the primary reasons people get sort of lost in trafficking is poverty, although that's not so true anymore, but especially for my women, it's crushing poverty that affects women and children the most. My women, the ones that I interview, come from areas that have very, very high unemployment. Many of the countries that I go to are post-Soviet countries, so they're relatively new. They just emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1992. So, there's a high degree of economic chaos. These countries have no social welfare programs and what you're seeing in the United States, one of the reasons why you're seeing more and more US citizens being trafficked is because of the so-called budget problems. Which by the way, we don't have a “budget problem.” We have an allocation problem. We have money. We just put it in different places. But one unintended result of this so-called budget problem that we have in the United States is that social welfare programs are being cut away, and so oftentimes, women have very little recourse and few ways to feed their children. They get trapped in these cycles of poverty, there's no way out and they end up in the traffickers net. We also have no programs for at risk children or very few programs for at risk children and as Janja mentioned, since the closing of the rehabilitation center in New York, we now nationwide have only 4 centers to rescue and rehabilitate children who are victims of trafficking in the United States.
The unfortunate thing about trafficking of children in the United States is that even when the children are rescued from the slave trade, one of two things happens to them. Usually, they're sent back to their homes, right? Usually, they run away from home because they're being abused by a brother, a father, a father-in-law. There's some abusive situation that leads them to run away from home. Because they're minors, the first that happens is they're sent back home, right? Back into the situation they ran away from. If they're not sent back home, they're sent to juvenile detention because we don't have facilities for them, right? So what happens in juvenile detention? They're re-victimized. Who's in juvenile detention? You tell me who generally is in juvenile detention? Oh, come on, make a guess...The abusers! The abusers, oftentimes. Yes, you have rapists, you have thieves, you have criminals, you have people with problems with violence, people who have problems--lots of problems that's how they end up in juvenile detention. They're budding criminals, right? And so you take a girl or a young boy who's been severely traumatized by gang rape, sodomy, all kinds of stuff like that and then you stick them in juvenile detention where they're treated as criminals and further victimized and then they're sent to foster care where they are further victimized. So again, we can do better. We have no safety net for these people. We can do better. We can put a bit of pressure on our lawmakers. There are lots and lots and lots of statistics out there that testify to the fact that where public opinion goes, legislation flows.
I'll say that again, where public opinion goes, legislation flows. So if we don't know about a problem and we don't let our legislators know we're concerned about the problem, nothing is going to change. But time and time again, when the population says, this is not acceptable to us, we're not going to stand for this, usually what happens within a few years, there's new and better legislation and that's kind of what we're hoping for and that's what—part of what's STOP is all about. Okay, so I've kind of gone on to sidetrack there [laughter]. Oftentimes also, many of the people who end up trafficked are victims of domestic violence before they ever even end up trafficked. Again, according to statistics by La Strada International, 80 percent of all people that they rescued were victims of domestic violence before they were ever trafficked, so oftentimes, it's women and children fleeing abusive situations and they're picked up by a pimp or they're coerced or traded or what have you.
It's a very dangerous trade. I oftentimes offend men and I don't really mean to so I'm going to apologize in advance--but if I offend you, you deserve it. [Laughter] But when we're talking about sex trafficking, it is terrorism perpetrated against thousands of women and children by men. Ninety nine point nine percent of the people who buy sex are men. And if there was no demand for sex for sale, there would be no supply. So the brothers--my brothers who are here in the audience today, you have a huge responsibility to educate yourselves and to educate your friends. And it's a very dangerous business. So usually, when I say that traffic--sex trafficking is terrorism perpetrated against women and children by men, men oftentimes get offended by that. But it is a very dangerous business. And again, a national survey by the Chicago Alliance to End Exploitation of Women interviewed thousands of sex workers, some of whom had started as trafficking victims but once you have been gang raped, sodomized, abused in all kinds of ways, going back and getting a nice job, you know, at the secretarial pool, just doesn't work. Many of these people are so destroyed that they don't feel they have any other options. So they--many of them end up back in traffic situations or back in prostitution. Anyway, the women involved in the sex trade report a tremendous amount of abuse and violence because again, the same study by the Chicago Alliance to End Exploitation Against Women reported that 84 percent of the johns--84 percent of the men who buy women for sex--women and children for sex are doing it--I'm sorry 84 percent have regular sexual partners.
They're either married or they live with a partner. And they're buying sex in order to get a type of sex that they're embarrassed or ashamed to ask their partner for. And it's usually sex that involves violence or children. And so women and children who are trapped in this sex slave trade oftentimes suffer tremendous amount of physical abuse. That's one reason why rehabilitation is so difficult because you have to put their bodies back together and then you have to try to put their minds back together before they kill themselves.
Here're just some more studies proving that women who are in the sex trade whether voluntarily or involuntarily suffer abuse, we all know that.
So I’m going to talk a little bit about my research here. Here is--for those of you who don’t know where Chisinau, Moldova is or Transnistria, there it is. It’s sort of sandwiched in between Romania and Ukraine. And it has the dubious distinction of being the poorest country in Europe. And so it is a prime target.
The women and children of Moldova are easy targets for the traffickers. In 1998, when I started research on this traffic--the traffickers were very blatant and very open about their activities. Now again, I'm talking about Moldova but when I'm talking about Moldova, think about U.S. and U.S.-Mexico borders and women and children from Latin America. Because if it goes on there, it goes on here. You can count on it, I guarantee it. I don't have statistics. I can't prove it, but I know it. So the traffickers originally would just gather up women, kidnap them, take them across borders, bribe the officials, openly sell them, it was all very much with complicity of local officials. Since there's been a lot of attention put on this problem, the traffickers have gotten a bit smarter. Every time law enforcement figures out what the traffickers are doing, the traffickers change their strategies, right? They're--at least the Eastern European traffickers tend to be very, very educated folk. They're brilliant strategists. I don't know about the Mexican cartels but I would guess that they're also very smart at strategy. They're also all very violent and they don't really care much about the people that they're trafficking. They don't see them as people. But for my people, once international attention started to be--coming to bring light on the problem of trafficking, the traffickers change their strategies. Now they setup these kinds of agencies, “work and travel,” “come to America.” These agencies are licensed by the state, they provide legal visas, legal work permits for people, 80 percent of the people who come through these agencies actually get to the university or get to the job that they're--they apply for and about 20 percent end up trafficked because if 100 percent of the women got trafficked, people wouldn't use these agencies.
But if 80 percent--you know, it's like, well my neighbor went through one of these agencies, she came back with thousands of Euros, it was fine, right? So if you're hungry enough, you're willing to take the risk. And there are these types of agencies all over Moldova. I'm just showing pictures of Moldova. They're all over Ukraine. They're all over Russia. They're all over Germany. They're all over the United States. I don't know how many in the United States are illegitimate but I know that many work-study programs in the United States have actually--many people who have gone through them have been subjected to human trafficking so be aware.
They're on every street corner. And there's no way to tell which ones are legitimate, which are illegitimate.
Most of them—well, all of them are legitimate and most of them traffic people.
So you have all of these kinds of advertisements everywhere.
In Moldova today, one third of the workforce is living outside of Moldova because there's no jobs. And so they're willing to go through these programs and take the risk in order to get them.
And these are precisely the type of women they target. These are young women who want to--I love this picture. Register now, get a green card, right? Get to the United States. Everyone get--wants to get to the United States. A few of them actually get here and I'll tell you some of the stories in a minute.
And again, you have lots of advertisements.
Internship in the United States,
work in the United States, go AmeriTrex.
Canada, go to Canada, immigrate to Canada.
Here's one for Dubai and there—you can get a job in Dubai. And this attracts thousands of women and thousands of them end up trafficked. And so I'm going to tell you some of the stories. I guess some of them are difficult to hear, let me back up. Just to give you an idea of what we're talking about in terms of the actual experience of being trafficked. The most difficult day I had doing research in Moldova. I was sitting in the offices of La Strada International. And I was talking to Alina Budeci who was a psychologist and it was her job to try to put the psyche of rescued victims back together. And she was telling me how they need to raise more international funding because the traffickers have taken to bashing out the teeth of the women so that they're better at oral sex. Now, they don't have the dentist pull the teeth. They just take a hammer and bash the teeth out because it's cheaper, right? No cost involved. She's telling me this and she gets a phone call and she says, "I'm really sorry, I have to leave immediately. There's a 9-month-old baby at the airport who has been rescued from a brothel in Germany and has been used for sex and I have to go pick up the baby." A 9-month-old baby was used for oral sex. That was the day that I went home and I laid on the floor in the fetal position and I sobbed. And I decided at that point that I would do whatever it took to bring awareness to this problem. I mean this is what it looks like up close and personal. And the idea of a 9-month-old baby giving sex in a brothel doesn't just happen over there. There's a very courageous woman who's a social worker in Florida. She was the one who started the program in Florida of social workers going with police on brothel raids so that there's somebody there who's able to identify what a trafficking victim is. She was also instrumental in getting the national hotline in the United States. And she was telling me that she also came across a baby who was 9 months old, had been rescued from a brothel in Texas. The baby had been born in a brothel in Texas. And the traffickers
tattooed the baby with a number because the baby didn't ever have a name.
It was just tattooed. It was just branded and not tattooed--I'm sorry, branded. Because it was the trafficker's property, the baby--the back of the baby's head was flat because it only sat up for meals, the rest of the time it was laid out and the johns could use it for oral sex or whatever, whatever you would do with a 9-month-old baby. I don't even want to think about it. That was the youngest victim I knew about. Other than that, I routinely have encountered 3 year olds, 5 year olds, 6 year olds, people who were trafficked when they were 8, people who were trafficked when they were 9 or 10. Most of the women that I interview were trafficked between the ages of 12 and 18. This one woman in Ukraine, her name was Marina. I don't know if I can talk about her. I don't talk about her usually. Her aunt came to her village--she was in her village and her father had run away. He was a drunk. Her mother was working trying to support the family; there were 4 children in the family. Marina was I think 12 or 13 at the time, maybe 14. And she was trying to work to help feed the family and her aunt said to her, "Do you want a summer job? I know--I have a friend in Moscow who can get you a job at a factory in Moscow." And Marina said, "Yeah, yeah, how much money would I make?" And you know, I don't know how many Rubles she was promised. But the aunt said it--it'll be fine. They'll give you a place to live. It's going to be hard work. You're going to have to work long hours, but you'll make a lot of money. And so she said, "Okay." And so her aunt gave her over to this guy who drove her to Moscow who then handed her over to another guy who said, "Okay take off your clothes." And she went, "What--what for?" And the guy says, "Well, I want to see what I just bought." And she went, "What?" And he goes--she said, "I'm here for a job." And he goes, "Oh yeah, you're--you'll work alright. You're going to work in this bar as a prostitute." And she started crying. She said, "I'm a virgin, I--I can't do this." And so when he tried to rape her, she
resisted.
And so to punish her, he brought in all the other guys that are part of his network to gang rape her. And then put her on the street for 2 weeks. She had to service men in the back seat of cars and in the woods in the mud for 2 weeks. She had to walk up and down the street in the cold all hours, riding down men. And after about 2 weeks of that, she was broken and so they put her in a brothel, locked her in a room. She did not leave the room for about a year and a half. And she had no papers. They took her papers away from her. And after about a year and a half, one of the johns--the guys who used to come regularly--took a liking to her and she asked him--she felt--finally felt comfortable enough to tell him her story. And he bought her from the traffickers at an outrageous amount of money, but then he brought her back to Ukraine. And got her into the care of La Strada which is where I met her. That's just one story. There's thousands and thousands of those stories.
Here's another one. This is Victoria Vitia is her name. These are her 2 lovely little children.
In Moldova, if you're raped, in order not to bring shame on the family, your family can make you marry the perpetrator. And that happened to Vitia. She was 16 years old, she was raped. And the family made her marry her perpetrator. And the result of that union was her first daughter, the oldest daughter. Her husband continued to rape her and beat her. And when she got pregnant with her second daughter, he left. And she had no way to support the family. There're no jobs in Moldova and she had about enough money to buy a loaf of bread a week for herself and her family. The neighbor had some chickens, so she got eggs once in a while, but it was usually a loaf of bread a week for the three of them. Her best friend from high school came to her house one day and said, "You know what, I know you're hurting for money. I know you need a job. My brother-in-law just opened up a bathing suit factory in Chisinau, do you want to go work?" And she said, "Yes, yes, yes." And so they went to Chisinau and the brother-in-law said, "Oh sorry, I just hired somebody today. But I have a friend with a factory in Italy, do you--I can get you a thousand Euro a month working in this factory and Vitia said, "I don't know, I'm not--I'm not so sure." And her friend said, "Well that's where I just got back from. I made lots of money there. It's perfectly fine. You can go for six months. You can make 6,000 Euro, come home, live off of it for a year or two." And so Vitia reluctantly said, "Okay." They got her, her travel documents and everything else. And put her on an airplane to Italy. And when she landed, a guy met her at the airport and took her to a casino where she had all of her documents taken away from her and she was forced to service up to 30 men a day. Again, after about 6 months, one of the johns let her use the telephone to call her mother in Moldova.
Here's another woman--another story. And again, these are multiplied hundreds--hundreds of thousands of times around the world, even in the United States. Lilia, she's the most--one of the most amazing women I ever met. Similar kind of thing, she hired a coyote to take her again to Italy because her sister was living and working in Italy. And she hired this Russian woman to take her into Italy. And it's a very, very long story, but when she got to Italy, they took her to a hotel. They traveled in a minivan with 6 or 8 other girls, other women. They took her to a hotel and the Russian woman said, "You just wait her, you go clean up and get something to eat, here's some food. I'll come back here in a little while." And Lilia is going, "But you said you were going to take me to my sister; I want to go to my sister's house." And the Russian woman just kind of laughed and said, "Just be patient, just go clean up, take--you know, just relax. I'll take you to your sister." And so they all kind of took showers and ate some food and a little while later, a man came with another van, took them to another hotel and Lilia told me she remembered walking up 7 flights of stairs with all these women. And she's going, "Wait, I don't want to go here. I want to--I just--all I want to do is go to my sister's house." And the Russian woman again very harshly said, "Shut up, you'll get there." And so she--"Okay." And they get up to the 7th floor and they're taken into a room where the first woman in the room gets thrown into the center. And there are men sitting in couches all along the edge of the room drinking tea and laughing. And they tell the first woman to strip. And again, she--she's resistant and Lilia said a woman behind her started silent--very quietly sobbing because they just--all of them kind of got it, what had--what was happening to them. And the first woman didn't--resisted and she was beaten into unconsciousness, perhaps killed. Lilia doesn't know what happened to her, but she was viciously beaten in front of all the other girls.
Her mother happily had seen an advertisement for La Strada. She called the help line in La Strada who contacted local law enforcement, turns out Vitia wasn't in Italy. She was in Cyprus and she didn't even know where she was. When I met her in this interview, I was on my way to Moscow and she was getting ready to go to Moscow because she had a family member who had a friend who had a factory in Moscow that she could go work at. And I said, "Vitia are you crazy? I mean after your last experience how can you go to Moscow? I mean aren't you afraid?" And she said, "Well, they assure me it'll be alright," and she goes, "Besides that, I have no other options. I have no way to support my family." And so I said, "Okay, I'm going to be in Moscow, here's my phone number, when you get there, call me. I'll take you out to dinner. We'll make sure that you're safe." And she said, "Okay," she promised and I never heard from her. So I don't know the end of that story. I don't know what happened to her children. But this is about the age some of them get trafficked. So the traffickers might have come back for the kids as well. And so Lilia was the second one and they threw her in the middle of the room and said, "Okay strip." And Lilia said, she took her top up like this and at that moment she said, time slowed down, she heard a ringing in her ears and she noticed that the curtains were blowing out the window. And she just said, "God give me wings," and she ran across the room and jumped out the window over the couches. And she landed 7 floors--7 stories. The police came and scraped her up off the sidewalk and took her to the hospital. That's when she learned that she was in Turkey not in Italy.
The traffickers came for her 2 weeks later but the doctors wouldn't let the traffickers have her. And they put her in a private hospital and hid her. She was in extensive rehabilitation for 3 months; she had to have a metal—her leg was so shattered she had to have a piece of metal put in her leg. She was ultimately repatriated back to Moldova. She has nightmares and headaches. She walks with a very severe limp. But La Strada bought her a sewing machine and now she runs a local tailoring business. And so she's—hers is a success story.
Then here's another one. I'll wrap this up before too long. I won't go into great detail. Darene is this guy. He's--this whole village of Hincahuts in Moldova. It's in the north of Moldova. Almost all of them had a kidney taken from them. The traffickers came in and a couple of people voluntarily gave their kidneys. And then they told everybody else, "Oh it's fine, you'll get $10,000." Darene said, "Okay, you can have my kidney for 10,000 dollars." He was taken to Germany and the person who is going to receive his kidney also met them in Germany. He was an Israeli. The operation was done in Germany. The guy died on the operating table and Darene lost his kidney. And some people say, "Well, how does that really trafficking? How does that count? Didn't he agree to do that?"
And my answer is kind of like, yes, but this is where he lives. Year round, he lives with sheep. He has no home. Now, he has a tremendous amount of health problems. He got a grand total of $800 for the kidney because they charged him for his trip to Germany and for his visa and for the operation and for compensation for the family of the guy who died and the doctor. He got charged for all of it.
This is his bedroom that he lives in year round. He actually has rescued 2 orphans who were trafficked.
And they live in--these are their rooms in the sheep shed. They live basically in the middle of nowhere in this village.
Anyway, by now, you know a lot about slavery, but there are top 10 facts about slavery. One is it's--people who are forced to work without pay, under threats of violence and they're unable to leave. There're about 27 million slaves in the world today. Slavery is not legal anywhere, but it happens everywhere. One of the reasons why you haven't heard about slavery until recently and why it flourished from 1996 until 2006 without any good legislation against it is because the attitude was, we don't have slavery. We got rid of slavery in 1862 and therefore, all those laws were taken off the books. And so until the early 2000s--until the year 2000, there were no laws against slavery in the United States because we ended slavery, even though it was flourishing. Anyway, there's--these are all facts that you can read about yourself.
Just to let you know how committed we are to ending slavery, the United States spends in a year fighting human trafficking the same amount that we spend in one day of the war on drugs. So we're--we lack the political will to go after this heinous crime, one of the worst human rights abuses of the 21st century and a criminal activity that is fast becoming the largest and most lucrative criminal activity in the world today. And we spend very little money on it, we don't care. One of the reasons why we don't really care is because it usually affects poor women and children of color. If it was happening--I'm sorry again if I offend you, you deserve it, but if it was happening to white middle class men, chances are we'd have a lot of really good laws against it. Speaking of laws, from 2006-2007 almost every state in the United States has adopted some kind of anti-trafficking law. And since 2006-2007 not a single person has been convicted under the states’ laws for trafficking. They have under federal law, but not under states’ laws. So we need to start applying pressure to our lawmakers, and saying, "We want a body of laws that is enforceable. We need to educate us." As Janja said, I mean one of the reasons why it's wonderful that you're here, is because you're educating yourself. Some of you will go into social work. Some of you will go into law enforcement. Some of you will go into teaching, all of which could be a first contact with slaves and can be a tremendous resource in changing this situation. The traffic in slaves is never going to stop, but there are things we can do to certainly slow it down.
Here's some more of the--these are a bit old. I put this together last--I think last year. So there have been more pimps and hookers and more child victims have been rescued. The average age of a trafficked victim now still is 12 to 14 years old. There was a trafficker, he is one of the head of the Mexican cartels in prison in San Antonio, I believe, it is Texas. And he was saying that they prefer children between the ages of 12 and 14 because it only takes--rather than taking 2 weeks to break their spirit, it only takes about a week of gang rape and sodomy before their--and these are his words, "Their eyes go blank and you know they're good to go, there's nothing left. And you've destroyed somebody for the rest of their lives. There's no way to put that back together."
Well there're lots of things that we can do and here's one that makes me very unpopular. I believe that one way to slow the trade in flesh is to criminalize the buying of sex and decriminalize the selling of sex. I didn't say legalize prostitution. Where legal prostitution is, trafficking flourishes, because you have the legal brothels on one street and one street behind them are all the illegal brothels, people congregate in those areas for sex. So--but typically in the United States in a brothel raid, typically what happens is the women are arrested and the men go home. We need to change that picture. It's not the--there's not a 13-year-old in the United States today sitting here right now going, "Let's see, do I want to be a nurse or a whore? Nurse or a whore? Hmm, whore, right?" It's not a career choice, right? So in some sense, all forms of prostitution or trafficking rarely very, very, very rarely is there not some kind of economic coercion involved in prostitution. You can see it right now. And again as Janja talked about, we're still stuck in the prostitute paradigm. You go down to International--I challenge you to go to International Boulevard in Oakland any night this week and you will see a hundred children for sale--at least a hundred children for sale and their pimps just in the shadows. That's human trafficking. It's happening here, right? And the lives, the minds, the bodies of children are being destroyed. There's a wonderful documentary if you can get your hands on it called “The Playground.” It's directed by Sean Penn and it's about child trafficking in the United States. It's a great documentary. So we need to target the johns. We need to criminalize the buying of sex, to start slowing down the demand. Again, if you remember that about 84 percent of the people who buy sex aren't buying sex, they are buying kinky sex or sex with children or something they can't get from their partner.
Those people are not going to buy sex if they think that it could end up in a criminal sentence or their wives, their church members are going to find out about it. So, we need to target the johns. Second of all, we need to change societal attitudes and we can do that very, very easily, you know. We need to stop thinking that going to a prostitute is a male right and a rite of passage and a male privilege-- it's not, it's not okay. If you can sell a human being in any context, then you can sell them in all contexts. So, this is where it starts, you know, prostitution easily or even the marketing of pornography, ultimately dehumanizes people to the point where you can sell them, buy and sell them. They're commodified. And to the traffickers, these aren't people. They're commodities to be exploited. I did some research up in Riga as well, up in Latvia and the forests around Riga are littered with body parts from the sex slave trade. Once the women get too old or to depressed or pregnant, usually they're throats are slit and they're tossed into the forest. Commodity [inaudible] get rid of it and I don't know for a fact but I can imagine that there are numerous Jane Does that show up all over the Unites States without documentation. Nobody ever knows where they come from, what their names are, many of them are victims of the slave trade, I'm sure. So, change societal attitudes. Poverty is not an affliction. It only affects those people and we are all respon--we are our brother's keeper. Educate the boys, right, educate the boys to see what they're looking at. Educate all of society to see what they're looking at. As I started this talk, almost all of you have seen a slave, you just didn't know what you were looking at, and so look--look a little beneath the surface. If you really look at people, you know, pull your iPod out of your ears, turn your phone off when you're walking down the street, notice where you are, chances are you can see people who are in trouble.
And then finally again, if nothing else you get out of this week, please get this--first of all, the slavers are very, very bad people. And again as Janja mentioned, right now, the penalties are very, very toothless. I mean 2 years and $2,000 for trafficking a minor. Why not take the risk? If you can make $67,000 on one girl and have a--maybe a maximum fine of $2,000. Again, that's not the federal laws. Federal laws are much tougher. Why not risk it? It's huge money and so there're lots of reasons to get involved in trafficking. So, if you see suspicious activity, please, please, please, do not get involved but, please, please, please call 1-888-3737-888. Also call your local law enforcement. Do not yourself try to get involved, lots and lots of honest people have been hurt trying to stop trafficking.

Okay, that brings me to the end of my presentation. We have some time for questions or comments if any of you have--that would like to--if I hadn't so sufficiently cheered you up and brightened your day [laughter]. Any questions, comments? Yeah.

**Audience Member:** So, paying for sex isn't a criminal offense?

**Dr. Transchel:** It depends upon what we're talking about. It--technically in the State of California, it is a criminal offense. In Nevada, it's not, depending upon where it is. There are--it is legal in lots of places in the United States. It's legal in lots of places around the world. So, yeah--but again paying for sex--I don't know--we have an officer here who could probably educate us more, but selling sex is a criminal activity, I don't know if buying sex is. [Inaudible Remark] So nobody is going to be prosecuted for buying sex.
Audience Member (Lt. John Vanek, San Jose Police, Ret.): Typically not.

Dr. Transchel: Typically not. Yeah, so paying for sex is not--and interesting under that law, like if I wanted to go home and make love to my 12-year-old neighbor, I could be put in prison for that. If I paid his father to have sex with me, paid his father for the 12 year old to have sex with me, that is not a criminal offense. It's a misdemeanor. So, if somebody--if you buy a teenager from a pimp, it's not as bad as having sex with a minor on your own. How is that okay? What kind of a system creates that, you know? Something's wrong. We need to take some action. We need to change a few things, so yeah. So, clearly paying for sex is not illegal or at least not prosecutable. Any other questions or comments? Yeah.

Audience Member: I can't think of the name of the movie, but there's a movie that came out where the guy goes and finds--

Dr. Transchel: Oh, she's talking about the movie, “Taken,” by Liam--with Liam Neeson.

Audience Member: Yeah.

Dr. Transchel: Yes.

Audience Member: Exactly. That totally could be anything of what you're talking about.
Dr. Transchel: That is a scenario that could easily happen, yes. It is of course dramatized quite a bit, alright, for Hollywood, but yeah, there's actually a case not long ago where a girl from a very wealthy Boston family, her grandfather paid for her to have a European tour basically after she graduated. She graduated from Brown, I believe, and people saw her get on a bus in Serbia and she never got off, and because her family had a lot of money and a lot of connections in Washington, a state department investigation was launched. Normally, we don't really care. The state department doesn't get involved when people go missing unless you have some kind of money and influence to bring to bear. Anyway, they finally discovered where she was. She'd been trafficked by the Serbs to a Saudi Arabian prince where as far as I know she is still there. Once the state department identified her, she was being use as a sex slave by this prince and the US government said, "Sorry, we don't want to risk an international incident. We can't go after her." So--huh?

Audience Member: Saudi Arabia?

Dr. Transchel: Oh, Saudi Arabia is one of the worst offenders, but we're not involved in Saudi Arabia because they're our friends. They're our ally. So, as far as I know, she might be dead, but last--you know, the investigation show that she was actually a sex slave for a Saudi Arabian prince, yeah.

Audience Member: So, there's like a hundred of children on the street of Oakland being sold, like, is there a way like. For the police to pick them up or like [inaudible].
Dr. Transchel: There is--the question is, if there's hundreds of children on the street in Oakland on International Boulevard, isn't there a way that police can pick them up, and yeah. The police do have periodic raids in International Boulevard, but again, usually what happens is that if they're over 18, they're arrested. Some of the children are being helped now. Janja was telling me that MSNBC just did a documentary about this and it showed the police going in and arresting the women, the Johns are--again, the Johns are being let go. The pimps sort of melt into the background and the victims get further victimized. So, yeah, but again part of the reason why there's not more vigilance and more attention brought to bear here is first of all, you know, what's happening with the budget. Police departments all over California are strapped. They don't have the resources. They don't have the manpower. They don't have the education. They think what they're looking at is prostitutes, not trafficked children. And then also, what we're looking at--these children on International Boulevard in Oakland, many of them are poor children of color and we really don't care about them. I mean, I don't like to say that, but as a society, we really don't, you know. We don't have the political will to take care of all our brothers and sisters--correct me if I wrong, but that's my experience. That's what I see. So, yeah--so there are things that can be done but again unless we the people put pressure on the lawmakers, nothing’s going to happen.
That's our job. That's why you should join STOP [laughter] and get involved, become a modern-day abolitionist. If there were ever a need for an abolitionist movement...many of you in high school read about the Underground Railroad and the freeing of the slaves and all that, you can be one of those people now. We need an abolitionist movement now more than any other time in human history because there's more slaves now, than at any other time in human history and we're all walking around going, "I don't want to see that, I don't think that's true," you know. But it is, and it's happening here. It's right in your backyard, and if you come back tomorrow from 11 to 2, you'll meet 3 people who are on the front lines of combating trafficking here in California. I'm really grateful that you all are here. Please, please, please don't keep this to yourself. Tell your friends to come, come back, educate yourself and help us stop or at least slow down this tremendous human rights abuse.