

Survivor of Slavery

Shamere McKenzie

Dr. Kate Transchel: Good evening and welcome to the second annual Human Trafficking Awareness Week at CSU Chico [applause] put on by -- yes -- put on by the student club STOP, which stands for Stop Trafficking of Persons [applause]. Yeah. One of the things I want to do first of all is I want to thank them. This has been a wonderful -- so far a wonderful week of events. We've raised a lot of awareness about trafficking. We've gotten local law enforcement -- the DA's Office, the Sherriff's Office -- involved. We've had the FBI here; not for any bad reasons [laughter]. And a lot of it's due to the efforts of the students in STOP. So if you would just take a moment -- and all the STOP members please stand up or wave your hand, so we can thank you for all the work you've put into this.

[Applause]

They've done an amazing job. I also want to thank Bidwell Rancho Soroptimist. They're the ones who are sponsoring Shamere McKenzie this evening. It was through their generous donations that we were able to bring her here [applause] so thank you to the Soroptimists. Also I want to thank the Soroptimist International. You'll see these little cards on your chairs. Those were printed up by Soroptimist International. They're for you to take with you. They're a number of questions you can ask if you think you're witnessing a trafficking situation. It also has the national help hotline for trafficking, as well as, local resources that you can call. So please take that with you. Put it in your purse or your pocket. You never know when you might need to make that call and save a life. So join the freedom fighters and take the card [laughter].

So we had an amazing turnout so far. We've had in our afternoon events -- many of you have been to them -- we've had somewhere between 80 and 160 in attendance each day for our daytime events. And our evening events are drawing close to 200 people, and it wouldn't be possible without the support of a number of campus organizations, as well. So I'd like to thank Dean Gayle Hutchinson and the College of BSS [Behavioral and Social Sciences] for their generous donation [applause]. We were also greatly supported by the Associated Students, the History department, Sociology department and all kinds of departments across campus. So we're -- through the efforts and donations of many we're educating literally hundreds of people in Chico and we have the possibility -- we're at that moment when we can actually take definite steps to end this dreadful, dreadful human rights abuse and economic crime. Having said that I want to thank you all again, for coming.

Tonight's speaker as you know, is Shamere McKenzie. I'll introduce her in just a moment. I want to remind you that tomorrow night we're going to have another freedom fighter here. It's also free and open to the public. It's also from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. A very fascinating man by the name of Kelsey Timmerman who decided he'd go find out where his underwear were made [laughter]. Wrote a book about "Where Am I Wearing?" He's visited the sweatshops and the slave labor camps and the factories

where all of our clothes are made. And he'll be talking about that journey, as well. So if there's any way you can make it tomorrow night I strongly encourage you to come. So I've said enough

Shamere McKenzie was much like any campus -- any student sitting in the audience now. She was going to college and she was looking for ways to support herself. She ended up coming under the manipulation of a trafficker and she was forced, coerced, beaten and enslaved by her trafficker. When he was arrested she was arrested, as well. She's actually had to pay the penalty for that and is still on probation; even though she was indeed a victim and now a survivor of trafficking. She has since gone on to be a part of an organization called Shared Hope International. And she can do a much better job of telling her story than I can. So without further -- oh, one more thing I forgot to mention. At -- she'll be speaking for about an hour and a half and then we'll have about a half an hour for Q and A. So if you have questions please write them down or hold them. We'll have mics going around. But during the Q and A period, STOP will be passing a bucket. This event has cost us a lot of money and if you have a dime, a dollar or a quarter to toss in the bucket we'd greatly appreciate it. If you have a check you want to write, make it out to STOP. So having said all that, I'd like to bring to you a remarkable woman, Shamere McKenzie.

[Applause]

Shamere McKenzie: Okay. Good evening everyone.

Audience: Good evening.

Shamere McKenzie: Do I need to come closer [laughter]? I'm going to try this again. Good evening everyone.

Audience: Good evening!

Shamere McKenzie: That sounds much better. I like when I talk to people they talk back. You know? I know I'm here to give a talk today but it's going to be interactive. I'm here to inform you guys about this horrific, horrific problem that's plaguing our nation, much more our world that we're living in today. I just want to thank Kate for this opportunity. Thanks for -- to everyone who's involved in this great opportunity that I'm standing here today. Because I'm just not supposed to be here. When I say I'm not supposed to be here, I'm not even talking about the trafficking situation. I'm going to get to that in a minute. But it was just -- my travels getting here today was just crazy.

But -- and I'm going to make this apology in advance. I believe in Jesus Christ and throughout this talk you may hear me refer to Jesus Christ. If you are not a believer in Christ I'm so sorry; but I believe that's the only reason I'm here today. So I just have to say that publically so I don't offend anyone. I know sometimes people are like, "I don't want to hear that guy's name." But [laughter] that's my BFF [laughter]. And so -- yes, that's my BFF.

And so I'm just so grateful to be here tonight. Very grateful to see all of you here tonight and when I walk into the room I saw all these people I had Facebooked and I said, "There's a lot of people of here. I'm kind of nervous." Because that tells me something. That tells me that I'm not fighting by myself. All of you in here should give yourselves a round of applause for being here [applause]. When I look out and I see people sitting in here I'm like, someone cares. Because when I was in the life I thought no one cared. So this issue exists today because of people who are not here today.

But before I get into that I want to talk a little bit about culture. Let's see; I can't stand still so I'm going to walk around a little bit. Is that okay [applause]? Okay. So I'm Jamaican. Right? Do we have any other nationality? Yes, where are you from sir?

Audience member: I'm Serbian but I was born here.

Shamere McKenzie: Serbian. Anyone else? Yes?

Audience member: I'm Indian.

Shamere McKenzie: You're Indian. Yeah. You sir?

Audience member: African-American.

Shamere McKenzie: African-American, yes.

Audience member: Cambodian.

Shamere McKenzie: Cambodian. Okay, so we have a mixture --yes ma'am?

Audience member: Dutch.

Shamere McKenzie: Dutch. Okay, very diverse crowd. I like it. I like it. So when we talk about culture what are some elements of culture? I'll start with myself. Everybody knows Bob Marley right? "No woman, no cry." You all know that one right? No?

Audience members: Yeah.

Shamere McKenzie: Okay, everybody should know that one. That's a hit. So we talk about culture and elements of culture you talk about music. What are some other elements of culture?

Audience member: Food.

Shamere McKenzie: Food. What else?

Audience member: Clothing.

Shamere McKenzie: Huh?

Audience member: Clothing.

Shamere McKenzie: Clothing.

Audience member: Movies.

Shamere McKenzie: Movies.

Audience member: Religion.

Shamere McKenzie: Religion. Jesus; that's my BFF [laughter]. So when we talk about culture -- we talk about the elements of culture that's how we define a particular culture. Right? And if you're not a part of that culture you won't know what's sacred or some of the elements of that particular culture. Am I correct?

Audience member: Yes.

Shamere McKenzie: So when we talk about the subject of human trafficking, if you are not a part of that culture it's going to be weird to you. Right? Right? So we are here today and we are been going on all week talking about human traffic and human trafficking, and I just want to make this disclaimer -- two disclaimers. One, today I will be focusing on sex trafficking. And two, I am Jamaican so some of my words may not come out right [laughter]. Okay? So if I say a word and it sounds kind of funny just know I'm Jamaican so that's how that goes [laughter]. So sex trafficking; if you're not a part of that culture you won't understand it. But just like every other culture, there are three elements that define this culture. There's a language. Right? You may not know this because you're not a part of that culture. But there's a language. There is a code of conduct and there are consequences for your disobedience. Aren't those three elements of every culture?

Audience member: Yes.

Shamere McKenzie: English, French, Spanish, Dutch. Consequences for disobedience; the justice system, or the "injustice system," as I like to call it. And there are rules right? But when we talk about culture I want to bring it home. Because we're all in America and so I want to focus tonight on this American culture, and how this American culture glamorized sex trafficking. Did you know that? Yeah? No? How many of us have smart phone? Almost half the room. Okay. And so there's a little app store, or Google play, or whatever it is depending if you're an Android/Apple user. And if you ever go there and just put in that word "pimp," there are over 300 apps that are attached to that word "pimp." Have you ever tried that? Try it when you go home. Over 300 apps attached to this word pimp. We glamorize this word

pimp. Pimp my car. Pimp my ride. Pimp my house. Pimp my cellphone. Right? And are we glamorize this word pimp when our children become in contact with a pimp we're thinking oh, it's cool. Right? When you hear the term bachelor party what comes to mind? Be honest.

Audience member: Strippers.

Shamere McKenzie: Okay, I'm going to ask this again. When you hear bachelor party what comes to mind?

Audience member: Strippers [laughter].

Shamere McKenzie: Okay. I ask this question in every talk I go. When you hear bachelor party what comes to mind and collectively everyone says, "strippers." But wait; isn't bachelor parties for people who are getting married? So why no one ever says "wedding" [laughter], or "groom," or "bride." Right? Everyone says strippers. It's kind of funny but the reality is, look at our society. Because I asked one question and collectively everyone said strippers. That should tell us something. That should tell us about our society. That's one element. Anybody ever heard of that restaurant Hooters?

[Inaudible Audience Response].

Shamere McKenzie: Now can someone explain to me why would -- to work at Hooters you have to wear this booty shorts and you have to have big breasts. Now if you're selling chicken and your chicken is that good; do the girls need to wear booty shorts and have big boobs?

Audience members: No.

Shamere McKenzie: What's the message there?

Audience member: Sex sells.

Shamere McKenzie: Sex sells. And we accept it because when Hooters set up shop in our neighborhoods we don't go have a demonstration in front of Hooters and say, "Uh, uh, uh, uh. Not in my neighborhood." Right? I'm going to play a song -- any party people? Party people?

[Inaudible Audience Response].

Shamere McKenzie: I don't care how old you are, you know when some music come on if it's even the two-step...

Audience member: Yeah [laughter].

Shamere McKenzie: I'm going to play this song and this song was the first hip hop song to perform at the Emmy Awards. Okay? This song received an Oscar. Okay? And when we hear human trafficking some of us would say, "Well, before this week I've never heard of this issue of human trafficking." But some of us have partied to these lyrics. And I'm going to apologize in advance; it's very explicit. But let's be honest. When our kids go to these parties the music is explicit. So I'm going to keep it on the real today and if I offend you my apologies. But listen to this song.

[Music]

Shamere McKenzie: It might be new to you but it's been like this for years. I'm going to fast forward.

[Silence]

[Music]

Shamere McKenzie: "He prays every night that they don't end up being dead. He got a snow bunny and a black girl too. If you pay the right price they'll both do you." This is the first hip hop song to perform at the Oscars. The Oscars. And guess what? No one did anything about it. And you heard the lyrics for yourself. Normally when I play this and I -- the paper that's going around with your email and I send out a survey people are like, "I was very offended by that song." And I'm like, "I'm glad you are" [laughter]. Because next time when a song like that performs at the Oscars or wherever, there needs to be an outcry. There needs to be people writing to the Oscars and saying, "Did you listen to the lyrics of that song?" Now if you go on YouTube you could read the lyrics line by line. I play selective parts but that entire song talks about sex trafficking. It talks about "the life." And some of us -- by show of hands -- I could put my hand up too -- have partied to this song before. Right? In the club. Yeah. Yes, I have.

Audience member: Who's the artist?

Shamere McKenzie: What's their -- what's the name? 36 Mafia. By the name you shouldn't -- that's not what I'm here to talk about tonight but I'm just talking about how our society glamorizes this word pimp. Or glamorizes trafficking. So by the time it gets down to where someone is forced into this we're desensitized. Because of songs like these. Because of Hooters and bachelor parties. But men -- don't be discouraged when I say bachelor parties and strippers. When your friend is about to get married you're like, "Man, what you doing for your bachelor party?" "I'm going to the strip club." Hey, that's what all the brothers do. Right?" No, no, no. You can be that man to stand up and say, "No we're not." And all the information that you got this week; you can take that information and educate your friend on why you're not going to the strip club for his bachelor party. Now your friend may end up kicking you out his wedding but you got to stand up for what's right. Right? Okay [applause]

So this sex trafficking thing; when you hear the words "sex trafficking," you got to keep three words in mind: force, fraud -- and this one is where my Jamaican comes in -- coercion. I got to say it slow. I put an h in there sometimes. Coercion. Right? I know I'm going to say "cohercion." My roommate is like, "That's

not how you say that word." Oh well. But so those three words. Right? Force, fraud and coercion. Right? And let's take this culture back into -- this argument of culture back into sex trafficking. There's a language. Did anyone know that? Language? What's a "trick"?

[Inaudible Audience Response]

Shamere McKenzie: The guy that's buying. Do we use that word in our culture? What's a "wife-in-law"? See, I told you there's a language. If you're not a part of the culture you don't know. A wife-in-law is all the girls who are under the same pimp. That's the wife-in-laws. They refer to each other as wife-in-laws. This is some of the language. "Lot lizard" is another word that you guys are like, "What is a lot lizard?" A girl that works the truck stops; lot lizard. And the pimp -- we all know the pimp/trafficker; but the girls refer to him as "Daddy." Why do you think she refers to him as Daddy?

[Inaudible Audience Response].

Shamere McKenzie: He supplies her needs. And what does Daddy do? Daddy protects. Daddy takes care. So he creates an atmosphere, this family atmosphere. Right? And so by now I know some of you are wondering, "Shamere, what happened to you? Tell us what happened to you. That's why we're here." But I just have to give you some background so when I get into the story and I refer to wife-in-laws or lot lizards then you guys are like, "What are you talking about?" I got to touch on the language. "The track." What's the track?

[Inaudible Audience Response]

Shamere McKenzie: The "spot" or the "stroll." I heard someone said "stroll." It's referred to as a stroll. But that's where the girls work; on the street. They just set up shop someplace. What's the "kiddie stroll or the "kiddie track"? What's where the younger girls work. Right? And we know that the average age where girls are forced into this lifestyle is what?

[Inaudible Audience Response].

Shamere McKenzie: 13. 13. And why do you think its 13? They're the most vulnerable and, sadly, that's what's in demand. That's what's in demand. We have -- Shared Hope has undercover footage -- if you go on YouTube and you put in Shared Hope you can see where the pimp is negotiating. He tells our undercover that I have a younger girl but you have to pay more. She's about 14. And if I told you the adult is \$200 you know, he's like I'll put \$50 more on it. He's like no, no, no, no, no. If I tell you she's \$200 you got to do a little better than that. That's undercover footage that's happening not in Thailand, not in China, but here in the United States. This is a problem that's going on right here in the United States. And for me, I was a college student just like some of you here. For me the word "pimp" was cool. It's what I saw on the videos. He's a pimp; oh he just has a lot of girls. It was cool. Oh, those are some "pimp shoes." I used to laugh when I used to hear "she got pimp slapped." Some of us still do laugh. It's okay to laugh. It's okay. We're here to learn. Right? She got pimp slapped. We laugh. We're like oh that's

so funny. But it's really not funny if you really look into this lifestyle. And I talked a little bit on the language.

Now the rules, right? Just like in our culture; don't steal. If you steal you're going to jail. You rob a car, you rob someone you're going to jail. There are rules in this culture and if you're not part of this culture you won't know. Don't look another pimp in the eye. Don't walk on the sidewalk if a pimp is walking on the sidewalk. Don't hand your pimp money in public. Right? These are some of the rules. Right? There's a pimp book out and this is a quote from that book. And the pimp says, "It's hard to protect girls from guys like us because we eat, drink, and sleep thinking of ways to trick the young girls into getting them to do what we want them to do." There are books written about how you can be a pimp.

So like I was saying, I was a college student on a full athletic scholarship attending St. Johns University. And I was in jeopardy of losing my scholarship; I injured my hamstring. And I met this guy -- and at that time I thought he was Prince Charming on a white horse. Very polite. Referred to me as "young lady."
START HERE 23:17 Chivalry wasn't dead in his eyes because he got my doors. Right? Pulled my chair out. Assisted me putting on my coat. I was like, he is such a gentleman. You must be sent from Heaven. Woo. Right? And so we had great conversations. Conversations about politics; which I really wasn't interested in. I was just like, my politics was who was president. That was my politics. I don't want him for president, and that's as much as I'll talk about. I didn't know the root of politics. Right? We'd talk about single parents in the community. The high number of African-American males that are incarcerated. And of course he said he graduated from Morehouse College. Reputable college, right? What girl wouldn't want a guy that graduated from Morehouse? Right? So we had these great conversations and I was like, you know, "What do you do for a living?" And then his response was, "Well, I want you to like me for who I am, not what I do." That's a fair response. Right? Ladies? That's a fair response right [laughter]?

[Inaudible Audience Response].

Shamere McKenzie: No?

[Inaudible Audience Response].

Shamere McKenzie: Let's talk about that [laughter]. I mean if you're courting a guy and you say, "Well, what do you do for a living?" He's like, "I'm not ready to tell you that yet. I want you to like me." That seems like a fair response. Right? Well, the naïve Shamere was like, "Oh, I don't want him to think I'm a "gold digger." You guys know that term. The older ladies may not know. It's a girl that's after a guy because of his money. Right? So I said okay, I don't want him to think I'm a gold digger but is he a rapper. He has all the bling, bling on. He drives a Mercedes Benz and I'm thinking; is he a rapper? No. Does he work on Wall Street, because this guy was from New York; does he work on Wall Street? No.

Okay. Until I -- you know, after a while I told him, "Well, I'm in jeopardy of losing my scholarship." And he said, "I will help you. All you have to do is dance." Now I'm thinking a lot of girls dance their way through college. Girls think it's okay. Right? I'm just dancing. I'm making bucks. I'm not doing anything

else. Dancing is legal and I'm getting my education. Right? Not understanding the other things that goes on in the strip clubs. Which is why guys -- bachelor parties; strip clubs and strippers. No, no, no, no, no. Ladies, if your husband or your fiance says he's going to the strip club the wedding is off. Okay? The wedding is off. Because I'm going to tell you some of the things that happen in these strip clubs tonight. All right? And so he said, "I'll help you. All you have to do is dance." And at that time after financial aid and loans all I needed was \$3,000 to go to college for that semester. I was in my third year, first semester -- just completed first semester going into second semester. So I went to the club; in two hours I made \$300. So I immediately -- I made \$300 with no one touching me and I wasn't completely nude. So I said, "Ah-ha, \$300, two hours." And I started to do the math. Right? And I said, "Well, in no time I'll make this \$3,000. I'll be back in school. This will be over."

Until he took me out of the club and he brought me to this house. And I remember the guys at the door specifically. They looked like body builders. Just big, tall and buff. I was -- you know, kind of scared of these guys. He gave us \$20 which is called a "tip in." Because when you go in you give them the money up front to be there. That's a tip in; another language word. And if you give them the money when you leave that's a "tip out." Get that. It's the same rule for strip clubs. Tip in, tip out. This is language we don't use in our culture. Well, as far as in that circumstance. But I went there and he said it's \$10 for a wall dance and \$20 for a lap dance. So I'm going around the whole night asking, "Do you want a dance? Do you want a dance?" "No." "Do you want a dance?" "No." "Do you want a dance?" Nobody want to dance with me. Until this one guy comes and he says, "How much is it for a blowjob?" Now my mouth is kind of cleaned up a little right now, but back then it was dirty. So the word that came out my mouth back then I would not repeat tonight. But immediately I started to curse him out. "How dare you ask me for that? Who do you think you are?" But the pimp overheard the conversation and he kindly pulled me over and he said, "You're going to go over there and you're going to do whatever that guy says to." And I started cursing him out. "Did you hear what he asked me to do?" "Yeah, I heard. It's \$50. Now go back." And I said, "Uh-uh. You go over there and you do whatever he says to because I'm not doing it." And he's like, "You're not doing it, huh?" I was like, "No I'm not. As a matter of fact I'm leaving."

What do you think happened next? The hand came to the neck and he said, "Do you really think you could walk out of here alive?" And I quickly remember those body builder guys at the front door -- and I have on some weight tonight, back then I was about a 100 pounds soaking wet. And I said, "If I leave they're going to kill me." And he said, "You will not make it out of here alive." So after choking me up in the corner I went back to the guy and I was like, "My life is on the line. Let's do some dances and get this \$50." Took me a while to convince him because I just cursed him out. And so the guy gave me the dances.

So anybody does history? History? So you know that they say that the bad slaves were dropped off in Jamaica and Haiti right? It's true. We're just fighters. I'm Jamaican; it's okay. You guys can laugh. It's okay. And so when I got home I'm like, I'm Jamaican. I'm going to take him on. I'm going to tell him it's just me and him. Those body builder guys that I know I can't fight are not there. So I went up to him and I was just like, "You know we talked about dancing. You didn't say anything about prostitution and I don't want to do that. So I'm going to go."

What you guys think happened then? He yanked me back. I took one step and grabbed the back of my neck. And of course the fighter in me thought I'm going to take you on. I ain't scared. So I immediately turned around; like dude, what's your problem? Back up. I'm from the Bronx New York so you guys know about the Bronx. We get down [laughter]. Okay? So I'm like turned around. like dude what's your problem? What's up [nervous laugh]? Should have done that, because the first came to the face. And even with the fist I still thought I was big and bad with my 100 pounds and I swung back. Made matters worse. I remember the hit to my face. I remember the kick with the Timberland boots. And the only thing I remember is waking up in a pool of urine. I don't remember what happened after that. Blacked out from that beating. You remember Prince Charming that I talk about when I said I first met this guy? That turned into the monster. Guess what, Prince Charming returned when I woke up. Because I woke up and I'm looking at myself and there's blood and I realized I peed myself and I'm just like, "Ah" crying. And he ran over; "Sweetie, I'm so sorry. I just lost control. I don't know what got into me." And I believed him. I believed him. And it was that easy because some of us now are in similar situations where a spouse, a boyfriend or a girlfriend does something real horrible to us and they come back, "Sweetie, I'm so sorry." And we believe them.

[Silence]

Well, sounds easy. For some people it's like, "No, I'm not standing up for that. I'm out." More power to you. Because some of us are not there yet. To stand up and say, "No, I'm not accepting this. You were wrong. Did you see what you just did to me?" And so that continued for 18 months. 18 months of these severe beatings, and rapes, and sodomy. And yes, I tried to run away. Yes. I ran away three times and each time I ran away he always reminded me, "I will kill you when I find you and if I don't find you I know where your mom lives."

And so that's call -- when he was Prince Charming; that's the grooming stage. That's the recruitment grooming stage. Where he pretends to be this nice guy -- and these are how all pimps are. The recruitment and grooming stage is very nice and pretty, but then the turn out stage is where the beatings come in. And by the time you reach to the turn out stage there's no leaving. Leaving is not an option.

Okay, so we traveled. Why do we travel? Got to go where the money is. So around Super Bowl time you will hear a lot of sex trafficking talk. Oh, this group is doing this for the Super Bowl. There are not pimps there. Yes they are because who goes to Super Bowl?

Audience: Men.

Shamere McKenzie: Not only men but people with....?

[Inaudible Audience Response].

Shamere McKenzie: Right. I'm staying home and watching Super Bowl on TV because I can't afford it. If I even watch the Super Bowl. But some ladies watch Super Bowl. Okay. And so, this continued; that fear. The number one question people ask is, "Well, why don't you just leave?" Fear. Control. Remember those three words I talked about? Force, fraud and coercion? Those are the three words that are in our federal definition. Force, fraud and coercion. The force was there. The fraud was there. You're going back to school. School never came. And the coercion is the violence. For some people that's a big word. It was a big word for me too when I first learned it. It's okay. It's the violence; when the violence comes in.

And so we traveled and we traveled to several different states. Texas. I was in New York, so Texas. Connecticut, New Jersey and Florida. So after coming up with several ways of coming out the life -- and when I said I come up with ways I mean when you're in this and someone tells you if you leave I'm going to kill you -- it's different when this person beats you to the point of -- when you think you're going to die. Right? You're going to believe that person. It's not just someone walking down the street and they're like, "Man, what you looking at? I'll smack you." You're like, "Yeah, whatever. You don't know me. I go to boxing classes." Right? But when this person actually beats you to that point you're going to believe every and anything he says. So at one point I tried to think, okay, well I'll poison his food. He will die. But no, that's not a brilliant idea Shamere, because if he lives, he'll know you poisoned him and then what's going to happen? Okay, that was option one.

Option two -- met these guys in Florida. These gangsters. These gangsters -- his father was running Jamaica from the '70s. The government of Jamaica is scared of this gang. So I'm like I know I'm rolling with the heavy hitters. Right? Tell the guy, you know, I'm trying to get from my pimp. The guy said, "Don't worry we're going to rob him and kill him. Are you down?" "Yes." So one time I ran away when I met this guy. Yes, we're going to rob him and kill him. Sends the killer to the hotel room, the killer gives me the 9 mm, shows me how to load it. He says, "Just cover me. You don't have to kill him. I'm going to rob him and kill him. Just cover me." I said, "I know what that means." Because I have to cover my pimp sometimes, right? I go up to the gate -- and by this time people, we're living in a gated community in Florida. I just want you to know. When you hear of sex trafficking you normally think of urban communities. No, no, no. It's not always in the urban communities. So I show up to the gate and I said, "I don't think I can do this. I can't kill nobody." And then it's going to be on my conscience. I showed him where he is. Now he is dead; even though he's done some horrible things to me. Right? My conscience kicks in. If anybody else was in my situation they'd be like this man done beat me, rape me, sodomize -- kill him. Right? Not Shamere. God knows what He was doing when He created me because the conscience kicked in. I can't do it. And for those guys who are in that business of killing people; when you tell them they're going to kill someone, don't get in the way. Because you're going to end up being dead, too. But for some reason when I told him I don't want to do it, he took the gun off his lap and he put it to my head. I said, "Okay, it's not the first time a gun has been placed at my head. So this is it." Then I turned and I looked at him and I said, "You're going to kill me?" He's like, "Man, you know what we're here for. We here to kill this guy and you trying to tell me you're not going to do it." So as a result of that I was raped at gunpoint that night.

So throughout this experience it's not only the pimp that's abusing me; its guys that I met, the johns faking like they're the police. And then I'm arrested several times during this 18 months. Arrested for prostitution. Right? My first arrest was in a strip club. And in that instance all the buyers were asked to leave. And all the girls were lined up and arrested. And guess what? This business continued as usual the next day, even though law enforcement was aware that sex is being sold in this establishment. Right? The buyers were not arrested. The guys who were in there; those guys were always free.

My next arrest was on the track. Remember that word? When the police pulled the car over; the buyer? "Get out of here." Now if you pull me over in someone else's car on the track, clearly a transaction is about to take place. That's two parties in an illegal activity. Right? But the girl, the victim, is arrested and the buyer is free to go. That's across the United States. Right? Seems to be a problem with our laws right there. Right? Because if you are selling drugs and they come to your house; everybody in the house is going down. Right? So why is it that when we come to this issue the buyers are free to go, but the girls are arrested and charged? Doesn't make sense. Right? Because we need to fix our laws. I was on a panel last Thursday in Tennessee; well, we have "john schools," and it is too help the buyers, the johns, so they can have an opportunity to do right [laughter]. Help the buyers so that they can have an opportunity to do right. That don't make sense to me. What about the victims? Why don't you help the victim so they can have an opportunity to do right? You see the man that purchased sex from a child; his wife don't know about it. When he goes to apply for a job, when they run his background check; clean. There's nothing in it that says I bought sex with a 13-year-old. He continues with his life. But the child or that young lady is arrested and given a criminal conviction and she now has barriers in her life. She can't apply for certain jobs. She's in jail -- sometimes you get jail time. You're barred from certain scholarships. And if you have never met a sex offender before you're looking at one. Because you're also labeled a sex offender. So after 18 months of being with this guy I finally decided that all the plans didn't work. Running away -- don't work. Poison his food -- don't work. Getting the gangsters -- don't work. Ah-ha. I got a plan this time. Stop making money. And my quota -- what's a "quota"?

Audience member: How much you got to make.

Shamere McKenzie: How much you got to make. That's right. My quota at this time was \$1,500. Let's stick a pin right there and talk about the money and how much money is in this \$32 billion industry. And when you hear the term \$32 billion industry -- that's -- human trafficking is a \$32 billion industry, people say, "No it's not." Well, take out your calculators or your smart phone. Now the average quota is \$500. You have one girl working 365 days a week. Multiply \$500 by 365. You're supposed to get \$188,000 something, something, dollars.

Audience member: \$182,500

Shamere McKenzie: \$182,500. That's off of one girl for the year. \$182,500; is that what you said sir? That's off of one girl. Now imagine if he has five. And that's the average quota. That's not talking about when she goes higher, or in my case makes \$1,500. Multiply \$1,500 times 365. Math guy, you're on it.

[Inaudible Audience Response].

Shamere McKenzie: You lost the chance? Okay, but that's even a higher number [laughter]. Right?

Audience member: \$547,500.

Shamere McKenzie: \$547,500 off of Shamere McKenzie alone.

Audience members: Woo.

Shamere McKenzie: Okay? That's a high -- that's worth some of us houses we're sitting in here. That's the amount of money these guys are making. Okay? So when we talk about human trafficking -- anybody like Starbucks?

[Inaudible Audience Response]

Shamere McKenzie: Starbucks, the number one selling coffee company; they make "cha-ching." Right? What's the number one footwear, sneaker company? Nike. Nobody not messing with Nike. Jordan's; they're made by Nike. Right? Billions of dollars. Right? When you want to Google and find out about Shamere, what do you use? Google right? Google search. Right? Millions of dollars. So Starbucks, Nike and Google; guess who's up there with making that money?

Audience member: Pimps.

Shamere McKenzie: Pimps. No one's competing with Starbucks. No one's competing with Nike, and no one's not definitely messing with Google and they're making millions. Millions. The difference is Google, Nike and Starbucks, they have to pay tax. Pimps don't pay tax. Sad. Off of people. When we talk about sex trafficking it's the buying and selling of people, for someone else's profit. Now you may ask, "Shamere, your quota is \$1,500. How much do you keep?" Guess how much I keep.

Multiple audience members: None.

Shamere McKenzie: \$9? Somebody said nine? Oh, zero. You're right. Because each night when I go home a cavity search is performed. Know what a cavity search is right? Google it if you don't know. Use Google [laughter]. Right? I'm promoting Google. I like Google; they're supporting this issue. Yes, I like Google. And so those are just some of the things that you go through. So I have to go to work these long hours in this modern day slavery. Now is there anyone that disagrees that this is modern day slavery? Disagrees. You can raise your hand. It's okay. We're here to learn. Okay, why is it modern slavery? Since everyone agrees with me. Why is it -- Professor Kate, you cannot answer this question [laughter]. Why is this modern day slavery?

Audience member: There's no choice.

Shamere McKenzie: There's no choice. What else?

Audience member: It's profitable.

Shamere McKenzie: Profitable. Let's break down this slavery thing for two seconds. We're going to talk about slavery in the 18th Century, 17th Century; slavery back then and slavery now. Slavery in the 18th Century; you're forced to work long hours. Right? Slavery in the 21st Century you are also forced to work long hours. I went to the strip club at 12 noon. I came home at 7:00 a.m. the next day. Because when I left the strip club I went to the track. Right? You work for little or no pay in the 18th Century. What happens in the 21st Century? You are given a new name, you take on the name of your slave master in the 18th Century. What happens in the 21st Century? You got a new name. You're no longer Shamere McKenzie; you're now "Barbie." Now just imagine that psychological impact of you taking away my name. Giving me a name that I don't even have a say as to what it is. You're Barbie and that's it. Why you're calling me Barbie? Because you look like a black Barbie doll. Now when I look in the mirror I definitely don't see that. Well back then. Now you can't tell me nothing. I'm Barbie and more. But back then I had no confidence. So when he was calling me Barbie I'm like, "What's the Barbie -- where is that? I don't want to be called Barbie." Didn't have a choice. Back then there was a "driver" who was also a slave. It's going back to the modern versus 21st Century. Back then you had a driver who was also a slave that watched over the other slaves in the absence of the slave master. In the 21st Century we have what's called the "bottom girl." Still a slave but watches over the other girls in the absence of the pimp.

Get it? Same thing. Modern day slavery. That is why it's slavery. It's so parallel. So if you're ever walking down the streets and you're like, "This human trafficking is just slavery." And someone turns around and says, "No, it's not." There's your argument right there. I just set you up. And tell them to debate that because they can't. And I've tried it. I don't think I'm very smart, but I've had some very scholarly people approach me and told me it's not slavery. And I set up my argument and I said, "Well, slavery back then. Slavery now." And I gave them -- and I went on and on. I just gave you about four points there. But I went on and on and on [laughter]. And I said, "Now what's your argument?" "Well, you see, these girls are doing it willingly."

Audience member: Oh, right.

Shamere McKenzie: So you explain to me what part of it is willing when I tell this man I want to leave and he told me he was going to kill me or my family. Which part of it is willing there? Right? So as I was saying, this continued for 18 months and I finally decided I'm going to stop making money. This \$1,500; zero. Now I'm working at a top strip club in Miami. The biggest club on the East Coast. The buyers that go to this club -- I'm going to tell you the amount of money that goes into this club. The guys that go to this club, the VIP, they spend \$65,000 a year to rent a skybox. That when they come to this club they can only be there for an hour. Okay? So I'm not talking about Professor Brown over here that teaches at Loyola. I don't want to call it this school because no professors in this school will ever go there. No professor at Loyola either. I'm a friend of Loyola. But we're not talking about a professor's salary. We're

talking about these big guys that are able to easily spend \$65,000 a year at a strip club just to rent a room. They pay for services when they come there. So that doesn't include the service. That's the amount of money that goes into this trafficking or this industry. Right?

Okay. So I said \$1,500; I'm going to make zero. "Barbie why you didn't bring home any money tonight?" "The club was empty." Now I can talk to somebody in that club and get \$200 by saying hello. Okay? It's real easy. And I went from bring in \$1,500 to zero -- and he knows that. I'm not saying that to say I enjoyed it. I could talk, I could bring in \$200. I'm saying it to show you that when I tell him that I'm bringing home zero dollars he knows that that's impossible.

So he pulled me out the club and he put me on South Beach. South Beach -- party, party, party. I go on South Beach and I do everything else but try to get a trick. So here I was having lunch one day -- me and my wife-in-law -- and he calls the cell phone. We see him, we duck underneath the table. He already saw us. The guy that's having lunch with us is looking like, "Why are they underneath the table?" He calls us to go to the car. I was the smart one to jump in the back and she jumped in the front. He immediately starts beating her up. And by the point I was the bottom "itch" -- it rhymes with "itch." That B word. Yeah. What's the bottom? Another language word. She's the most trusted. She acts in the absence of the pimp. Right? So I was the bottom. But I didn't know until I was in handcuffs. Because according to him he had no bottom.

So I jumped in the back seat. He drops her off -- after just beating her up -- at the strip club and he says, "What am I going to do with you?" And I boldly say, "Well just make me leave." He said, "You want to leave huh. I'm going to give you \$5,000 and you could leave." Now I know that that's not going to happen because I've seen him play that same card on another girl. And when he was finished with her, her body was bouncing on the floor like when you're sorting dirty clothes. So when I got in the house he went upstairs and I stayed downstairs. And I heard the click of the gun. Now I had a previous encounter with that gun because before when he told me I had to drive one day I said, "I am not going to drive. I am tired. I don't want to do this." And he said, "Well, you have a choice. Chose death or driving." And at that point in my enslavement I was tired. I was done, I wanted out. So guess what I chose?

[Inaudible Audience Response].

Shamere McKenzie: I chose death. He said, "Open your mouth." And I opened my mouth. He placed the gun in my mouth and he pulled the trigger. So here I was on a wall and I'm looking at him and I'm like, yes I'm dead. Can't do me nothing no more. What you going to do? I'm not making no money? And I'm like, oh, actually when you're dead you can still see people. He's standing right there, I should haunt him. I should do something. And all these things are going through in my mind until I feel the blow of the gun in my head. I'm like hold up. When you're dead you're not supposed to feel anything. Why am I feeling that gun in my head? That's when I realized the gun was unloaded. So now when I hear that sound of the gun I said, "Ah-ha. He's smart. This time he's making sure the gun is loaded." So I ran out the house -- and this is in a gated community in Florida -- and this guy was in his garage with his daughter. He says, "Well, why are you running around here?" Now, you are trained to tell people you

don't have a pimp. Part of the rules. Don't tell anyone you have a pimp; even the police. You don't have a pimp. So when he said that I said, "Oh, I'm running around from my ex-boyfriend who's trying to beat me up." And I call that guy my Prince, not my Prince charming; I kind of love that word huh? I call him my guardian angel. If you're in this room raise your hand. You're my guardian angel? Oh, you're all my guardian angels. I love ya'll too.

[Inaudible Audience Response].

Shamere McKenzie: But I call this guy my guardian angel because if I should see him right now I can't recognize him. This guy took me into his garage, he gave me a place to stay, he gave me some food and he gave me a cell phone to call home to my mother. That's how I got out of it. And for all that time, when I came out guess what I did? I called that pimp every single day. Why did I call him every single day?

[Inaudible Audience Response].

Shamere McKenzie: Brainwash. Trauma bonding. Anybody ever heard of the -- what's the syndrome called -- Stockholm Syndrome? And also I was scared. Because he said he would kill me. Right? So I'm calling him to make sure where are you? Are you really coming to kill me? Until afterwards he said, "Get off my phone because I think the police is on the phone." So here I am, I got a job. Was in the process of going back to school. When one morning I heard, "Are you Shamere McKenzie?" Now my mom had just had kidney surgery and I'm hearing in my house at 6:00 a.m., "Are you Shamere McKenzie?" I said, "Ah-ha. He's really coming to kill me." So I woke up and I get out all the shoes from underneath my bed and I put on a sports bra so I could hold the perfume bottles in and I had one shoe in my hand and I had the perfume bottle in the other hand and I bust open the door thinking it's going down. It's going to be me, him, and my stilettos [laughter]. Right? So I bust open the door when I hear, "Are you Shamere McKenzie?" And they're like [screech] [laughter]. I kindly put the shoe down, took out all the perfume bottles out the bra; because guess who it was.

[Inaudible Audience Response].

Shamere McKenzie: The FBI. I looked like a fool. I'm glad they didn't take pictures of that [laughter]. That would have been on Facebook somewhere. Shamere busts out ready to fight the FBI with the perfume bottle and the stilettos [laughter]. So they're like, "Are you Shamere McKenzie?" And I'm like, "Yes." "We need to talk to you." "What you want to talk about?" Cuffs start going on. I'm like, "Hold up, that's not how you talk. You're arresting me. You're not talking to me." "You know what this is about." "What is this about?" And they use his real name, Corey Davis. I'm like, "I don't know who that is." Because he used three other names. So when they told me his real name I didn't even know who he was. When they called him his pimp name I said, "Oh yeah, I know who that is." They said, "We need to talk to you down by the station." So I'm like, "If you need to talk to me why you arresting me?" So here I was caught up in a case that I – one, I don't even know what I'm being arrested for; and two, I was a victim who's being arrested.

And in my mind I'm like, "It's cool. It's the FBI." Why am I cool? Because the FBI only comes after you when they have evidence. Right? It's the FBI, they'll see that I'm a victim, I'll be out. Then I get down to the station -- the courthouse. When the FBI comes to your house you have to do three business days in jail. And they were so smart about it to get me at 6:00 a.m. in the snowstorm, and the only person who could revoke that is the prosecutor, who was on vacation. So this three business days turned into three weeks in jail. And yes, I did have an attorney. And I'm bawling like a baby for the first two days. "Why am I here? I'm innocent." Everyone is innocent in jail, right? If you speak to jails, no criminal that would say, "Yes I deserve to be here." Well, some of them are bold enough to say it but, everyone's innocent in jail.

Until they finally said, "You have an option. We're going to release you and you can go to D.C., San Francisco, or North or South Carolina; one of them. And I chose D.C. because it was closer to home. And I say this and I said everything I said before to show you how victims are being criminalized in our country. Right? There was no part of the story that said, "I willingly wanted to do this." I wanted out. I was the one that had to make money while this guy profit. But because I drove minors across state lines, charge.

Now after spending three weeks in jail, and I love to eat -- so Kate the dinner was awesome. Thank you guys. Kate knew what she was doing. She's like if I feed her she'll talk well [laughter]. Right? No, I love to eat. In jail they feed you at 5:00 o'clock, 11:00 o'clock and 4:00 o'clock. Not the place for me. In jail they -- the trauma and the psychological trauma that I endured under the pimp; it's even worse in jail. Because when I got there the cut my weave out and I was very vain; I couldn't go without my weave. They clipped my -- I had acrylic -- they cut my acrylic. This is not even cute. I'm not even cute in jail.

And then, I got to take a two minute shower with a half -- you know, when you go to the hotel and they give you that face soap? They give you a half of that soap and say take a shower. I'm like, "Excuse me, I'm a female. I need a washcloth." "McKenzie you got two minutes." The shower is going and I'm debating about a washcloth. "How am I supposed to take a shower with half a soap and no washcloth?" And I started to slowly rub the soap around my neck, shower goes off and she said, "Spread them apart." Spread what apart? I'm not even finished taking a shower. That's when it got real ugly. I'm like after all of that enslavement I come here and I'm not even treated as a human being. I am naked and this woman tells me to bend over and spread them apart. For what? Cavity search. Now that's the worst thing. I'm like, he did that to me. Now you're doing that to me? He told me the police was not my friend. Now you just did a cavity search that he did? You're definitely not my friend. He told me the police was arresting me. You are arresting me. You're definitely not my friend. This is why girls don't run to the police. Because the pimp already tell you the police are not your friend. The police is going to arrest you and here I am arrested and is being treated the same way the pimp treated me.

Now I understand that's the standard protocol. People sneaking things in jail. But at that time I was still undergoing severe trauma, so to me I wasn't getting the logic. You get it? I was understanding -- I'm just comparing her to a pimp. You're a pimp. You just did the same thing he did. So finally I got out and when I got to D.C. in three weeks I got a job with a school until they said, "You got to take a plea." "Why I got

to take a plea? I cooperated with you. I gave you all this information. You were able to rescue two other girls. Why am I taking a plea?" "Miss McKenzie you have to be held accountable for your actions." "My actions of a gun being placed in my head several times, the gun placed in my mouth, or being raped and beaten and witnessed other girls being beaten severely and you can't help. What actions?" "Actions of driving a minor across state lines."

One of the girls I drove -- I didn't even know that at the time and it still bothers me to this day -- that I did this girl's makeup, in her face, did her eye makeup, and I did not even know she was 12. To this day I am like, how can I look into a person's face and not know she's 12? So when they told me there was a 12-year-old I said, "Huh, the pimp already told me ya'll police are liars. So you're lying. You're trying to stick something on me. And two, he said he don't deal with minors." Because at one time a 16-year-old girl came home and he told us to take her back. He don't deal with anyone who's under 18. So why would he have a 12-year-old? That don't make sense. So I don't never believe the police until I read the document and she showed her birth certificate that she's really 12. And to this day I say to myself, "Shamere how could you not know she's 12 and two, now that I'm out of the situation what would I have done?"

Now when I was in the life I had the courage to help other girls get out the life. To help other girls escape. But when they would say, "Why don't you come with me?" I'm like, "No, you go. And if he ever finds you I did not help you out of this one." But I didn't have the courage to leave. I was still attached. That trauma bonding had already kicked in. So when I got to D.C. they put me on probation and there are two clauses in this Mann Act which is a very old piece of law; this Mann Act. That says that I knowingly and willingly transported minors across state lines. One, I didn't know and two, it wasn't willingly. Now this is my story that you hear tonight. You may have read about this and read other stories and in no part of it is it willingly. She may have said, "Yes, I want to come with you initially." But it's not willingly. So when I got to D.C. and the probation said, "Miss McKenzie, you have to register as a sex offender." I said, "All right." Felony, sex offender; I'm committing suicide. There's no reason to live. Because here I was, an innocent person; you charge me with a felony. Now you want to tell me I'm a sex offender? Now raise your hand. By show of hands -- a sex offender is someone who molests kids. Right?

Audience members: Right.

Shamere McKenzie: That's what we believe. Right? It's more than that. Guys, if you pee in public and they catch you, you have to register as a sex offender in some states. So it's not just the guy that molests kids that you have to register as a sex offender. It's any act where -- well, for some states I just don't understand that. If you pee in public you have to register as a sex offender. But it's any act that involves children, any sexual act that involves children you have to register as a sex offender. So because I drove that 12-year-old I'm a sex offender. So after attempting to commit suicide several times the probation officer said I need to see a psychologist. Now at this point I had layers of trauma that I didn't even see. And my trauma was being manifested through my mouth. And I had trauma before I was enslaved.

So when I went to the psychologist, he had his note pad and after 10 minutes he said, "You're not a sex offender." And I said, "I don't need you with your PhD to tell me I am not a sex offender. I know I am not a sex offender." But that's how my trauma manifested. I went to seven different psychologists for healing and I cussed out every single one [laughter]

"Miss McKenzie what do you want to talk about today?" "You are the one with the PhD., why you asking me what you want to talk about today?" "Miss McKenzie what do you want to talk about today?" "Sleep. Wake me up -- what's the session? 45 minutes? Wake me up in 45 minutes." And she did let me sleep for 45 minutes and woke me up after 45 minutes and said, "You're free to go." [Laughter]

Because this issue is so complex -- like, people equate it with PTSD -- but it is so complex that in this year's review it's not even being looked at as PTSD. It's being called "DESNOS" which is "disorders of extreme stress not otherwise specified." It's so complex, the trauma is so complex, and here I am dealing with the trauma of being molested at five. Then enslaved at 21. Now with a felony and a sex offender registry? I'm done. Life is not for me. I'm out.

Now he said, "Okay. I know you're not a sex offender but I'm going to give you a polygraph." Start cussing him out again. "So I got to take a lie detector test to prove to you that I was a victim? I don't need your lie detector test to tell me that. I know what happened." So here I had to go, take the lie detector test. They ask you 10 questions. They put something around your waist, a blood pressure thing on your arm, this thing on your finger and if you tell a lie something goes off in your body. Something, something and it triggers something, something, something. I don't know how those things work but apparently they can detect whether you're telling a lie. So here I was -- and I'm sitting and he asks me 10 questions. I'm like, "no, yes, 13, 12." Whatever question he asked I honestly answered. He comes over, he checked my equipment. He looks at his computer screen, he looks at me and I'm just like, "What's the problem?" He's like, "Oh, nothing." He asked me the same questions again, in a different order. Now I'm looking at him like okay, you crazy. He asked me the same question. He comes over, he checks the equipment, looks at his computer screen, looks at me. I'm like, "Yo, what's really good?" Right [laughter]? He says, "Nothing." Asks me the questions again the third time. Now this time I'm going off. I'm like why is he checking me? Why is he looking at a computer screen? They trying to set me up. They trying to send me to jail. That's what I'm thinking. So after he did it the third time he said, "Shamere, I've been doing this for seven years." -- and apparently when you tell a lie or when you're nervous or something some gland inside you does something and the needle moves on his computer. That's how they now when you're telling a lie. He said, "I've been doing this for seven years and I've never seen the needle just stood still." I said, "I don't need you or your computer to tell me that I'm not lying. I know I ain't lying." "Miss McKenzie, calm down." I said, "Okay, what's next? Do I come off the registry?" "We'll have to send this back to probation and we'll see what happens."

But the ways our laws are set today, I'm still a sex offender. And it's so funny because Lawrence Taylor slept and raped a 16-year-old; he's a sex offender whose face is not shown on the sex offender registry but Shamere McKenzie who's a victim of a crime is shown on the computer. Right? We need to fix these

laws. I mean, California -- I work for Shared Hope. We analyze the state laws and we give each state a letter grade. California got an F; failing.

But guess what? There is hope. And I know there's hope because I told you I'm not even supposed to be here. I'm supposed to be dead, laying in a box as a scavenger for somebody, I've done faced death's door a thousand million times. So I am here today, so I know that there is hope. And I don't want you to leave here today saying, "Oh my gosh. I'm so sorry this happened to you. I'm going to pray for you." Don't leave out here saying that.

Leave out here saying, "I'm going to take action because I have power." Let me tell you how. Now this is my issue. Right? This human trafficking thing is my issue. It may not be your issue but whatever your issue is, get up and fight and do something about it. How do I do something about it?

I'm going to give you one example. Everybody got Facebook? Twitter? Instagram? Social media. When you go on Facebook, instead of sitting in class and saying, "This professor is so boring. I can't wait for my 40 minutes to be up," talk about trafficking. Put something educational on your status. Because you never knew who you're helping. I talk about trafficking every single day. I have friends who have unfriended me and told me I need to shut up about this issue. I said, "God gave you 10 fingers the way he gave me 10. Utilize your index finger and press the unfriend button if you don't want to see my status." You have the power to do so [laughter]. Don't complain about what's on my status. But then, I have thousands of people who sent me messages on Facebook or I'm connected to on Facebook saying, "You need to help her. You need to talk to her." Because of the status that I put on my status on Facebook. So you never know who you're going to reach by putting something about trafficking on your Facebook status. You could be saving a life. Someone could be enslaved but have the power to check their Facebook. Because the pimps sometimes will allow you to check your Facebook to recruit your friends. And that -- it could be your friend that's enslaved that you're telling her the hotline number to get out.

Politics. My new favorite subject. I told ya'll when I met this guy my politics was, "Who's running for president? I don't like him, I like him." That was my politics. Right? Do you guys know how important politics is? Is there anyone who does not like politics? I was one of those people. I hated politics. "I don't care. I'm not voting for no one." I had that point where I'm not vote -- I can vote now in D.C. I can vote even though I'm a felon. Yeah. [cheering] In some states I can't vote. As a felon. So I think I'm going to live in D.C. forever.

But politics -- it's very important that now it's the legislative session. And I'm not sure when California's legislative session ends but look at your legislative session. See what bills are being introduced on your topic. Last year when we came out with the Protected the Innocent Challenge when we graded the 50 states on their sex trafficking law, 280 bills were introduced throughout the country related to this issue. That's 280 bills throughout the 50 states including D.C. that you could write to your legislator and say, "Hey, I'm in California. I see that HB whatever the bill is, or SB if it's a Senate bill or a House bill. It goes SB if it's a Senate bill, HB if it's a house bill. I see that this bill is on the floor. What are you doing about

it? I'm in your constituents." Write to him. Visit him. Because when you write to him, he's like, "Oh, this person care." But when you visit him he thinks 10 people out there think like you. And when you look him in the eye and you said, "Hey, I just want you to know I'm a voting citizen, and I want to know what are you doing. Are you sponsoring this bill?" "Ah, I can't give you an answer on that." "Okay, I can't give you an answer on my vote." [laughter] Or I'm going to start a petition to get you out. Because there are some legislators who will not even introduce a bill. Asset forfeiture in Maryland has been -- didn't even come to the floor for the last four years. You know why? The chairman who has the power to do so did not bring the bill to the floor. Even though 17 members of his 23-member committee are for this bill. He did not bring it to the floor.

So take it to the people. People have power. We had a press conference and my co-worker called him out to the press: "Chairman Valerio you need to pass this bill. Bring the bill forward." In addition to that where we did media interviews my co-worker said, "You do not need to ask me this question. You need to go to Chairman Valerio's office and ask him that question." In addition to that, we got a lovely law enforcement officer, 25 years. He wrote a beautiful piece for the Gazette newspaper calling him out and telling the people they need to do something about it. [Applause]

So when you decide that you want change and you tell these legislators, "Look, I know about this bill and I need you to sponsor it." And you get your friend and you keep ringing off their phones you could do something. When you're walking down the street and you see a prostitute and you stick up your nose and you say, "Oh, I just gotta call the police because there's a prostitute in my neighborhood." Do you know how many times she has been beaten and raped before she was put on the street? Instead of calling the police about her why don't you take down the tag number of the car that pulled up beside her and is talking to her, and report that number to the police [applause]. Right? That's a power you have. And when you come in contact with a victim; this issue -- and I know for myself because of politics and I am not scared to say because of politics. So if this goes back to a Senator, the President, whosoever I really don't care. I'm a person who believes in justice and I'm going to stand up for it as long as I can breathe. It's politics.

There's no money being put into this issue. Or whatever money they put into this issue is not really helping victims. So you have the power to do that. Support organizations working on this issue and support victims of this crime. And when I say support it doesn't always mean financially. It doesn't because I am broke right now. But I still support victims. Sometimes it's simple -- be that ear when they need someone to talk to and don't be sympathetic; "I'm so sorry this happened to you." Empower victims.

If you have an organization, hire victims so they have skills, we have skills. Clearly we have to have some kind of skills to be surviving in those wee hours of the night. Some of us don't leave our house after 10 o'clock. Right? So empower these victims to do better. The only reason I could stand here to talk to you tonight is because others empowered me. They gave me a job. For two years I was unemployed. "Miss McKenzie I'm sorry, we can't hire you because of your felony." "You don't even know what my felony's about. You could get a tax write off if you hire me." "Sorry." "Okay, I guess you don't want that \$2,500

write off huh." But if you hire victims of trafficking you -- you're empowering them. Encourage them to do better. Because like I said, I didn't think I was "Barbie." Now I am Barbie plus tax [laughter]. Some people may say I'm cocky. No I'm not cocky. Like Jay Z said, "I'm confident." Okay? So that's what you can do as a community.

If you are a law enforcement officer take this to your Captain and he's going to tell you, "No, I don't want to deal with prostitution." And you got to tell him it's not prostitution. Because this girl -- as I told you, the 12-year-old was dressed up and I didn't think she was 12. So when you become in contact with the victim ask the right questions. Any law enforcement officers in here? Skip.

Teachers. Any teachers? If my child's coming to your class and you realize they're no longer coming, they're no longer doing their assignments, they're sleeping; ask questions. "I'm sorry, I don't mean to cut into your business but is everything okay? I realize you're drifting off in class." Don't go to her and say, "You're getting an 'F' because I see you sleeping in the front row all the time." You know, but develop questions and provide the resources. You don't have to talk to me -- and I understand for some teachers this is -- you have to draw the line where you can't ask certain questions. But there are resources and if you know of those resources or you can research the resources that's available." If you need to talk to someone here is such and such card. There's a counselor here in school. Go talk to this counselor. I don't know what it is, but I realize you know that you're kind of sleeping, and you look tired and you have scars" -- or anything you feel is evident signs.

Any nurses? Nurse? Medical? No, skip that. But if you're any other profession, you can volunteer your service. You can volunteer whatever service that is. So if you're a teacher -- let's go back to the teachers -- you can tutor that girl that needs help with school. Because school -- under pimp control you're not going to school.

And there are other forms of sex trafficking that's manifested in three other forms. There's gang trafficking, there's familial trafficking, and there's survival sex. But what I was talking about tonight was pimp control. Gangs are leaving the drug trafficking industry to come into the sex trafficking industry because it's a lucrative business. Low risk, high profit. Families are pimping out their children; their nieces and nephews and they're making money. There are guys online that shop for children. "Oh, you got a 3-year-old? Have sex with her, take a picture and send it to me. I'll buy it from you." It exists. There's -- I just want to put a map on my Facebook that shows around the country how many men buy and sell sex -- trade sex of children; pictures, photos, pornography. And it's -- I -- they show you the red and they show you the blue for the states and I can hardly see a blue. It's serious out here, and this is my issue. Once again, this is my issue.

What is your issue? What is your issue? And number two, what are you doing about your issue? Are you going to stand up and fight for justice? Because our moral obligation as human beings is to stand up and to fight for the oppressed. For those who cannot speak for themselves, for those who cannot fight for justice for themselves, but we can. And a lot of people tell me all the time, especially on my Facebook page; "Shamere you need to stop because it's not going to change." Prostitution is the oldest profession

-- it may not change but I can save a life. It may not change in terms of it stops completely, but the numbers are going to decrease. So we need to advocate for stronger laws for these pimps. I heard a pimp got 600 years plus five days the other day [applause] [laughter]. I said, "Yes, judge. You got it." And when I say advocate I wrote my judge last September and I asked for early termination of probation. And she says, and I quote, "While the court applauds Miss McKenzie for all the work she is doing to combat the issue of human trafficking her early -- the request for early termination of probation has been denied. This is her punishment." And so you guys may say, [gasp]; you know what I did when I got that email? I ran around -- I was in -- what's that called, not Mississippi -- Minneapolis. What's that state called?

Audience members: Minnesota.

Shamere McKenzie: Minnesota. And I ran around my hotel room screaming, "Yes." And I was with another survivor friend and she said, "Why you getting so excited?" I said, "The judge denied my request and she told me it's my punishment. Yes!" And she said, "Shamere, the judge said it's your punishment. Why are you so excited?" I said, "She just gave me ammunition. Yes." I'm going to run with that because that tells me you need to be trained. So when I go before my legislators and I say our judges needs to be trained. Victims are being arrested. they're saying this is your punishment; they can't tell me I'm lying. Because I pull out my black and white and say this is something my judge said. So she just gave me the ammunition to fight harder and go for it.

Now, you may not have lived or have any traumatic experience, and I have, and if you have -- get help and do something about it. Fight. Fight, fight, fight. Soon as she gave me that I said, "Yep, that's why I'm going to fight, fight, fight." Because I refuse for another victim to receive a letter that says "that is your punishment." That is my punishment for being beaten. That's my punishment for being sold for someone else's profit. That's my punishment for being raped. Thank you, judge.

But I refuse to let it happen to somebody else. And we can all come together. It's a collaborative effort to eradicate this issue. So I can sit up here and I can fight, fight, fight. But I can't fight by myself. I need your help. People will say, "Oh, it's a police thing. Oh, it's a legislator thing. It's the non-profit thing." No, it's all of our problem. We have to work together, come together and fight. Let our voices be heard. So I'm going to ask my two questions again and then I'm going to shut up and open up for questions and answers. What is your issue? And what are you doing about it? You don't have to shout it out. But when you leave here, don't be sad. Take action. You can take action. You have the power to do so. Thank you so much and we are now open for questions.

[Applause and Cheering]

Dr. Kate Transchel: We have a microphone, so if you have a question just raise your hand and someone will bring the mic over. [Inaudible].

Shamere McKenzie: Don't make it too difficult, okay? [laughter]

Audience member: I admire you for your courage and I thank you for being here visiting.

Shamere McKenzie: You're welcome. Thank you.

Audience member: I watched on Dan Rather, he reported this a while ago that in Sweden they actually made it legal for prostitution and there they -- the prostitutes are victims and they arrest the men -- the buyers, but they also send the victims for counseling to help them out. They send the guys, too, for counseling so, you know, they can stop buying girls but who knows if they actually stop because prostitution still goes around. But they made it legal. Do you think that's ever going to happen in the USA that there's a chance that they're going to make prostitution legal and it finally gets stopped, or it's just going to grow?

Shamere McKenzie: That's the number one question. Well did you also research in that Sweden report that when they legalized prostitution the sex trafficking victims increased? The amount of victims increased.

[Inaudible Audience Response].

Shamere McKenzie: So if the product -- if it's illegal to provide the product why would we legalize it and say, "Here, here's the product. Yes, we're putting the product out." What we're trying to do is take the product off the market. Because it's a three party type of thing. You have the product, the pimp, and the buyer. And so the product is illegal right? And even now that it's illegal, they have to find ways around it, these pimps, and if we have harsher penalties in place these pimps and these buyers will be arrested and these girls will be safe. But why would we legalize prostitution to put the product out there. To say, "Yes, you can buy and you can sell this child." Why would we give the product? No, you got to take the product away. So legalizing prostitution is not the answer. Because that's saying yes to the product. That's saying yes, I can put this product on the market. And they have fake ID's, so when I'm talking about 12 -- the average age is 13 years old and you're saying, "Well, they'll have to moderate this thing." Yeah, but there are fake ID's and I know it because I traveled through USA on a fake ID. All the [inaudible] they do looking at them, uh-huh. So with the fake ID's and they look so real you're still going to have children that are being forced into this lifestyle, so that's not the answer. The answer is having harsher penalties in place for the buyers and the pimps so that the demand people will be deterred. There will be no -- there will not be a demand for this thing. That's the answer [applause]. Yes, any more questions? Yes, ma'am?

Audience member: So I was just wondering what your mom thought you were doing during those 18 months.

Shamere McKenzie: So I was allowed to call my mom on occasion. But he instructed me what to tell my mom. Tell her that I'm your boyfriend and I'm taking care of you and you don't have to work. But my mom knew the child that she raised and she said, "Nu-uh, that's not my daughter. And she went to the

police and told the police, "Something is wrong." And the police said, "There's nothing we can do. She is not kidnapped. She is in contact with you and she's just with her boyfriend. What can we do?" Any more questions?

Thank you. Well thank you guys so much for being here. Give yourselves another round of applause because you could have been someplace else.

[Applause]