

Press Release

Child Victims of Sex Trafficking Are Being Exploited in America's Hotels

ECPAT-USA's new Public Service Announcement and campaign, "Does Your Hotel Know?", calls on hotels and travelers to learn the signs of sex trafficking and take action.

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Brooklyn, NY -- (ReleaseWire) -- 07/01/2015 -- Sex trafficking victims - including children - are often bought and sold in hotel rooms and exploited in prostitution, ranging from budget properties to luxury resorts. Service providers and law enforcement agencies report that nearly all victims they come in contact with have been exploited in hotels. A trafficker may run their business out of a hotel room, putting employees in a unique position to identify victims and alert authorities. From checkin to checkout there are a number of indicators victims and traffickers exhibit during the time they are on a hotel property.

Estimates state that 100,000 American children are victims of sex trafficking in the United States and 300,000 are at risk. Over 4,000 children just in New York City were found to be victims of sexual exploitation, and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) received over 500,000 reports of sexual exploitation in 2013 alone.

Katrina Owens, survivor of trafficking and victim advocate, was exploited in prostitution the United States, beginning at the age of 16. She spoke about her experience of being taken to hotels, "Some of the top hotels they look at you and they know; its like when your eyes meet you know that something might not be right, 'should I say something, should I not say anything, or should I just turn my head?' And quite often, they turn their head."

Despite the number of victims, the hotel industry has been taking a stand. "We've made a lot of progress working with hotels in the United States. The travel industry has become really active because they know they can make a huge difference in the lives of victims," says Michelle Guelbart, Director of Private Sector Engagement for ECPAT-USA. "With almost every training I lead, someone tells a story about how they have witnessed something on a hotel property. Our hope is that training to prevent and identify child sex trafficking becomes standard with the hospitality industry."

Real Hospitality Group, a hotel management company with properties such as Hilton, Hyatt, Marriott, Wyndham, etc. has been conducting training for hotel employees in New York City. Ben Seidel, President and CEO stated, "Real Hospitality Group is committed to doing all it can within our sphere of influence to end the sexual exploitation of children. Our associates are in a unique position to be able to identify victims and alert authorities. It was important to us to work with ECPAT-USA to develop and implement complete training for all associates not only within

New York City but across our portfolio in Delaware, Pennsylvania and Maryland".

ECPAT-USA is launching the PSA "[Does Your Hotel Know](#)" as a call to action to hotels and their customers. With proper training, a front desk clerk or a housekeeper can notice that something is not right and respond. ECPAT-USA promotes The Tourism Child-Protection Code of Conduct ([The Code](#)), the only voluntary set of business principles companies can implement to prevent sex tourism and the sex trafficking of children. ECPAT-USA's new campaign promotes corporate social responsibility and encourages hotel brands to join the Code and take a stand against sexual exploitation. Major companies currently implementing the Code include Hilton Worldwide, Wyndham, Carlson Companies, Orbitz, and Delta Airlines. PSA can be viewed here: <http://www.ecpatusa.org/code>

An additional focus of this campaign is responsible tourism and utilizing travel for social change and a positive impact. This November ECPAT-USA is leading the groundbreaking journey to Thailand, [Behind the CODE: An ECPAT Advocacy Journey](#), in which a group of tourists have the opportunity to learn about the issue of sexual exploitation, along with how the travel industry is combating trafficking and child sex tourism. Registration costs directly support anti-trafficking programs.

About ECPAT

ECPAT is an international network comprised of over 80 organizations, represented in 75 countries. [ECPAT-USA](#) is recognized as one of the primary organizations focused on ending the commercial sexual exploitation of children and is the American affiliate of the international ECPAT network. ECPAT-USA works every day to ensure that no child is bought, sold, or used for sex. ECPAT-USA undertakes policy and legislative advocacy, corporate social responsibility, research, training, educational initiatives, along with raising awareness that children are commercially sexually exploited here in the US. <http://www.ecpatusa.org/>

For more information on this press release visit: <http://www.releasewire.com/press-releases/release-606821.htm>

Media Relations Contact

Michelle Guelbart
Director of Private Sector Engagement
ECPAT-USA

Telephone: 718-935-9192
Email: [Click to Email Michelle Guelbart](#)
Web: <http://www.ecpatusa.org>

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