

Bring attention to trafficking

Written by The Vidette Editorial Board
Monday, 21 January 2013 14:32

Most people are aware — through museum exhibits and website articles — that February is Black History Month. And most people realize that November is National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month as a result of different fundraisers that usually occur during that month.

However, not a lot of people know that January is National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month. Sex trafficking is one of those evils in life that people are usually aware of in the back of their minds, but it does not register that it would occur in their own country.

According to an article on CNN's website, trafficking often begins by deceiving young girls into believing they will receive a legitimate job, such as a nanny or a Tae Kwan Do instructor. The traffickers would then force slavery upon these victims by stripping them of their hope and identity.

The writer of the article was a former slave and expressed that she had no idea what to do and "without language skills or money, [she] was terrified and without options."

Like slavery in the past, victims endure physical and verbal abuse, as they are led to believe that they would be arrested if they leave. Many slaves don't make it out of the trafficking business, but those who do usually suffer the slavery for years before help comes.

This torture is not acceptable on any level. Each individual deserves the opportunity to live a normal life without maltreatment.

This Editorial Board believes that everyone needs to remember that sex trafficking does occur, and that modern slavery does exist. There is no stereotype for modern slavery, and it can affect anyone. Trafficking and slavery are more common than one would probably think, and the first step to ending it is to be aware of the issue.

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Some individuals have recognized the problem, and as a result, the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST) has emerged. According to the CAST website, the mission statement of the organization is “to assist persons trafficked for the purpose of forced labor and slavery-like practices and to work toward ending all instances of such human rights violations.”

The government is also working to bring an end to this practice by attempting to pass various laws, such as the Strengthening the Child Welfare Response to Trafficking Act, which would, as stated on the CAST website, “help prevent child trafficking by amending the Social Security Act to require state foster programs ... to report in their annual plan on current efforts to address all forms of human trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children in their care; or report on their future plans to address the issue.”

Even with more attention being directed at human trafficking by articles written on different websites and the government passing laws to address the issue, human trafficking will no doubt still exist, which is why this Editorial Board not only encourages everyone to educate themselves on the matter, but also to volunteer for CAST, contact local legislators to pass more laws, donate any amount of money possible and to, above all, report any crimes if known.

Just because the month of January is drawing to a close that does not mean the issue itself is. With everyone’s help and cooperation, though, human trafficking can end a lot sooner than it otherwise would. Take the next step.