

Housing for Minors Escaping Hawaii's Most Horrific Industry: Sex Trafficking

In the touristy town of Waikiki, booming businesses, ABC stores, vibrant beaches, and bustling hotels paint an idealistic picture of the perfect family friendly vacation for a little girl and her parents. Wearing a bright pink aloha dress with a plumeria flower clip, this 11 year old girl skips through the street with her family, brimming with excitement of the adventures that await them during the day. As the sun sets, painting the sky and ocean with a kaleidoscope of colors, the little girl runs back to her hotel, recounting all her memories. However, as light fades away and darkness creeps in, another 11 year old girl comes out to the streets of Waikiki, dreading and scared of the night that awaits her. She is not with her parents, not skipping around and excited to explore the busy town. Instead, she is with her pimp, forced to work in the most horrific industry in Waikiki: sex trafficking. In order to help girls, specifically minors, escape the sex trafficking business, non-profit organizations can work with family court to ensure safe and temporary housing for these victims that provides therapy, educational resources, and legal help.

Sex trafficking is a huge and prominent problem in Hawaii especially in the Waikiki and Downtown areas. There are 150 known brothels in Hawaii that house 3 to 15 prostitutes (Popescu). Many of these girls are minors, being forced to be a prostitute as early as the age of 11 or 12 years old (Popescu). These girls are from all around the world, being shipped from brothel to brothel throughout most cities in the United States (Popescu). In 2017, 162 cases were filed about child prostitution in Hawaii alone ("800 Cases of Child Sex Abuse"). However, many incidents of child prostitution is not brought to court due to fear caused by their pimps (Popescu). Also, according to the prosecutor's office, there are no temporary homes for girls who were in the sex trafficking industry funded by the state government (Yuen). Many times these

girls are sent to youth detention centers to testify in trial or to find a safe and permanent home due to liability issues (Yuen). If we do not address the housing situation for minors who were victims of sex trafficking, they will continue to live temporarily in the detention centers or will be too afraid to escape the industry, growing the sex trafficking business of minors in Hawaii.

Currently, Ho'ōla Nā Pua, a non-profit organization that helps girls that were abused or were prostitutes, is creating a residential area for these victims, opening in 2019. Through their visionary "Pearl Haven," these girls will have a place to stay temporarily and have access to different types of therapy and education opportunities ("Pearl Haven"). However, their program does not work with the government to provide legal help if a girl would want to put her pimp to jail.

In order to help young girls leave the sex trafficking industry in Hawaii, non-profit organizations, like Ho'ōla Nā Pua, can work with Family Court to create government funded homes directed solely towards victims of the sex trafficking industry that provide therapy, educational resources, and legal aid. Although there is controversy due to the liability issues of minors under the care of Family Court, they should have access to a safe and less institutional temporary shelter, unlike the youth detention center. In addition to the therapy and educational services, these temporary shelters can provide legal support. Through the legal support or help, victims can have access to lawyers that will help put their pimp to jail. Also, Family Court can work with the Department of Health and Education to help the girls receive an education by putting them back to school or to find a guardian ad litem for them if there is trouble at home. By creating these homes, these girls will also not have to worry about their pimp harming them or their families, allowing them to have an easier time going through the legal process.

Clarence T.C. Ching was a very influential public figure who loved the people and places of Hawaii. Because of his generosity and compassion towards others, he donated a large amount of money to develop Kukui Gardens, an apartment complex for low-income residents. Through this, he helped many families who were in a vulnerable state, showing his devotion to the community. By working on housing for minors who were victims of the sex trafficking industry, people can continue to carry on Mr. Ching's legacy of creating a better community.

By creating temporary homes that provides therapy, educational resources, and legal aid, girls who are victims of the horrific sex trafficking industry will be able to have a safe shelter, creating a safer community. Through helping these girls, we can slowly stop the sex trafficking industry that hurts many both physiologically and physically. These temporary homes can also support young girls' journeys of becoming regular children again, going to school, meeting with friends at the mall, or enjoying a hike. Through this process, these girls will no longer be victims, but empowered survivors.

Works Cited

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