

00:00:15:01 - 00:00:20:17

Suzie

Hey, everyone, welcome to Peace Talks. Brave Conversations About Formation, Justice and peace.

00:00:21:00 - 00:00:32:18

Vanessa

Today's conversation is with Kaitlin Reed and Stacy Elliott from End Slavery, Tennessee, an organization dedicated to nurturing survivor healing and strategically combating human trafficking. In Tennessee.

00:00:33:06 - 00:00:47:01

Suzie

Caitlin and Stacy unpacked not only what trafficking is, but also challenged us to imagine a world in which the church provides a safe place for victims and perpetrators alike to speak truth and receive healing.

00:00:47:13 - 00:00:57:20

Vanessa

Our conversation was both informative and transformative. But before we begin, we want to inform you that this episode contains sensitive subject matter and may not be appropriate for all.

00:00:58:10 - 00:01:12:00

Suzie

Caitlin and Stacy, thank you so much for being here today. With us. We're so excited to talk with you and to hear all that you're doing with End Slavery, Tennessee and maybe a new big reveal baby.

00:01:12:01 - 00:01:12:20

Vanessa

Breaking news.

00:01:12:22 - 00:01:15:09

Suzie

Breaking news. Listeners, viewers.

00:01:17:22 - 00:01:26:15

Vanessa

I'd love to jump in with a couple of fun questions. So free association here. What did you eat for breakfast last hour?

00:01:26:16 - 00:01:49:18

End Slavery TN

I'll start, then, I had I had an omelet cup, some veggies and just threw together an omelet was delicious. I actually was out of breakfast this morning for one of our partner agencies. So we had some fruit and yogurt and, you know, a little continental breakfast situation And I have lots of coffee, so I'm ready.

00:01:50:09 - 00:01:51:05

Suzie

That's awesome.

00:01:51:18 - 00:01:55:10

Vanessa

We're ready to go. Question number two. What are you not good at?

00:01:56:13 - 00:02:01:15

End Slavery TN

Many things, but probably interior decorating.

00:02:02:09 - 00:02:02:20

Suzie

Oh, me.

00:02:02:20 - 00:02:10:03

End Slavery TN

Neither. Somebody put together a room or something. I'm just an ox. I don't know how to do it. I can't do that. I'm a.

00:02:10:03 - 00:02:15:21

Suzie

Good copier. You're a good copier of interior decorating. Yeah.

00:02:16:17 - 00:02:27:21

End Slavery TN

I am not good at sports. I'm not coordinated. I I. I enjoy sports watching them. I will care about my team, but I'm not a participator.

00:02:29:11 - 00:02:30:09

Suzie

Fair fair.

00:02:30:09 - 00:02:37:15

Vanessa

That's fair. I played sports growing up. That's something Bishop John and I talk about sometimes. We both played. He played baseball. I played softball. Yeah.

00:02:37:15 - 00:02:39:02

Suzie

You seem like you would be athletic.

00:02:39:03 - 00:02:47:07

Vanessa

Thank you. I appreciate that. Yeah, I do. Okay, last question. What is your guilty pleasure currently?

00:02:50:19 - 00:03:09:04

End Slavery TN

In the dark? I feel like I feel a guilty pleasure. The term guilty pleasure takes put some shame upon your face. So true. I what I've been bingeing lately is law and order. Like just old episodes of cognac.

00:03:10:09 - 00:03:13:15

Vanessa

Isn't that, like, the longest running show on television ever?

00:03:13:16 - 00:03:15:19

End Slavery TN

It's like 21 seasons or something. Yeah.

00:03:15:19 - 00:03:18:12

Suzie

There's no shame in that. You should be free from that. Shame.

00:03:19:11 - 00:03:21:03

Vanessa

Know they're doing something right.

00:03:22:10 - 00:03:45:08

End Slavery TN

I know. That's. I had that trouble, too. What's the guilty pleasure, right? I avoid guilty pleasure. But I really. I'm all into real great pleasure. And maybe a little off. That little off. Okay, so. Okay, here's I'll do a confession. When I go to the movies, I bring my own food. I just can't have those prices. But I do.

00:03:45:08 - 00:03:50:08

End Slavery TN

But I bring good food, and I bring and I share with my friends and sometimes with the neighbor, if I'm.

00:03:52:22 - 00:03:56:11

Vanessa

And you enjoy the movie all the more because you brought your own comfortable.

00:03:56:14 - 00:03:57:00

Suzie

Yeah.

00:03:57:15 - 00:04:04:12

End Slavery TN

Oh, yeah. It's more it's healthier. And I just feel better but I only feel slightly guilty. But maybe not.

00:04:04:14 - 00:04:08:09

Suzie

So do you buy popcorn also, or. No, not even the popcorn.

00:04:09:12 - 00:04:09:23

End Slavery TN

No.

00:04:10:00 - 00:04:10:16

Suzie

Good for you.

00:04:10:16 - 00:04:12:20

Vanessa

Good for you know, I can't get away from the pops.

00:04:15:18 - 00:04:18:05

End Slavery TN

I usually bring my own candy, but I do buy the popcorn.

00:04:18:18 - 00:04:19:06

Suzie

Yeah.

00:04:19:20 - 00:04:20:10

End Slavery TN

It's just you.

00:04:20:10 - 00:04:24:01

Suzie

Can't beat it. The movie theater popcorn. It's its own thing, for sure. Yeah.

00:04:24:23 - 00:04:25:09

End Slavery TN

That's true.

00:04:26:00 - 00:04:40:00

Suzie

Well. Well, we would love to hear from both of you specifically. About what initially led you to the space of human trafficking. Just before we get into all the other things. Just would love to hear that. Your story about that.

00:04:40:14 - 00:05:18:20

End Slavery TN

Yeah. So I'm the senior communications specialist, and prior to working here at In Slavery, Slash New Name Coming, I was working on an anti-poverty nonprofit in in Nashville. And I've been in nonprofit for six or seven years at this point. But I really was drawn to to the organization through a previous organization I worked with and actually had the opportunity to meet a couple of survivors.

00:05:19:14 - 00:05:46:01

End Slavery TN

While I was in that position and I, like everybody else, had no idea that this was happening here in Nashville, let alone the United States and I just really it just really resonated. And I met a couple of the survivors and didn't start working here until about four or five years later, but I thought about them and that experience the entire time.

00:05:46:01 - 00:06:09:22

End Slavery TN

And when an opening came up here with with an opening that I was fit for, I really kind of jumped at the chance to to to start to work here. So she's great. Who was really grateful, really. We were we were talking about it and stuff and into the day, like, what would we do with Caitlin Really? That's everything.

00:06:09:22 - 00:06:40:05

End Slavery TN

We need to fill in some gaps. Anyway, so how I got started, I'm a social worker, a master's in social work, and I so I've been aware of a lot of community dynamics. But here's what happened in the early part of the 2000 I saw a show called Dateline NBC To Catch the Predator right there. Yes. It's where Chris Hansen and his team they get together and they say there was an undercover sting.

00:06:40:21 - 00:06:58:12

End Slavery TN

Right. And they're posing as a good law enforcement agency as posing as a young girl. And they have online conversations with people who agreed to come and have a sexual experience.

00:06:58:19 - 00:06:59:05

Suzie

Wow.

00:06:59:06 - 00:07:44:07

End Slavery TN

And here's what happened in in the interviews. I mean, in the in the news program. I mean, man after man from every walk of life would show up ready to have a sexual encounter with a young girl. Yeah. And I just I guess I'd never seen any thing so blatant. I mean, I knew I knew that people particularly children, were vulnerable to, you know, being sexually mistreated by more more people that they knew Unfortunately, you know, family members or or somebody a coach or a teacher or a pastor or, you know, I'd been familiar with that sort of.

00:07:44:17 - 00:08:06:17

End Slavery TN

But to have a strain with strangers, you know, I was surprised by that. But also, just how in the world do you even think about to go online to find some? This is something I'd never entered my mind before. And I was a master's in social work. And it's not something I want that. But I knew it was the first thing that made me go, something's wrong and really wrong.

00:08:06:17 - 00:08:36:12

End Slavery TN

And I have not seen it. I didn't know what to call it then. I just I just was aware of the dynamic and a little bit later at my church, they had a done for international justice mission. And I

learned about human trafficking. I learned the word human trafficking. And I loved their model where they brought there. It was an international model at the time because that's where trafficking was believed to reside, mostly in in early 20, 20.

00:08:37:03 - 00:09:00:12

End Slavery TN

And they had attorneys and law enforcement on one on one into what they did and then they had the Survivor aftercare. So they brought both those things together, which is really important. You can't work without you have to lose. So I really respected that. But all of a sudden, not long after that, it clicked for me and I went, Oh, my goodness, that's happening here.

00:09:00:20 - 00:09:15:18

End Slavery TN

That's what that was on Dateline NBC. Yeah. So my awareness was back then. And the thing that when I think about my faith journey, I'm always drawn to the things that make me the most uncomfortable That's awesome.

00:09:15:19 - 00:09:16:10

Vanessa

Yes.

00:09:16:14 - 00:09:39:19

End Slavery TN

And that's where I end up. I mean, I've worked with the AIDS and HIV when people were still dying. I've worked with Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. I've worked in hospice things that, you know, death. Yeah. All these things that are buried that, you know, make me uncomfortable and nervous. Yeah. Right. Yeah. And sexual sexual misconduct, especially towards children and.

00:09:40:05 - 00:10:01:11

End Slavery TN

And buying and selling human beings. And for other services. I know that's that's very uncomfortable, but that's where I am. And that's how I got here, because of conviction. And when I found and then in 2012, when I found in slavery, Tennessee, and I realized were something local that I could do something about, I just didn't look back.

00:10:02:02 - 00:10:26:18

End Slavery TN

And from the day I found them, I told the one of two employees at the time, I said, I'm in, I'm all in. And I began that day to pray daily for one full year. I made this commitment to pray daily and not just but the prayers I had were with, I say, intellectual intention and creative expression. So I would write poems and songs in response.

00:10:26:23 - 00:10:56:05

End Slavery TN

In that relationship, I had my faith building. So it wasn't just a stagnant prayer, it was a growth prayer. And from that point, I was as a volunteer at fundraising, and I did a support group in the Safe House because I have a master's in social work, so I can do that and leadership

development. And then I guess right before the pandemic, they invited me to be on staff to do community engagement.

00:10:57:23 - 00:11:22:00

End Slavery TN

So it's been a little stagnant with some of the challenges, but I've I've always been delighted to be a part of being education and and loving the mission to serve survivors and confront slavery, or we called it slavery with human trafficking. Now, we don't use that term much anymore, but I've loved the process of being able to do that.

00:11:22:00 - 00:11:29:17

End Slavery TN

And I am on the committee engagement specialist, and I also executive produce the podcast that we do called Someone Like Me.

00:11:30:01 - 00:11:31:01

Vanessa

Someone Like Me.

00:11:31:19 - 00:11:54:18

Suzie

I love from a formation standpoint, just imagining the the type of prayer, praying that you were doing. And you know, this what you kind of called an anti stagnant prayer, but something that kind of engaged all of your senses and moved you to a place of growth that actually moved you to a place of action. Mm hmm. That's very cool.

00:11:54:21 - 00:12:18:00

Vanessa

The openness, the openness that that takes to to engage in in prayer in such an imaginative way is really, really beautiful. I would love to. I'm going to jump a question real quick, because I think it fits better here with us using the terminology. This may not be the case for everyone, but some people may not know what we mean by the term human trafficking.

00:12:18:01 - 00:12:30:19

Vanessa

And so I wonder if you could unpack that for us. You know, like you said, some people think internationally, not so much domestically. Could you speak to you why that might be a misconception? And then also just give us a definition.

00:12:31:07 - 00:12:55:20

End Slavery TN

Yeah. So I'll I'll start with the definition because some folks might not be completely familiar with the term **human trafficking**, but it's the exploitation of humans for the purposes such as **sexual and labor servitude**, where something of value is exchanged So money, food, housing, drugs, any type of resource, anything worth something. And there has to be means of force, fraud or coercion.

00:12:55:20 - 00:13:22:12

End Slavery TN

So those are definitely some in the weeds terms. Force can look like physical abuse or assault, sexual abuse or assault. Confinement. Fraud looks more like false promises of work or living conditions, withholding promised wages and then coercion, which we see more often than not, especially in sex trafficking. Is threats of harm to self or others or psychological manipulation.

00:13:22:15 - 00:13:52:07

End Slavery TN

Document confiscation we see with labor trafficking and human trafficking here in the States looks very different than internationally. Internationally, you know, you could see instances of kidnap or capture or things like that. But here in the States, it's very different. It's very nuanced. It's complex and dynamic. There's a lot of power and control dynamics at play. It's not typically a random crime.

00:13:52:07 - 00:14:17:09

End Slavery TN

So those, you know, the guy driving by in a white van snatching girls up off the street, that's not really happening. There's a lot more involved with it. It's it's a lot of relational all it's it's very relational. So it's typically someone is typically committed by someone they love or they have a relationship with, which is where we see like familial trafficking.

00:14:17:09 - 00:14:47:09

End Slavery TN

So family members or someone that's in their church or school or a friend of the family, etc., or a boyfriend that they've met online there's a relationship that's established first before the trafficking really begins. Wow. And that leads to victims really being able to being not able to identify it becomes very, very difficult to for victims to come forward because, you know, why would this person do this?

00:14:47:09 - 00:15:16:09

End Slavery TN

They love me or that person is my spouse or my partner or my parent. Right. So it really it makes it very difficult for victims to identify. And it is happening here in Tennessee. We serve the middle Tennessee areas of the Nashville area. And it's been reported in all 41 counties in middle Tennessee now. And it's as likely to occur in suburban areas as it is to occur in urban areas.

00:15:17:02 - 00:15:27:01

End Slavery TN

Of course, we're getting more reports here in the Nashville area just because of our population concentration. But it is happening in in more rural areas. Of the of the state as well.

00:15:27:15 - 00:15:51:15

Vanessa

I'm just thinking about the evolution of things. And so throughout the seventies and eighties, the term was stranger danger Right. Don't go to the man in the white van. We are with with the candy or anything like that. But now it's it's people that we know and that crosses into sexual abuse but also into human exploitation like you're talking about.

00:15:53:03 - 00:16:24:08

End Slavery TN

Yeah. Yeah. So we see a lot of crossover between sorry, there's a lot of crossover between trafficking, domestic violence, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, etc. There is a huge overlap in in all of those crimes. The other thing, there's a huge overlap when we talk about homelessness and addiction issues and we see that those are all correlated incarceration, foster care.

00:16:25:00 - 00:16:54:15

End Slavery TN

These are all sort of part of that if you look at the overlap of where we see the most vulnerable. But I want to think about too, when we think about human trafficking, honestly, it's only been in urban tacular since the year 2000 when there was a federal law that stated you know what, we were going to talk about human trafficking, and it's taken a while for this kind of concept to kind of sift through down to state level.

00:16:54:18 - 00:17:25:16

End Slavery TN

And frankly, a lot of the the drive to address this issue was from faith based groups I think the same I think I wasn't I'm not unique in my conviction that this is something that we can that we as a church body and other religious communities know it kind of gets to the core of the belief system about what we are designed to do or supposed to do in response to human as human beings anyway.

00:17:26:21 - 00:18:01:16

End Slavery TN

So, you know, really the laws in the United States, it take it a long time to sort of kind of get in line and understand. So because human trafficking wasn't known in our in our vernacular and we didn't recognize it, just like Kate was saying, we didn't we didn't see it and I didn't see it. And I think some of the things that really we're getting huge paradigm shifts in our thinking about who is the the person that is guilty and who who was the victim of a crime and who is the perpetrator.

00:18:01:16 - 00:18:31:02

End Slavery TN

And I think about prostitution in big ways. That's really a lot of what happens in sex trafficking. And we've talked with lots of law enforcement including our CEO, who is a it was a law enforcement and the director of the first human trafficking unit for the TBI investigation Oh, wow. They talk about a paradigm shift in law enforcement going from arresting people for prostitution.

00:18:31:22 - 00:19:09:11

End Slavery TN

And then them getting out and going just right back to it in this terrible cycle. And the person who was controlling them, the trafficker her, was getting away with that, you know, getting money and getting away with it. No record and all the burden was on that. So when law enforcement began to see people in prostitution as the actual victims, they began to serve them in ways that said, oh, instead of arresting you, I'm going to offer you services and try to find instead of looking down upon you and looking at you like, you know, you're the bad guy, I'm gonna look at you like you're the one who I need to be helping.

00:19:09:15 - 00:19:33:15

End Slavery TN

Yes. So that's been a big show tonight. And I think that's a big shift for a lot of folks in general in society. You think about what we call people that are sexually promiscuous in our society, the names that we use, particularly for women and the judgment that we're putting on people because of maybe the way that they dress.

00:19:34:17 - 00:20:00:04

End Slavery TN

And what I challenge people to do is to say, wait a minute, what were the decision processes that that that person went through to make the choices they made to act in a certain way or dress in a certain way? And so that's what we're trying to do is we're trying to come at it with an understanding of, wait a minute, somebody is they're acting in ways that are not socially acceptable.

00:20:00:06 - 00:20:18:16

End Slavery TN

What got them there? Right. And where can I find the compassion? And I think that's what Christ, Jesus Christ would have done the same thing and said, wait a minute, I see through all of that veneer. Yeah. To the heart. And I want to help you become the most beautiful you you can become. And that's kind of what we do.

00:20:18:17 - 00:20:20:23

End Slavery TN

I hope I hope that's what we do. That's that's the goal.

00:20:21:16 - 00:20:46:08

Suzie

Yeah. It sounds like compassion. And actually, first of all, curiosity is what what paves the way for you to come alongside people and help them? And do you find that that they are. How does it how does it look with the victims in terms of being willing to receive the help? And I mean, does it take time for you to help them understand their situation?

00:20:46:08 - 00:20:57:07

Suzie

Because, you know, if I'm being groomed for this by someone that I love and trust, it's going to take time to to understand that that's happening. Is that part of what happens with you?

00:20:58:00 - 00:21:33:23

End Slavery TN

Yeah. So we actually do an empathy exercise as part of our training that we give frontline professionals, especially law enforcement guys. We walk them through a just a generic instance of someone being identified as a victim and kind of giving space for you to think and reflect and assign some feelings to how you would feel if this person that you thought loved you that was providing for you was actually sexually exploiting you.

00:21:34:01 - 00:22:00:09

End Slavery TN

Yeah. And you weren't identifying this. You didn't see yourself as a victim. How would you feel? And then enters law enforcement, someone that you don't know, that you might not have a great relationship with to begin with. Intervenes, says you're a victim. This is what's happened to you. Come with me. Who you don't know you've never met.

00:22:00:14 - 00:22:33:08

End Slavery TN

They're telling you all of these things about you. How would you feel? And then enter someone from our organization that says, Hi, I'm here to help. We think this might be what happened to you, but please, let's let's talk. Let's have let's answer some questions. You still would be very, very, very skeptical of that person. Coming in and say, here I'm offering you all of these things and you have to do nothing in return.

00:22:34:16 - 00:22:59:18

End Slavery TN

I mean, every you know, at every point up up until this point, you have been asked to give something in return. So your skepticism, your alarms are flashing, they're going off. Are you going to willingly accept help? You know, what does that look like? I think going through that exercise really helps put people in the position of the survivor.

00:23:00:06 - 00:23:20:22

End Slavery TN

You'll never truly know how you'll react to a situation unless it happens to you, but it can give you a better sense of how you would feel in that situation and thinking that you would will willingly walk away with someone that you just met to take you somewhere that you've never been before, that you don't know where you're going, would you willingly go?

00:23:21:03 - 00:23:34:21

End Slavery TN

Probably not. Would you be skeptical? Definitely, yeah. So do the survivors come to us and praise us and. Oh, thank you. Thank you so much.

00:23:34:21 - 00:23:35:07

Vanessa

Not so.

00:23:35:07 - 00:23:35:12

End Slavery TN

Much.

00:23:36:05 - 00:23:36:14

Suzie

Now.

00:23:37:23 - 00:24:09:00

End Slavery TN

And for a lot of good reason, you know, those alarms should be going off. And so we also talk about how the healing journey is not a linear experience. There are lots of ups and downs, you know, regressions leaps forward, etc. It doesn't look the same for everyone. Not everyone has

the same experience. Not everyone's healing journey looks the same So there are a lot of push and pull.

00:24:10:13 - 00:24:39:03

Vanessa

Yes. I was thinking about some of the clients that I work with who have experienced sexual abuse or may or may not even have been trafficked at some some point. The naming coming. It's such it takes so long to even just name what it is. And then you're also in the realm of trauma bonding and trying to sift through feelings of complicity along with all of that.

00:24:39:03 - 00:25:13:21

Vanessa

And so I wonder if you could just speak to the nature of the longevity of even coming alongside victims and survivors and what that looks like to see it as a marathon, not a sprint, and maybe from the the point of view of this being a formation or issue where we're not thinking about necessarily the end game, but where we're coming alongside of people and how this plays into how we are to come alongside people as Christ.

00:25:14:15 - 00:25:51:13

End Slavery TN

That's beautifully set up. You know, I will say, you know, this organization did not start out as an organization that serves survivors. It started out as an activist organization. But the process of seeing people and recognizing the gaps of services, it helping someone go through rehab, you know, getting them to a rehab place and trying to find resources for them, advocating for them in the court system was good getting them health care in them, but it wasn't enough.

00:25:51:13 - 00:26:13:16

End Slavery TN

And that's what we discovered in the process, that what we do is intensive case management. And that means not just giving them a form that fills out until these are the resources that are available to you. That's helpful. But you've got to think about the level of trauma experienced by someone who can be graphic about things. Yes. Yes.

00:26:14:02 - 00:26:47:17

End Slavery TN

I mean, these are the people that we serve mostly sex trafficking have been they've been raped multiple times a day of mostly young people and treated so poorly. I mean, the level of trauma is very difficult to imagine. We think of PTSD and military situations very, very valid. And but it there is there's a comparison and not a comparison, the intensity of that kind of trauma.

00:26:49:12 - 00:27:16:10

End Slavery TN

There's a lot that had a lot of space that has to be given. So really one of the the foundational things that all of us are engaging are is trauma informed care, ensure that every word, every even down to the colors we use. I mean, we really are very, very intentional about how we move in our spaces, how we create the spaces for recovery.

00:27:16:23 - 00:27:43:12

End Slavery TN

These are all part of helping to make sure that that that process can occur. But even with that, we have to understand that each individual is going through their own journey and we see that the relationship starts very, very slowly. It starts with building trust, helping them, helping people identify, offering simple things to help build that relationship and and know that that can be trusted.

00:27:43:12 - 00:28:06:22

End Slavery TN

And then really the best thing but my favorite referral that we ever get or when people who have been in the life which is what they call when you're in prostitution and things, when they when they refer each other, they say, listen, this program is for renewal. It's working. I'm finding ways to to heal, to grow. I'm getting my kids back next year.

00:28:07:13 - 00:28:37:01

End Slavery TN

You know, I've got a job that doesn't you know, that I chose I'm learning to choose things because when you're somebody who's been in this kind of trauma, you don't get to choose what you wear. Right when you sleep right. You eat and we walk through individually, personally. That's what intensive case manager that each of the therapist walk personally with the person to the grocery store, help them, help them, not judge them for what they choose, but help them to help them walk through making those decisions.

00:28:37:06 - 00:28:58:19

End Slavery TN

Sometimes some of them can't can't make a decision. They want them to be made for them because they don't. They get a practice. Yeah. And that can be anxiety producing. So I think that maybe gives you a little glimpse at what it's like. And I'll say one more thing about it. We when people first come, they are resistant and they're testing us out there in some tough places.

00:28:59:03 - 00:29:29:01

End Slavery TN

And I know they get because there are people on staff. Sometimes it comes out. I look a test that when I give support to them, say that it's fine because when I see this is what I'm talking about, same past that veneer and what I when people tell me, but you know what I'm they may be saying to me and putting themselves out there and what I choose to see is I choose to see that as saying, please, please love me.

00:29:29:01 - 00:29:29:07

Suzie

Yeah.

00:29:29:17 - 00:29:45:17

End Slavery TN

Please see me, see how intense this is. I see that I am hurting. Yeah. And don't judge me and don't shame me for this. So I you know, if we can kind of see that what that behavior really means instead of what on the surface it looks like.

00:29:46:07 - 00:30:10:19

Vanessa

So we spoke a little bit about in the pre call how we wanted you wanted to have you all on because this is an issue that disproportionately affects marginalized parts of society across the board, which makes this a justice issue. And so I wonder if you could share some of the factors that put people at risk of sex trafficking and human trafficking yeah.

00:30:10:19 - 00:30:44:17

End Slavery TN

So I first say that anyone can be impacted by human trafficking, but there are groups that are disproportionately exploited people of color, immigrants, people who identify as LGBTQ plus individuals are exploited at a much higher rate. Are we surprised by this? No, but what End Slavery TN mentioned earlier, we've really only been recognizing this as a crime over the last 20 years.

00:30:45:01 - 00:31:20:20

End Slavery TN

So now we're getting to a point where research is proving this disproportionate exploitation. So we're really making a point to make the strategic choices about finding better ways to identify and serve these marginalized groups. But anyone who's really experiencing vulnerabilities or is susceptible or high risk can be anyone that's experiencing economic disparity, housing insecurity. So over 90% of the clients we serve come to us either homeless or have experienced homelessness at some point.

00:31:21:23 - 00:31:58:18

End Slavery TN

So runaways like mostly kids that are in foster care as soon as they run away they're immediately vulnerable to exploitation. Anyone who has a history of childhood sexual abuse, mental illness, substance abuse, and then anyone that's experiencing systemic oppression, all of these folks are or are vulnerable to exploitation and anyone who's experienced any one of these or sometimes multiple vulnerabilities are even more susceptible to exploitation.

00:31:59:11 - 00:32:15:18

End Slavery TN

We talk about how it happens in your backyard. And yes, that's true because it is happening in Brentwood and Franklin and all of these suburban areas but we do know for a fact that it is targeting their marginalized populations.

00:32:17:00 - 00:32:49:15

Suzie

Well, in the pre-interview, and we talked with you guys a couple of weeks ago, we sense that that there is an ever present awareness of multiple victims in a trafficking situation, multiple people who have experienced harm and as believers were called to great compassion and kindness for for every life. So what does that look like for you all in terms of justice and kindness towards not only the survivors, but also the perpetrator or is of the harm as well?

00:32:50:05 - 00:33:32:05

End Slavery TN

Yeah, that's a very complex question, right? When we look at all the people back, why is human trafficking even around? Well, it's supply and demand, right? Mm hmm. We didn't have

a demand for well, in our case, mostly sex trafficking. We don't have a demand for it. We wouldn't have the crime. So when we look at who who that is, those actors in this situation, by and large, it's mostly men who are the exploiters, mostly women who are the exploited that can, you know, and then the the traffickers, too.

00:33:32:05 - 00:34:13:21

End Slavery TN

I mean, that's that that can be anybody really but we, by and large, see that that trend you know, we as an organization, of course, we are serving survivors and we don't you know, we wouldn't it would that's that's the population that we you know, we're working with. And we we are you've heard what we can do. But I also believe with my faith walk and my faith journey, you know, the the conviction to find a path of redemption for all it's very uncomfortable, which means I care about so.

00:34:14:16 - 00:34:47:10

End Slavery TN

And the real truth of the matter is, how do you solve a problem like this unless you can find a path for redemption and recovery? For all the people engaged we organization, we we definitely are doing that with the survivors. But I encourage people to especially churches or other religious organizations, to consider that we are affected by this all of us all of us, in my opinion, are culpable human trafficking.

00:34:48:09 - 00:35:16:20

End Slavery TN

We all have a piece to play now. Not everybody has purchased sex or watched pornography, which also, you know, feeds that. Yeah, but we probably all have bought clothing or food where we don't know where it was sourced and things are not and things are not as expensive. There's a reason why. Yeah, I don't say that to make people feel guilty or ashamed of themselves, but I do say to help people kind of think about and it's what I've done.

00:35:16:21 - 00:35:35:02

End Slavery TN

I thought carefully about the choices that I make, especially when purchasing things. I want to make sure that I can make a little choice. I can't. I can't figure it all out in one day. I can't fit it all, but I can make a small choice today that I can make sure that I drink coffee that's sourced well, you know, one step at a time.

00:35:35:23 - 00:36:05:04

End Slavery TN

And I think when it comes to finding redemption for particularly perpetrators, the best the biggest number of people that cause human trafficking if we don't do that, we don't stop it. Right? Yeah. And if we use blame and shame, especially shame, it keeps us from talking about it. So there's no chance to heal if we can't find a way.

00:36:05:04 - 00:36:23:11

End Slavery TN

And there have to be safeguards, you know, you you can't just say, oh, forgiving. Right. It's done. I think that's pretty glib because there's a there's a whole series of choices that got

someone to make that into that path where they were not doing things that were redemptive. And so there's a whole path you have to get back to being redemptive.

00:36:23:14 - 00:36:31:09

End Slavery TN

But I hope it because there's nothing more powerful than someone who's got a story of redemption. Right, to help others know it's possible.

00:36:31:09 - 00:37:10:04

Vanessa

Yeah, I am. I think so much often about how structures of supremacy that are built upon wielding power over the innocent, over the vulnerable, over the weak and people can't engage in those kinds of behaviors without degrading their own humanity in the process. And so I love what you're talking about. What does it look like for all parties involved to come back to the Imago Dei that's inherent in all of us?

00:37:10:18 - 00:37:39:09

Suzie

Well, what does that look like for us as believers who are called to bless those who persecute us and to pray for our enemies and to forgive those no matter what? I mean, you know, like you said, forgiveness is just one part of the process. You can't just say I forgive and that's it. But like blessing and and bringing bringing that bringing forth that redemption with Christ is I mean, when you put it in this practical sense yet and this scenario, that becomes really hard.

00:37:39:09 - 00:38:12:07

Vanessa

Yes. It becomes uncomfortable. I love how do you see you're talking about just okay, it's uncomfortable, which means that's probably where God's leading. And so I'm curious how you've seen you know, we're looking at the intersection of formation and justice where have you seen Christians and even the church for for lack of a better word, continue to perpetuate harm and also, where have you seen them really step in and and take part in that redemption story?

00:38:13:05 - 00:38:37:00

End Slavery TN

I think one thing I experienced at you know, I think a lot of times when human trafficking comes up and sex trafficking usually gets put in the women's ministry you know, well, that's a women's issue, you know, and because they're because when I think at least my experience where it's seen as, you know, it's it's a lot of women helping women recover.

00:38:37:06 - 00:38:57:23

End Slavery TN

But. Well, I think one of the the hard parts that I would like to see is the churches stepping up and some of the leadership saying, wait a minute, men, where this should be an abyss should be, you know, what can we do to help? We need to help keep each other accountable. Well, it's hard for a woman in sex in this.

00:38:58:04 - 00:39:29:06

End Slavery TN

It's just harder. We need everybody at the table, I think is what I'm want to say is every every voice and then being honest with each other again, that's the shame stuff and humble it would be really nice to to acknowledge it as a human trafficking, as an all. Yeah, all people. And then I think to sometimes it's the churches that are that are siloed off to do to help to focus more on the marginalized.

00:39:29:06 - 00:39:50:16

End Slavery TN

People have some church that have focus to be inclusive with LGBTQ right. Plus those churches are addressing this right in a direct way because well disproportionately affects and I think I see some African-American churches going in that direction too in wanting to because it's this disproportionate.

00:39:50:19 - 00:40:09:09

Suzie

You know, one of the questions we were going to ask is is just talking about how women make a large percentage of this, but there are men also who are trafficked. So maybe if you could expand on that a bit about why it's important for it not to just be relegated to the women's ministry. And what are what are some things men specifically can do?

00:40:09:09 - 00:40:16:14

Suzie

Because we're our listeners are both men and women. Yes. And but you know, speak to the men. Like, what can they specifically do?

00:40:17:12 - 00:40:47:09

End Slavery TN

Well, I think what's interesting about our research in general, were, again, we we've only been really looking at this critically for 20 years. So so much of the research that comes out is new and some of it's startling. I remember in 2012 when we were startled to find out that it was a, it was the patterns that we were seeing were happening in rural counties significantly.

00:40:47:23 - 00:41:36:23

End Slavery TN

Right. That's not something that a lot of people were thinking about. And I think one of the things that were asked, the more we learn and keep going on, we're going to see more communities that are affected by this in better ways than we imagined. Right. Caitlin mentioned LGBTQ Eye Plus and other types of oppressed communities. I think we're going to see more men Some of the work I do in education at the Johns School, which is where men who participated in prostitution but arrested for prostitution go to learn more about what they're what their crime kind of they have the impact of their crime.

00:41:37:06 - 00:41:45:11

End Slavery TN

Yeah. But what I'm noticing there is seeing more more it looks like there might be more men victims than we thought that's just anecdotally.

00:41:45:16 - 00:41:48:05

Suzie

Well, isn't it more difficult for men to come forward to?

00:41:49:06 - 00:42:30:01

End Slavery TN

I think certainly is. And you think about the history and just think about some of the things we've heard about in the news. You know, with the Catholic Church, Christine, just the pressure of hiding and not talking about things. And some of the new paths of redemption that are happening there and healing is possible. When we put it out there and we actually let our faith to what it was designed to do You know, confession of taking our cares before God taking or sin or guilt or shame and letting that sift through the unconditional love so that it can be used for good.

00:42:30:18 - 00:43:00:00

End Slavery TN

I mean, abuse is terrible. But there's a lot more people that experience it. And I think in the churches are wonderful places where people can come. And if they know it's a safe space, to heal, I mean, think of what could happen if if people could find that kind of redemption by being able to confess that they have been dealing with something and get the kind of help they need to to move safely out of it.

00:43:00:06 - 00:43:00:15

End Slavery TN

Right.

00:43:01:01 - 00:43:01:10

Vanessa

Yeah.

00:43:01:13 - 00:43:04:06

Suzie

I feel like End Slavery TN's taking us to church today. She is.

00:43:04:11 - 00:43:29:15

Vanessa

She is. And it might it might feel now. It's good. It's so good. It also so this might feel like a little shift almost because I want to bring the political piece into it and the ways that laws and systems and policies need to be put in place to change some of the ways that we like you were talking about the way that police approach prostitution and things like this.

00:43:29:15 - 00:43:47:03

Vanessa

I'm curious for you guys because humans are being exploited and and money comes into the picture. So it's a it's a moneymaking machine. How have you all navigated that uphill climb with lawmakers and even, you know, law enforcement like you mentioned?

00:43:47:22 - 00:44:31:12

End Slavery TN

Yeah. So like End Slavery TN mentioned earlier, ten years ago, we started as an awareness and advocacy organization and then moved into aftercare. But we've always been working that

advocacy piece working to make systemic change. And we are working on the state and national level with state officials, you know, members of the legislation, as well as national organizations to really change systems at both levels through legislation and education and like End Slavery TN mentioned again earlier, the first piece of legislation that we helped to establish was to fund a human trafficking unit at the Tennessee Bureau Investigation.

00:44:31:22 - 00:44:57:18

End Slavery TN

And that's ultimately how we got our CEO, Margie Quinn, who's a former agent. She's seen the crime from both sides. You know, law enforcement and now after care. And so she's using her expertise to continue to build those collaborative efforts. And we've become a model for other organizations across the country. And that's ultimately led us to creating this great relationship with the state government.

00:44:57:18 - 00:45:32:01

End Slavery TN

We are designated as the regional point of contact for all 41 counties in middle Tennessee for victims. That's awesome. And we're training law enforcement officers and corrections officers on how to recognize victims and how to respond in a trauma informed way. So like End Slavery TN mentioned earlier, that shifts of we're not arresting victims for prostitution. We are finding resources for them as survivors, and we are instead prosecuting the traffickers and the buyers.

00:45:32:23 - 00:46:00:02

End Slavery TN

And a lot of that a lot of that legislation, legislative work that we've done is for harsher punishments for traffickers and buyers and for expungement for survivors. They might have committed a crime while they were being trafficked. Yeah. Make sure that those crimes are expunged and making sure that they're being directed toward the proper resources in order to heal from their victimization.

00:46:00:18 - 00:46:24:08

End Slavery TN

We work with the Human Trafficking Court here in Middle Tennessee, which diverts victims from incarceration into our program. It offers them an alternative to incarceration We've also passed legislation here in the state of Tennessee for mandatory training for public educators. So all public educators in the state of Tennessee take a mandatory human trafficking training that we have designed.

00:46:26:05 - 00:46:50:13

End Slavery TN

And we've we've helped shift a lot of the ways of thinking for law enforcement and the judicial system in how to properly identify victims, prosecute traffickers, and buyer and direct survivors to work toward those resources. And we have a lot more detail about the things that we've done in the last ten years that are available on our podcast.

00:46:51:08 - 00:47:04:01

End Slavery TN

And all of those trainings that we offer frontline professionals, law enforcement, corrections officers, teachers, teenage pre-teens, etc. all those trainings are available for free on our website.

00:47:04:04 - 00:47:40:03

Suzie

That actually leads me. It makes me super curious for your perspective on this, because so much of what we've talked about, the research, the information, it's been kind of, you know, everything's become so intertwined in the LGBTQ eye community, systemic oppression, all of that stuff has become so politicized and polarized even within the church church community. And I would unfortunately say that there's a lot of people in the faith community that have perpetuated mis information that's out there.

00:47:40:12 - 00:48:01:04

Suzie

I mean, could you speak to that? Because what you have, what you're talking about, all this awareness and this training and being able to identify victims and and situations, and then you have you turn on your social media and you have like hashtag Save the Children and and this is a front for trafficking and I mean, there's just so much out there.

00:48:01:11 - 00:48:05:13

Suzie

Can you bring some clarity to that for. For our community?

00:48:06:08 - 00:48:39:18

End Slavery TN

I would say at the end of the day, all of that misinformation, those posts that you're resharing on social media and those falsehoods that you're perpetuating. At the end of the day, they prevent victims from identifying and which doesn't allow them to get the resources that they need to heal from their exploitation and instead keeps you over here to your attention over here while the crimes happening over here.

00:48:39:19 - 00:49:06:07

End Slavery TN

Mm hmm. And if we aren't correctly identifying the crime, the perpetrators, the victims, then we're not doing our job. And as members of this community, we are not doing our job and all we're doing when we're when we're sharing these when these pieces of misinformation on social media or telling a friend like, hey, this is what I heard.

00:49:07:03 - 00:49:10:00

End Slavery TN

We are hurting the people that are being exploited. Yeah.

00:49:10:04 - 00:49:24:13

Suzie

And what about the people who are doing the actual work? I mean, how have you found I mean, particularly in the wake of 20, 20 and 2021 with so many conspiracy theories around, have you found that that's interfered with your work?

00:49:24:14 - 00:49:24:23

Vanessa

Yeah.

00:49:25:23 - 00:49:34:16

End Slavery TN

Yeah. I mean, what it does, it draws our attention, right? So we have to address that in the community.

00:49:37:09 - 00:50:01:19

End Slavery TN

You know, I want to go back just a minute, though, because there are some some big dynamics at play here that are just human dynamics. You know, when we hear human trafficking, it is horrible. It's a horrible thought. And I think sometimes people, you know, because they're fearful, it just comes out of a place of fear. Yeah. And when people hear something and it makes them nervous, their first response, I want to protect.

00:50:01:19 - 00:50:27:18

End Slavery TN

Right. And so they want to get it out there and want to get that information out there because they want to protect people that's a beautiful thing. Okay. So I'll start with that. That that initial motivation to protect is beautiful. But the best way am I, you know, in my experience is to take the time to deal with that fear, where's it coming from and making sure that out of that fear, you don't do something right?

00:50:28:21 - 00:50:29:03

Vanessa

Yeah.

00:50:29:19 - 00:50:57:23

End Slavery TN

Take the time to look at where the places are sourced, especially with social media. We all know things can get a little emotional on social media and go off track and really not do the job that you're trying to convince somebody to change or think in a different way. So I think we have an opportunity as people of faith with all kinds of practices, of historical practices, of meditation, and study to show ourselves approved.

00:50:58:03 - 00:51:18:21

End Slavery TN

I mean, all these things are the tools that we in faith communities have to respond responsibly and build programing that helps us learn and keep growing so that we continue to act. And so that we're looking at who said that is it okay? It makes me nervous. But is it true?

00:51:18:22 - 00:51:19:06

Vanessa

Yeah.

00:51:19:10 - 00:51:58:04

End Slavery TN

And how does it further help the people that are really being victimized here? Because that's who we're supposed to be serving the serving the victim, or is it serving the potential? Who's that really serving? Oh, I'll say one more thing Sometimes we've seen that it really serves the person who is actually wanting to be this savior. So to say that I mean, there's a real there's a real feeling of I've done something and I want to be a part of something.

00:51:58:12 - 00:52:21:08

End Slavery TN

But I think what's really important and what I've been learning in my faith journey is I as a social worker, I remember when I first would my somebody told me, oh, you're you're save the world. That's what social worker means to us. MSW, master of saving the world. And I, I was like, oh, okay. But I, that's, that's not my job.

00:52:21:20 - 00:52:23:14

End Slavery TN

I want that to be my job.

00:52:23:14 - 00:52:25:04

Vanessa

That's actually not what I believe.

00:52:25:11 - 00:52:25:21

Suzie

Yeah.

00:52:26:06 - 00:52:48:03

End Slavery TN

That's kind of, that's. Well, I mean, yeah, it's not it, and I, I don't want to save the world. That's really in the realm of God. But what I do want to do is I want to be part of that happen. And I think we get caught up, though, in that idea of as believers, we have, we have to do something that is involved in that saving up to us.

00:52:48:07 - 00:53:05:16

End Slavery TN

Yeah, yeah, yeah. We don't even use the term rescue anymore. We've learned that that's a word that it puts the all the power into the person who's rescuing and none of the power into the person we're hoping to. Right. Right. Right. So as I checked yourself.

00:53:06:02 - 00:53:29:07

Vanessa

Yes. Well, as you talk about being part of the solution, I'm curious as we shift to wrapping up our time together to just we like to ask our guests are there any questions or categories around formation, justice and peace that maybe people people wish that you wish people were asking are considering?

00:53:31:02 - 00:54:02:10

End Slavery TN

Yeah, I think the one and maybe two things that I, I hope people will start asking themselves or ask themselves more often is are you checking your motivations? Are we checking our

motivations? Why are we doing this work? Why do we feel called to do this work? What what is the reason behind what we're doing? And and sometimes you can realize, like, oh, it's way more self-serving than it is serving others.

00:54:03:08 - 00:54:08:22

Suzie

Well, it took you four years of praying and thinking before you actually even stepped into the arena, right?

00:54:09:17 - 00:54:36:19

End Slavery TN

Yeah. I mean, I didn't feel like there was a place for me until it happened, and I still feel that way sometimes. Um, and the other is, are we are we acting and are we serving with empathy and humility? Again, going back to you, to the point where anyone can be affected by this, anyone can be impacted anyone could be exploited.

00:54:36:19 - 00:55:04:19

End Slavery TN

Yes. There are folks that are being exploited at a higher rate than others, but none of our are above this. None. None of us are above exploitation and being taken advantage of. And just remembering that in an instant, we could be put in one of these positions. And are we are we serving these victims and survivors with empathy or are we operating with empathy and humility?

00:55:05:02 - 00:55:13:23

End Slavery TN

And just remembering that and casting aside judgment and blame and shame and focusing on the road ahead. Yeah.

00:55:15:04 - 00:55:29:10

Vanessa

Well, thank you guys so much for spending time with us today. This has been such a fruitful and helpful conversation and I'm so appreciative of your time and the work that you all are doing. And I will be in touch very soon.

00:55:29:10 - 00:55:31:02

Suzie

Yeah. Thank you so much.

00:55:31:21 - 00:55:45:18

End Slavery TN

Yeah. Thank you very much. It's been a pleasure to meet you and to see what you're doing. And I really appreciate that you're out there in the community and having voice to justice issues. I think that's really important, especially of community.

00:55:45:18 - 00:55:52:03

Suzie

Thank you. Thank you. Thanks for listening to Peace Talks, a production of the Center for Formation, Justice and Peace.

00:55:52:09 - 00:55:58:04

Vanessa

Each episode is produced on Cherokee UHI and Shawnee Land by Brett Simmons and Creative Minds.

00:55:58:11 - 00:56:07:05

Suzie

If you're enjoying peace talks, we'd invite you to follow us on social media at Center SJP or visit our website center dot org.

00:56:07:13 - 00:56:18:13

Vanessa

In closing, we offer this poem entitled to Be a Realist from Drew Jackson, and God speaks through poems based on the story of Jesus Raising a little girl from the Dead in Luke eight.

00:56:19:15 - 00:56:29:16

Suzie

I am a realist ideal in the logical, but sometimes reality must give way to impossible, especially for the sake of our children. Grace and peace.