

I Was a Victim of Human Trafficking

The following is a documented record of the life experience of Julie Shematz and of a victim that has been in the Beauty From Ashes' safehome. The survivor herself will not be reading the part.

Hi I'm Julie and I was a victim of human trafficking.

Hi I'm Annie and I was a victim of human trafficking.

I am originally from a farm in Indiana.

I am originally from suburb in New Jersey.

My dad left my mom and little sister when I was three years old.

My mom and dad divorced when I was 6 years old.

I was a cheerleader and was on the varsity track and swim teams.

I was a ballerina that danced with the Pennsylvania ballet.

I was offered numerous track scholarships and still hold records I set in high school to this day.

I graduated high school with honors although my attendance was terrible.

I lost my virginity in a rape my freshman year in college, dropped out and then returned 10 years later to Purdue University. At the age of 30, when I was a junior, a triple major, deans list student that made a business decision: minimum amount of time for a maximum amount of money, and became an exotic entertainer in a gentlemen's club 60 minutes away.

I lost my virginity when I 6 years old my mother, on my birthday, made a business decision: to sell me to an adult man my dad worked with. They made the deal at the Halloween party they all attended a week prior.

I had no idea the toll my 'business decision' would take on me and it took me 3 more years before I could acquire my college degree.

I had no idea my mother would continue to sell me over and over to adult men until I ran away at the age of 16 & engage in survival sex in order to have a couch to sleep on. I began to strip in order to survive.

I didn't think I'd have to numb myself with drugs and alcohol in order to do the work I chose.

I didn't think I'd be doing cocaine from the age of 12 to 20 in order to numb myself from the work I went on to chose to do.

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There wasn't a night I worked that I didn't endure physical, mental or sexual abuse. There wasn't a club I worked in across the nation that I was not aware of illegal activities going on ranging from drugs to prostitution.

There wasn't a day or night I worked that I didn't endure physical, mental or sexual abuse. There wasn't a club I worked in that I was not aware of illegal activities going on ranging from drugs to prostitution.

I was a broken woman looking to be loved and accepted.

I was looking for love in all the wrong places.

I ended up working in the sex industry for a total of 7 years.

I ended up working in the sex industry for a total of 14 years.

After a while men would tell me all I was going to be was a stripper & I started to believe them.

After a while I believed all I was was a whore and it was all I was good at.

I had no idea when I chose this 'stepping stone' profession that I'd end up trapped in an industry I was ashamed of. Nor did I realize how many people would judge me unfairly, treat me with disrespect nor that I'd end up being sold for sex by a club owner.

I had no idea when I enrolled in a Christian college that I'd end up stripping and escorting because I felt like it was all I could do. I was shocked when one of my professors showed up at the club I worked at and recognized me.

I was shocked when one of my TA's showed up at the club I was dancing in and then later offered to negotiate my grade with private lap dances.

I led two different lives.

I tried to commit suicide 7 times, was a drug addict, stuck in abusive relationships, hopeless and felt trapped.

I tried to commit suicide too many times to count, cut myself, was anorexic, hopeless and felt trapped.

Over 7 years ago I chose to commit my life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and was able to break free from all bondage, including the sex industry and sex trafficking.

Over 2 years ago I chose to commit my life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and am attempting to walk the road less traveled.

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I am no longer a victim or a survivor of commercialized sexual exploitation, I am an over-comer by the blood of the Lamb & the word of my testimony. I have stepped out of the shadows and into the Light. I am no longer for sale.

I am a survivor on the road to becoming an over-comer.

God gave me beauty for ashes and today I am the founder and CEO of a not for profit public charity that has been providing assistance to victims of commercialized sexual exploitation and human trafficking since 2005, Beauty From Ashes Ministries.

I found out about Julie & Beauty From Ashes online googling ministries to prostitutes and strippers. When I read her testimony, I connected immediately with her. After contacting her, Julie embraced me and Beauty From Ashes began immediately providing services to me for my recovery.

We stand before you as evidence that God still reaches, rescues and restores. We offer hope to others like us that they too can be free.

We both are still on a healing journey.

We stand before you as a voice for the voiceless, the invisible victim most chose to call a whore and ignore.

I am not a prostitute. I am a child of God.

My dignity has been restored.

Today God has used what was meant for evil for His good.

Today I am free to be all that God destined me to be.

We represent the voices of the victims and wish that you would listen to what we have to say because we know what other victims are going through.

We know first hand what it's like to be a victim, a survivor and what it takes to become an over-comer.

We are committed to reaching, rescuing, and restoring others like us.

If God can do it for us, we know He will do it for others.

Please don't give up on those we represent and the fight to abolish slavery.

Together we are better and can make a difference.