

SPEAKING OUT

'Sound of Freedom' details unseen horrors

Captures reality of child trafficking

Your Turn
 Jessica Levinson
 Guest columnist

Like the more than 8 million people who saw the movie "Sound of Freedom," I believe actor Jim Caviezel and the director and cast captured the reality of child sex trafficking.

I know it is a reality because I am a survivor of sex trafficking. My life is living proof. At the young age of 12, I was sold to a man for drugs in exchange for sex. My concern for women and children today has inspired me to create Leah's Place in Wayland, a safe housing project for women who are exiting trafficking and are pregnant or are parent-

ing children under the age of five.

The movie is based on the true story of a former Homeland Security agent Tim Ballard and his battle with the horrors of child trafficking and his attempts in rural Colombia to rescue two child-trafficked siblings. In the process, dozens of other enslaved children, mostly young girls, are rescued.

Human trafficking, of which sex trafficking is a subset, not only occurs across international borders and in foreign countries, but in the United States, across state lines as well as in our own backyards. New York ranks among the top states in the number of "reported instances of human trafficking," helping to fuel the billion-dollar global trafficking industry. Is this movie exaggerated? Are there enough resources to aid women and children who fall victim to trafficking? The answer is no, and no.

After being a victim for two years, I

became pregnant with a baby boy at the age of 14. I was repeatedly pressured to terminate my pregnancy, but I reluctantly refused. However, now with abortion pills made available through mail order, a sex-trafficked victim is no longer required to be seen by a health-care provider face-to-face. Victimization of not only the unborn child but of the trafficked mother will likely increase. Pimps who have access to an endless supply of abortion pills easily acquired and stockpiled might not be questioned at an abortion clinic or even confronted by a pharmacist. Coerced abortions can be facilitated and an endless cycle of violence with no interference by medical personnel to interrupt the abuse can ensue. An article recently in a Congressional Newspaper, The Hill, reveals how a survivor, because of her pregnancy, was freed from human trafficking.

The majority of these children live with social and economic disadvantages. Children in poverty, victims of domestic violence, sexual abuse or even addiction have fewer safe spaces or guardians available to them. Traffickers groom their victims by building relationships with emotionally damaged children and making them feel comfortable before isolating and manipulating them. Children are under enormous social pressure to look and act older, which invariably fuels child pornography and trafficking. Hopefully, with the help of technology we can better detect predatory behavior, abusive environments, and protect our children.

Jessica Levinson is founder of Leah's Place in Wayland. Contributing to creation of this column was Morgan Growney, of Rochester, a Duquesne University student and a recent intern at Feminists Choosing Life of New York.



The owner of the YouTube channel RadioWV recently posted a home-shot video of "Rich Men North of Richmond" with the following accompanying message: "When I first came across Oliver Anthony and his music, I was blown away, to say the least. He had a whole collection of songs that I could listen to for hours. Oliver resides in Farmville, Va., with his three dogs and a plot of land he plans on turning into a small farm to raise livestock." RADIOWV/YOUTUBE

Who is Oliver Anthony? And why is 'Rich Men North of Richmond' so hot?



President Joe Biden celebrates the first anniversary of the Inflation Reduction Act at the White House on Aug. 16. EVAN VUCCI/AP

Democrats need strong challenger to Biden



Your Turn
 Jeremy D. Mayer
 Guest columnist

means that someone, say a popular Democratic governor, could announce in September that they are running and raise millions in a few days. In 2016,