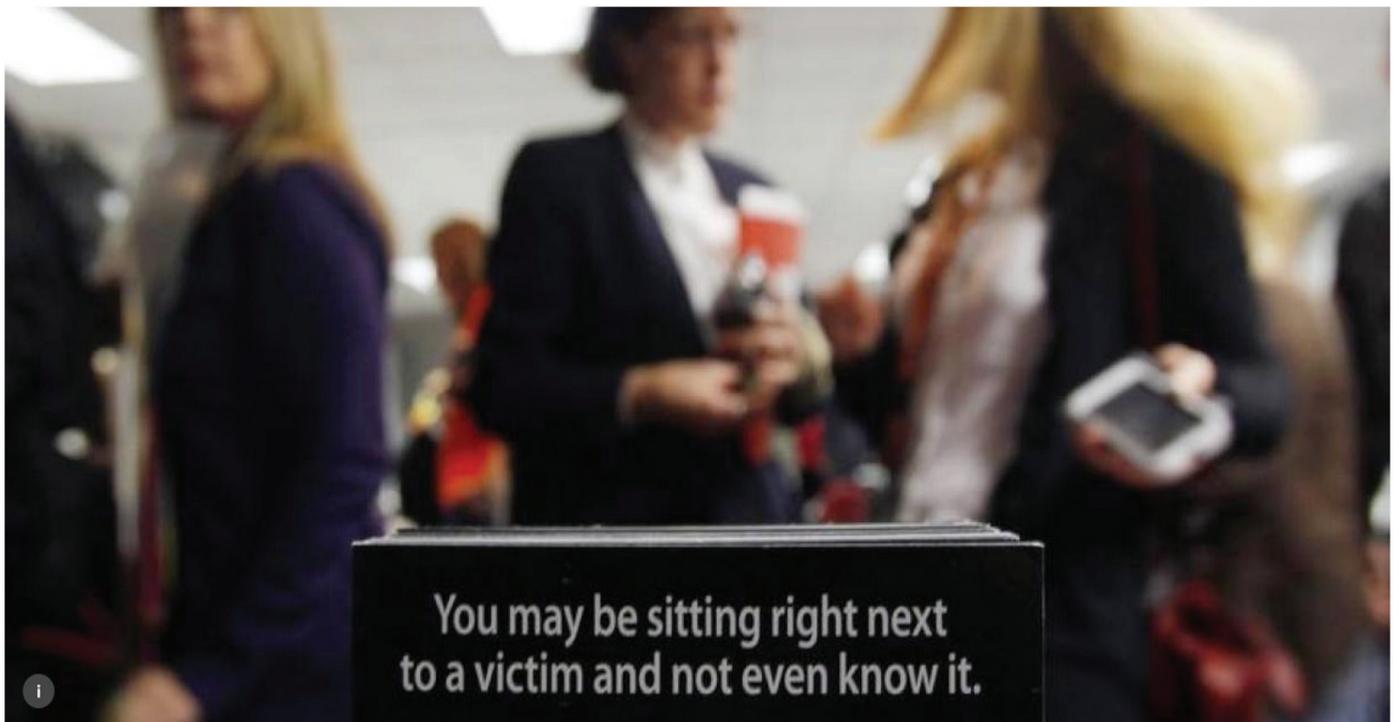




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Survivors, advocates launch U.S.-based anti-trafficking effort

by Ellen Wulforth Thomson Reuters Foundation
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The coalition aims to give survivors a major role, organizers said

(Adds U.S. council report, recasts lede)

By Ellen Wulforth

WASHINGTON, Oct 19 (Thomson Reuters Foundation) - Necole Daniels spent years as a sex trafficking victim, like her mother and grandmother before her.

At age 42, Daniels now works as a victims' advocate, proud that she broke the chain and that her own children did not fall into a life of degradation and violence.

"I was born into vulnerability," she said. "It was very easy for me to slide into the sex trade.

"I always say I didn't choose the life. The life chose me," she added.

Daniels is a co-founder of World Without Exploitation (WorldWE), a coalition launched on Tuesday to end sex trafficking and sexual exploitation.

The coalition brings together more than 60 lawyers, activists, artists, service providers, community leaders and others who battle sex trafficking, from escort services to the streets, organizers said at its launch in Washington, D.C.

Sex trafficking generates an estimated \$99 billion in illegal profits worldwide each year, according to the International Labour Organization.

The coalition aims to have an impact on laws and policies as well as popular culture that glamorizes so-called "pimp" culture, said Lauren Hersh, another WorldWE co-founder.

"I see it everywhere. I see it on my Facebook feed with parents who put a cap on their little boy and then everybody's saying, 'He's so pimp,'" she said.

"When we're glamorizing it, we're normalizing it, and when we're normalizing it, we have a huge problem," Hersh said.

The coalition aims to give survivors a major role, organizers said.

Daniels, who recounts being raped repeatedly beginning at age 7 and began working in prostitution at age 15, advocates for services to help people born into damaged families like hers to escaped a future being trafficked.

"In a lot of families where there's sexual abuse from generation to generation to generation, it grooms you in a sense," she said.

The launch of the coalition came as the U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking released a report on the government's efforts to combat sex trafficking and labor trafficking, including debt bondage and forced child labor.

Among its recommendations, the council called for involving survivors in all aspects of the effort, from policy-making and training to providing services and raising public awareness.

"... survivors bring a profound understanding of human trafficking based on their direct experience," it said.

"They provide the clues investigators need as evidence in court, as well as the signs a community needs to recognize trafficking to prevent its citizenry from becoming victims."

The council, comprised of trafficking survivors, was set up last year to review U.S. government anti-trafficking policies and programs.

Also working with WorldWE is trafficking survivor Cherie Jimenez, 66, who works at Boston's EVA Center, a survivor-led program that helps women break free of the sex trafficking industry.

It aims to build awareness of social, economic and other factors such as family violence, under-funded schools and poorly run foster care that leave girls and women vulnerable to trafficking, she said.

"We need to be part of a movement," Jimenez said.

WorldWE also plans to compile an archive of testimony by trafficking survivors, which would be the first of its kind in the United States, organizers said.

The alliance is funded by grants and private donors, Hersh said.

(Reporting by Ellen Wulforth, Editing by Astrid Zweynert. Please credit the Thomson Reuters Foundation, the charitable arm of Thomson Reuters, that covers humanitarian news, women's rights, trafficking, property rights and climate change. Visit <http://news.trust.org>)

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Lauren Hersh serves as Sanctuary for Families' Director of Anti-Trafficking Policy and Advocacy