

Thursday, August 19, 2020

With the presidential election around the corner, social media has turned human rights issues into cultural sparring between political camps. The right is accusing the left for ignoring the death of 5 year-old Cannon Hinnant and for being silent on the uncovering of the child sex industry, while the left is criticizing the right for justifying the death of George Floyd or for being against the Black Lives Matter movement.

With the American social consciousness now awakened, long-term justice workers are taking advantage of the stage to educate on the recently popularized, yet long standing issues. These activists have been speaking about and chipping away at these human rights issues for years, but are only now being heard.

One of these organizations is the Salt and Light Coalition in Chicago. Salt and Light highlights that supporting their anti-trafficking efforts is, in the end, supporting both Black Lives Matter and freeing children. Here are the statistics found on their website and fightforgirls.org:

- “25,000 Women are trafficked every year in Chicago.”
- “Of that number, 62% of those are trafficked before the age of 18.”
- “According to the FBI, 40% of victims of sex trafficking are African-Americans, with that number being significantly larger in the major metropolitan areas.”
- “African-American children comprise 59% of all prostitution arrests for those under 18—more than any other racial group.”
- Child Protective Services cannot intervene if the individual was not trafficked by a family member.
- “African-American victims of domestic minor sex trafficking are much more likely to be arrested on prostitution charges, leaving them more vulnerable to re-traumatization in the juvenile and criminal justice systems, and depriving them of appropriate services.”

Dr. Izabel Olson is the CEO and she herself had once been homeless, disconnected with her father, and a single mother at age 18. Her own story serves as fuel for the organization’s mission. Olson and her diverse female team have created a six-month holistic healing program focused on caring for victims through wellness, psychotherapy, spiritual development, and nutrition. Furthermore, they prepare victims for the workforce through yoga teacher training, personal branding coaching, a stipend, and even public transportation cards to lessen the chance of recidivism or the need to return to their former lifestyle.

So how successful are they at this work? For this organization, 90% of their graduates are able to find jobs and 80% of those graduates retain their jobs one year after graduation. One of their graduates Corinne is graduating this summer with a degree in business economics. She is also a mother of a two year-old and now serving on Salt and Light’s advisory board.

“The peace of mind I sought for so long has been replaced with outright joy, and I owe it all to the Salt and Light Coalition. They taught me the skills I needed to join the workforce, and gave me the tools I would need to continue to grow,” Corinne wrote recently in a blog post from March 11.

Challenging the status quo of slacktivism, this organization is encouraging people to become donors, volunteers, and sponsors of individual students. As they have stated for themselves, the change needed to remedy systemic injustice will need time, “diligence, and patience.” But onwards we all must continue.

To support and donate, please visit: <https://saltandlightcoalition.com>