



CHICAGO  
ALLIANCE  
AGAINST  
SEXUAL  
EXPLOITATION

# We're Listening: What Black Survivors Say About the Sex Trade



307 N. Michigan,  
Suite 1020  
Chicago, IL 60601

P: 773-244-2230  
policy@caase.org  
caase.org

# Table of Contents

## A Note on Language:

The survivor leaders centered in this report understand their experiences in the sex trade as exploitation. This report respects the language used by survivors to identify their experiences by using the terms *sex trafficking* and *prostitution*.

The survivor leaders centered in this report do not align their experiences with the term “sex work.”

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>2</b>
Introduction	2
Research Question	3
Methodology	3
Key Findings	4
<b>Survivor Leader Biographies</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Report Findings</b>	<b>7</b>
On-Ramps: How Survivors Enter the Sex Trade	7
Descriptions of Discrimination, Violence, and Exploitation in the Sex Trade	9
(In)Justice and Accountability: The Harms of Traffickers, Buyers, and Police	12
Service Needs	14
Understanding the Sex Trade: “Sex Work” vs. Sexual Exploitation	16
Policy Perspectives: Full Decriminalization a.k.a. Decriminalizing “Sex Work”	17
Policy Perspectives: The Survivor Model	18
<b>Policy Recommendations</b>	<b>19</b>
The Survivor Model	19
Funding for Services and Opportunities to Exit	20
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>21</b>
CAASE: A Record of Survivor-Centered Advocacy	21
Legal Services at CAASE	21
<b>Learn More From Survivors and Partners</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>23</b>



# Executive Summary

## Introduction

The exploitation and enslavement of African descendants has not ended in the United States (U.S.). The commercial sex trade, for example, mirrors the history of sexual and labor exploitation targeting Black people. According to legal scholar Cheryl Butler, the myths that “sustained slavery and colonization drive supply and demand in America’s modern commercial sex industry.” This disproportionately harms Black women and girls. Butler explains that racist and sexist beliefs that cast Black women as “eroticized sex objects” can be traced to the “stereotyping of female slaves and other Black women as sexually loose, seductresses, and prostitutes.”<sup>1</sup>

Black women survivors of sex trafficking and prostitution know firsthand that race and gender-based servitude continue in the sex trade today. As survivor leader Vednita Carter makes clear,

“Prostitution is a racial justice issue. The slave era is where sex trafficking began for African American women. Even after slaves were free, Black women and girls were still being bought and sold. Today there are too many poor urban areas that middle class men drive through for the sole purpose of finding a woman or girl of color to buy or use. **You just can’t take race out of it.**”<sup>2</sup>

Black women and girls who experience sex trafficking and prostitution are less likely to be understood as victims of gender-based violence. As both survivors and community leaders, their stories and expertise on the sex trade often go unrecognized. Research suggests that 40 percent of all U.S. sex trafficking victims are Black.<sup>3</sup> Instead of being offered life-affirming support to promote healing and autonomy, Black survivors are frequently criminalized amid their trauma — even as children. Across the U.S., 51 percent of the youth arrested for “prostitution” are Black, despite Black children only representing 13 percent of all youth.<sup>4</sup> Sex buyers and sex traffickers know that exploiting Black women and girls involves limited risk of legal accountability.<sup>5</sup>

What can be done to address this injustice? According to Black survivor leaders, we need laws that 1) end the arrest of people experiencing trafficking and prostitution, 2) provide services for people in the sex trade who want to exit, and 3) hold traffickers, buyers, and other exploiters accountable. This public policy approach is known as the *Survivor Model*, or *partial decriminalization*.<sup>6</sup> As public debates concerning whether to decriminalize or legalize the sex trade increase, it is imperative for us to listen to Black survivor leaders — one of the most marginalized groups in the sex trade — about their experiences, insights, and what policy approach will best support survivors.

---

<sup>1</sup> Cheryl Nelson-Butler. 2015. “A Critical Race Feminist Perspective on Prostitution and Sex Trafficking in America.” *Yale Journal of Law & Feminism*, 27,1. [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2642976](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2642976).

<sup>2</sup> Anne K. Ream. “The Believer: Vednita Carter.” *World Without Exploitation*. Accessed October 15, 2024. <https://www.worldwithoutexploitation.org/survivor/vednita-carter>.

<sup>3</sup> National Black Women’s Justice Institute. 2022. “Sex Trafficking of Black Women & Girls.” [https://www.nbwji.org/files/ugd/0c71ee\\_cd4d16e2b9ce4568be165c09a6badf53.pdf](https://www.nbwji.org/files/ugd/0c71ee_cd4d16e2b9ce4568be165c09a6badf53.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> There is no such thing as a child or youth “prostitute” or “sex worker” (<https://rights4girls.org/campaign/>). Any youth subjected to sex in exchange for something of value is a trafficking victim. Child trafficking victims are prohibited from being arrested for prostitution in Illinois and are eligible for services under state and federal law; National Black Women’s Justice Institute. 2022. “Sex Trafficking of Black Women & Girls.” [https://www.nbwji.org/files/ugd/0c71ee\\_cd4d16e2b9ce4568be165c09a6badf53.pdf](https://www.nbwji.org/files/ugd/0c71ee_cd4d16e2b9ce4568be165c09a6badf53.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Stephany Powell. 2023. “Sex Trafficking in the African American Community is a Human Rights Violation.” <https://endsexualexploitation.org/articles/human-trafficking-in-the-african-american-community-is-a-human-rights-violation/>.

<sup>6</sup> Other names for this policy approach include the Nordic, Equality, and Abolitionist Models.

# Executive Summary

## Research Question

A primary question is asked in this report: What do Black women survivors of trafficking and prostitution in the U.S. say about the sex trade and the Survivor Model?

To answer this question, this publication centers Black women survivors of the sex trade who have shared their experiences and expertise in the following areas:

- How survivors enter the sex trade
- Descriptions of discrimination, violence, and exploitation in the sex trade
- Harms perpetrated by traffickers, buyers, and the police
- Service Needs
- Different ways of understanding the sex trade (e.g., “sex work” vs. sexual exploitation)
- Policy perspectives on the sex trade

## Methodology

Black survivors who support the Survivor Model have generated a collection of work analyzing the sex trade. This qualitative report compiles a sample of that work.<sup>7</sup> Data was collected from four Black survivor leaders’ publicly accessible writings and interviews. Survivors’ statements were grouped by themes that further demonstrate their expertise and advocacy for the Survivor Model. All survivors were contacted and consented to their inclusion in this publication.

The contributions made by this report include placing multiple survivor voices in one publication, demonstrating why survivors support partial decriminalization, and creating a resource for policymakers and the public to better understand the survivor-led policy option. This report recognizes survivors as the experts leading the movement to end commercial sexual exploitation.

---

<sup>7</sup>This report relied on purposive, convenience sampling and is limited in scope. The data collected is specific to survivor policy expertise that supports partial decriminalization. An analysis of perspectives in support of other legal models is beyond the scope of this report.

# Executive Summary

## Key Findings

Black survivors' advocacy for the Survivor Model, also known as partial decriminalization, is directly linked to their lived experiences. Many survivor leaders report histories of trauma: sexual and domestic violence, racism, interactions with foster care and other aspects of the legal system as children, LGBTQ discrimination, poverty, and abuses in the sex trade by traffickers, pimps, buyers, and law enforcement.

## On-Ramps: How Survivors Enter the Sex Trade

- Vulnerabilities created by abuse in childhood are common on-ramps into the sex trade.
- The sex trade profits from oppression. Abuses of power linked to race, gender, and class are woven into the sex industry.
- Traffickers and pimps prey on the hopes and needs of victims to manipulate a victim's entry into the sex trade.

## Descriptions of Discrimination, Violence, and Exploitation in the Sex Trade

- Violence and trauma fuel the sex trade.
- Sexual abuse against children is a reality of the sex trade. Traffickers and pimps target vulnerable youth because buyers will intentionally seek out a child to sexually exploit or ignore a youth's age.
- In addition to sexual, physical, and mental harms, survivors of trafficking experience financial exploitation.

## (In)Justice and Accountability: The Harms of Traffickers, Buyers, and Police

- Traffickers and pimps are driven by profit and the demand for commercial sex from buyers.
- Black girls and women are less likely to be seen as victims of gender-based violence, more likely to be hyper-sexualized, and are criminalized instead of offered support.<sup>8</sup>
- Deeply rooted racist and sexist attitudes within U.S. culture toward Black women and girls promote sexual entitlement over marginalized people's bodies.

---

<sup>8</sup> Epstein, Blake, and González. 2017. "Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls' Childhood." *Center on Gender Justice & Opportunity at Georgetown Law*. <https://genderjusticeandopportunity.georgetown.edu/report/girlhood-interrupted-the-erasure-of-black-girls-childhood/>.

# Executive Summary

## Service Needs

- Survivor leaders emphasize housing, healthy relationships, and identity and financial recovery as critical factors to help people exit the sex trade.
- Survivor leaders also underline the importance of culturally specific services.

## Understanding the Sex Trade: “Sex Work” vs. Sexual Exploitation

Applying terms like “sex worker” uncritically to all people selling or sold in the sex trade can conceal differences in power and privilege, making it more difficult to understand whether a person is truly involved in commercial sex because they want to be. They may be in the sex trade because they lack options, they are being trafficked, or both.

## Policy Perspectives: Full Decriminalization a.k.a. Decriminalizing “Sex Work”

Survivor leaders oppose the full decriminalization of sex buying, pimping, and brothel owning, noting the harmful consequences that this will have for the already vulnerable and most impacted Black and Brown girls.

## Policy Perspectives: The Survivor Model

Survivor leaders advocate for the Survivor Model to curtail race and gender-based sexual exploitation.

Applying terms like “sex worker” uncritically to all people selling or sold in the sex trade can conceal differences in **power and privilege**, making it more difficult to understand whether a person is truly involved in commercial sex because they want to be. They may be in the sex trade **because they lack options, they are being trafficked, or both.**

# Survivor Leader Biographies

## Vednita Carter

Vednita Carter is a survivor of prostitution and the founder of Breaking Free, one of the first organizations in St. Paul, Minnesota and the U.S. with the mission to end prostitution and sex trafficking. Vednita is also an author, speaker, and pioneer in the sex trade abolitionist movement. Her background includes leading programing for trafficking survivors and training law enforcement. Vednita has educated service providers and community members across the world on Breaking Free's leadership and helped others create similar programs. She has received numerous awards including the Norma Hotaling Award, the Path Breaker Award from Shared Hope International, the Lifetime Achievement Award from President Barack Obama, and was named a CNN Hero.

## Tina Frundt

Tina Frundt is a survivor of child sex trafficking. She is the founder and Executive Director of Courtney's House, the only survivor-led, African American-led, and LGBTQ-led service organization supporting trafficking survivors in Washington, D.C. As a youth, Tina lived in Chicago, Illinois where she first experienced trafficking as a child in foster care. Today, Tina is a member of several anti-trafficking task forces including the U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking, the Washington, D.C. Anti-Trafficking Task Force, and the Prince George's County Human Trafficking Task Force. She also provides training and education to law enforcement and other organizations. Tina was honored with the Frederick Douglass Award from Free the Slaves, recognizing her leadership and dedication to supporting survivors.

## Brenda Myers-Powell

Brenda Myers-Powell is a survivor of prostitution and child sex trafficking. Based in Chicago, Illinois, she is the founder and CEO of Ernestine's Daughter, and the co-founder of the Dreamcatcher Foundation, two survivor-led organizations that assist trafficked women and girls. Brenda is also a member of the U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking and has provided public testimony about her experiences in the sex trade to the Illinois General Assembly. She is a former board member of the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation and the author of the book *Leaving Breezy Street: A Memoir* (with April Reynolds).

## Melanie Thompson

Melanie Thompson is a survivor of prostitution and child sex trafficking. Based in New York, she is currently the Northeast Regional Engagement Specialist for the Sex Trade Survivor Caucus, and the Outreach and Advocacy Coordinator at the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women. As a member of the LGBTQ community, Melanie is passionate about intersectional equity. Her advocacy spans across racial justice, reforming the foster care and criminal legal systems, and improving social services. She is a powerful public speaker in movements to end gender-based violence and human trafficking. Melanie partners with survivor networks and serves on numerous advisory boards across the globe.

## On-Ramps: How Survivors Enter the Sex Trade

Vulnerabilities created from childhood abuse and neglect are common on-ramps into the sex trade.

“From the age of 9 years old, I was a victim of child sex trafficking. My parents abandoned me when I was young, and I was placed into foster care. My foster mother lived in the ‘projects’ in Chicago, Illinois.” — Tina<sup>1</sup>

“Grown folks turned their backs on us for things like being raped and being molested, being mentally ill. Things happened, and we had no defenses because we were children. We were expected to accept it or we were told we were lying. No one believed our story. Boys and girls. When we spoke up against adults doing stuff to us or other family members doing stuff to us, nobody grown stepped up. Nobody wanted to be our hero.” — Brenda<sup>2</sup>

“My foster mother traded us for drugs. I was forced to go to people’s houses and perform sex acts on adult men. I didn’t know what to do to stop my foster mother from forcing me to endure rape after rape. Because of the culture in the projects, I grew up viewing the police and the government in a negative way and thus didn’t trust them.” — Tina<sup>3</sup>

The sex trade profits from oppression. Abuses of power linked to race, gender, and class are woven into the sex industry.

**“Racism makes Black women and girls especially vulnerable to sexual exploitation and keeps them trapped in the sex industry. It does this by limiting educational and career opportunities for African Americans in this country. It does this through a welfare system that has divided the poor Black family.”** — Vednita<sup>4</sup>

“...[T]he vast majority of people in prostitution were sex-trafficked as children, homeless, sexually abused, in foster care or otherwise racially and economically marginalized. When they turn 18, they don’t magically become ‘consenting adults’ who stay freely in the sex trade. The trauma they experienced never goes away.” — Melanie<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tina Frundt. 2021. “Tina Frundt.” Survivor Voices of Human Trafficking presented by the Combating Trafficking in Persons Program Management Office, U.S. Department of Defense. [https://ctip.defense.gov/Portals/12/Tina%20Frundt%20Story\\_1.pdf](https://ctip.defense.gov/Portals/12/Tina%20Frundt%20Story_1.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Brenda Myers-Powell with April Reynolds. 2021. *Leaving Breezy Street: A Memoir*. Henry Holt and Company.

<sup>3</sup> Tina Frundt. 2021. “Tina Frundt.” Survivor Voices of Human Trafficking presented by the Combating Trafficking in Persons Program Management Office, U.S. Department of Defense. [https://ctip.defense.gov/Portals/12/Tina%20Frundt%20Story\\_1.pdf](https://ctip.defense.gov/Portals/12/Tina%20Frundt%20Story_1.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> Vednita Nelson. 1993. “Prostitution: Where Racism and Sexism Intersect.” *Michigan Journal of Gender & Law*, 81,1: 83. [https://repository.law.umich.edu/mjgl/vol1/iss1/6/?utm\\_source=repository.law.umich.edu%2Fmjgl%2Fvol1%2Fiss%201%2F6&utm\\_medium=PDF&utm\\_campaign=PDFCoverPages](https://repository.law.umich.edu/mjgl/vol1/iss1/6/?utm_source=repository.law.umich.edu%2Fmjgl%2Fvol1%2Fiss%201%2F6&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages).

<sup>5</sup> Melanie Thompson. “Legalize Prostitution? Hell No.” *New York Daily News*, March 1, 2019. <https://www.nydailynews.com/2019/03/01/legalize-prostitution-hell-no/>.



## On-Ramps: How Survivors Enter the Sex Trade

Traffickers and pimps prey on the hopes and needs of victims to manipulate a victim's entry into the sex trade.

“I was finally out of foster care and in a stable home. But when I was 13, I met an older guy (he was 25) who lived in our neighborhood. He was nice to me and gave me rides to school when my parents were unable to do so. He told me that he was adopted too, but then given away. **I bonded with him and trusted him.** He worked on my mind to make me distrust my new parents. Unfortunately, none of what he said was true.” — Tina<sup>6</sup>

“I wanted to graduate high school and go straight to college. We couldn't afford that, so myself and a friend decided to look for summer jobs. ... [T]he bulk of what we found was Dancers Needed to Make Big Money, and things like that. ... And those ads said we could make \$1,000 a week! We went in and were hired on the spot. They weren't really looking for dancers. It was an ad for stripping. ... Back then dancing was the stepping-stone to prostitution. Today it's still the same. Modeling, dancing – **it's almost never what they tell girls it's gonna be.**” —Vednita<sup>7</sup>



<sup>6</sup> Tina Frundt. 2021. “Tina Frundt.” Survivor Voices of Human Trafficking presented by the Combating Trafficking in Persons Program Management Office, U.S. Department of Defense. [https://ctip.defense.gov/Portals/12/Tina%20Frundt%20Story\\_1.pdf](https://ctip.defense.gov/Portals/12/Tina%20Frundt%20Story_1.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Anne K. Ream. “The Believer: Vednita Carter.” *World Without Exploitation*. Accessed October 15, 2024. <https://www.worldwithoutexploitation.org/survivor/vednita-carter>.

## Descriptions of Discrimination, Violence, and Exploitation in the Sex Trade

Violence and trauma fuel the sex trade.

“My first beating was a pistol-whipping by two pimps. They sold me at a series of rest stops in the Midwest. It was trafficking, I know that today. I didn’t have the words for it then. But I had feelings, and it felt bad.” — Brenda<sup>8</sup>

“I can’t describe on this page what these men have done to me.” — Melanie<sup>9</sup>

“...I met a man that was 15 years older than me. During my trafficking situation, **I survived manipulation, torture and mental abuse...**” — Tina<sup>10</sup>

“I don’t even know how to answer the question ‘Were you ever raped as a prostitute?’ It was just a part of the deal. Johns and pimps, they know you’re not gonna go to the police. They’ll hurt you real bad.” — Brenda<sup>11</sup>

“One night, when my pimp wasn’t looking, I snuck a copy of a key in an effort to escape with other girls. He caught me and beat me with an iron rod.” — Tina<sup>12</sup>



---

<sup>8</sup>Anne K. Ream. “The Dreamer: Brenda Myers-Powell.” *World Without Exploitation*. Accessed October 15, 2024. <https://www.worldwithoutexploitation.org/survivor/brenda-myers-powell>.

<sup>9</sup>Melanie Thompson. “Legalize Prostitution? Hell No.” *New York Daily News*, March 1, 2019. <https://www.nydailynews.com/2019/03/01/legalize-prostitution-hell-no/>.

<sup>10</sup>Tina Frundt. 2018. Written testimony. “Following the Money: How Human Traffickers Exploit U.S. Financial Markets” hearing before the U.S. House Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the Committee on Financial Services.115th Congress. <https://financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hhrg-115-ba09-wstate-tfrundt-20180130.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup>Anne K. Ream. “The Dreamer: Brenda Myers-Powell.” *World Without Exploitation*. Accessed October 15, 2024. <https://www.worldwithoutexploitation.org/survivor/brenda-myers-powell>.

<sup>12</sup>Tina Frundt. 2021. “Tina Frundt.” Survivor Voices of Human Trafficking presented by the Combating Trafficking in Persons Program Management Office, U.S. Department of Defense. [https://ctip.defense.gov/Portals/12/Tina%20Frundt%20Story\\_1.pdf](https://ctip.defense.gov/Portals/12/Tina%20Frundt%20Story_1.pdf).

## Descriptions of Discrimination, Violence, and Exploitation in the Sex Trade

Sexual abuse against children is a reality of the sex trade. Traffickers and pimps target vulnerable youth because buyers will intentionally seek out a child to sexually exploit or ignore a youth's age.

“Do I think he knew I was 14? Oh he knew. Johns pay more money when they know you're younger. I told them how young I was. They knew.” — Brenda<sup>13</sup>

“I was bought and sold countless times for sex. I was only 12.” — Melanie<sup>14</sup>

“...I was taken with several other girls to private parties, to military parties, to police parties, to hotels, and to legal strip clubs where we were sold to make this guy money. I was 14 years old. I was in plain sight, but no one helped me. No one noticed the bruises on my body or an older man constantly by my side. **I felt invisible and worthless.**” — Tina<sup>15</sup>

“I thought if I could just stay strong, I would be found. **I didn't know that people don't look for little Black girls.** They didn't then, and they don't now. So many missing Black girls. Nobody looked for us. I didn't know that back then. All I knew was being lost was a lot for a fourteen-year-old girl to hold on to.” — Brenda<sup>16</sup>

“Sex buyers don't care whether the person they purchase is 18 or **younger, trafficked** or not, **'consenting'** or not.” — Melanie<sup>17</sup>

“Most of [the youth referred to Courtney's House are] under the age of 19 years old, and are sold on Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat and Tagged (especially our boys) ... Survivors referred to Courtney's House, who are minors, **were all sold on social media** – traffickers are moving away from Backpages and recruiting children and youth on social media, which is easily accessible. Since January of 2017, 100 percent of all of our survivors were sold online on the sites I previously mentioned.” — Tina<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Anne K. Ream. “The Dreamer: Brenda Myers-Powell.” *World Without Exploitation*. Accessed October 15, 2024. <https://www.worldwithoutexploitation.org/survivor/brenda-myers-powell>.

<sup>14</sup> Melanie Thompson. “Legalize Prostitution? Hell No.” *New York Daily News*, March 1, 2019. <https://www.nydailynews.com/2019/03/01/legalize-prostitution-hell-no/>.

<sup>15</sup> Tina Frundt. 2021. “Tina Frundt.” Survivor Voices of Human Trafficking presented by the Combating Trafficking in Persons Program Management Office, U.S. Department of Defense. [https://ctip.defense.gov/Portals/12/Tina%20Frundt%20Story\\_1.pdf](https://ctip.defense.gov/Portals/12/Tina%20Frundt%20Story_1.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> Brenda Myers-Powell with April Reynolds. 2021. *Leaving Breezy Street: A Memoir*. Henry Holt and Company.

<sup>17</sup> Melanie Thompson. “Legalize Prostitution? Hell No.” *New York Daily News*, March 1, 2019. <https://www.nydailynews.com/2019/03/01/legalize-prostitution-hell-no/>.

<sup>18</sup> Tina Frundt. 2018. Written testimony. “Following the Money: How Human Traffickers Exploit U.S. Financial Markets” hearing before the U.S. House Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the Committee on Financial Services. 115th Congress. <https://financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hhrg-115-ba09-wstate-tfrundt-20180130.pdf>.

## Descriptions of Discrimination, Violence, and Exploitation in the Sex Trade

In addition to sexual, physical, and mental harms, survivors of trafficking experience financial exploitation.

“When you are with a trafficker and are a U.S. Citizen, survivors must hand over their bank card, SSI check and other government assistance received. ... Pimps/traffickers take survivors social security cards and birth certificates as **another form of control over their finances.**”  
— Tina<sup>19</sup>

“

...I was taken with several other girls to private parties, to military parties, to police parties, to hotels, and to legal strip clubs where we were sold to make this guy money. I was 14 years old. **I was in plain sight, but no one helped me.** No one noticed the bruises on my body or an older man constantly by my side. **I felt invisible and worthless.** — Tina

”

---

<sup>19</sup>Tina Frundt. 2018. Written testimony. “Following the Money: How Human Traffickers Exploit U.S. Financial Markets” hearing before the U.S. House Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the Committee on Financial Services, 115th Congress. <https://financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hhrg-115-ba09-wstate-tfrundt-20180130.pdf>.

## (In)Justice and Accountability: The Harms of Traffickers, Buyers, and Police

Traffickers and pimps are driven by profit and the demand for commercial sex from buyers.

“My pimp, like all pimps, profited from my sex buyers’ dollars.” — Melanie<sup>20</sup>

“Most traffickers do not have one person they sell. Like any good business person, **pimps/traffickers focus on many avenues to increase their weekly profits**, children and youth are placed on the street, in hotels/motels, strip clubs, online and private homes.” — Tina<sup>21</sup>

Black girls and women are less likely to be seen as victims of gender-based violence, more likely to be hypersexualized, and are criminalized instead of offered support.<sup>22</sup>

“When tricks get caught with us, the police don’t dare take them to jail, they take us to jail. Cause we’re ‘the problem.’ Black women are the PROBLEM. Not this white guy from Skokie or Wilmette, or wherever.” — Brenda<sup>23</sup>

“...[W]hen I was getting sick and not able to perform, [the pimp] drove me back to my neighborhood and dumped me in a place where I was arrested and charged with prostitution. This was the beginning of a long life in prostitution. I went from one vicious pimp to another. I ended up in the DC area ... Military service members and [U.S. Department of Defense] civilian employees often bought me from one of my pimps – mainly on pay days when they were flush with cash.” — Tina<sup>24</sup>

“**Black women and girls make up a staggering 40 percent** of the women trafficked in this country, while **24 percent are Latina**. We also know that **LGBTQIA+ individuals, especially trans women of color**, are also overrepresented in the sex industry. And it is these women who are far more likely than White people to be arrested for prostitution-related crimes.” — Brenda<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> Melanie Thompson. “Legalize Prostitution? Hell No.” *New York Daily News*, March 1, 2019. <https://www.nydailynews.com/2019/03/01/legalize-prostitution-hell-no/>.

<sup>21</sup> Tina Frundt. 2018. Written testimony. “Following the Money: How Human Traffickers Exploit U.S. Financial Markets” hearing before the U.S. House Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the Committee on Financial Services. 115th Congress. <https://financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hhrg-115-ba09-wstate-tfrundt-20180130.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> Epstein, Blake, and González. 2017. “Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls’ Childhood.” *Center on Gender Justice & Opportunity at Georgetown Law*. <https://genderjusticeandopportunity.georgetown.edu/report/girlhood-interrupted-the-erasure-of-black-girls-childhood/>.

<sup>23</sup> Brenda Myers-Powell with April Reynolds. 2021. *Leaving Breezy Street: A Memoir*. Henry Holt and Company.

<sup>24</sup> Tina Frundt. 2021. “Tina Frundt.” Survivor Voices of Human Trafficking presented by the Combating Trafficking in Persons Program Management Office, U.S. Department of Defense. [https://ctip.defense.gov/Portals/12/Tina%20Frundt%20Story\\_1.pdf](https://ctip.defense.gov/Portals/12/Tina%20Frundt%20Story_1.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> Brenda Myers-Powell. “Protect Black Girls in the Sex Trade, Not the Pimps Who Sell Them.” *Chicago Defender*, March 7, 2024. <https://chicagodefender.com/opinion-protect-black-girls-in-the-sex-trade-not-the-pimps-who-sell-them/>.

## (In)Justice and Accountability: The Harms of Traffickers, Buyers, and Police

Deeply rooted racist and sexist attitudes within U.S. culture toward Black women and girls promote sexual entitlement over marginalized people's bodies.

“Prostitution is a racial justice issue. The slave era is where sex trafficking began for African American women. Even after slaves were free, Black women and girls were still being bought and sold. Today there are too many poor urban areas that middle class men drive through for the sole purpose of finding a woman or girl of color to buy or use. You just can't take race out of it.” — Vednita<sup>26</sup>

“Racist stereotypes in the mainstream media and in pornography portray Black women as wild animals who are ready for any kind of sex, any time, with anybody. Additionally, strip joints and massage parlors are typically zoned in Black neighborhoods, which **gives the message to white men that it is alright to solicit Black women and girls for sex** – that we are *all* prostitutes.” — Vednita<sup>27</sup>



---

<sup>26</sup> Anne K. Ream. “The Believer: Vednita Carter.” *World Without Exploitation*. Accessed October 15, 2024. <https://www.worldwithoutexploitation.org/survivor/vednita-carter>.

<sup>27</sup> Vednita Nelson. 1993. “Prostitution: Where Racism and Sexism Intersect.” *Michigan Journal of Gender & Law*, 81,1: 83-84. [https://repository.law.umich.edu/mjgl/vol1/iss1/6/?utm\\_source=repository.law.umich.edu%2Fmjl%2Fvol1%2Fiss%201%2F6&utm\\_medium=PDF&utm\\_campaign=PDFCoverPages](https://repository.law.umich.edu/mjgl/vol1/iss1/6/?utm_source=repository.law.umich.edu%2Fmjl%2Fvol1%2Fiss%201%2F6&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages).

## Service Needs

Survivor leaders emphasize housing, nurturing healthy relationships, and identity and financial recovery as critical factors to help people exit the sex trade.

“...[I]t was because of my personal experiences that I founded Breaking Free. We were the first program in the nation to provide permanent housing for prostituted women and their children. Twenty years later, we are still doing it. There are so many hurt and dying women caught up in this life. **Helping them see their value and recognize that they are worth saving is my mission.** That matters as much as getting a roof over their heads.” — Vednita<sup>28</sup>

“Programs do not save people; relationships help save people. If we don’t build **relationships, trust, and understanding**, we can’t make a difference.” — Brenda<sup>29</sup>



---

<sup>28</sup> Anne K. Ream. “The Believer: Vednita Carter.” *World Without Exploitation*. Accessed October 15, 2024. <https://www.worldwithoutexploitation.org/survivor/vednita-carter>.

<sup>29</sup> Brenda Myers-Powell with April Reynolds. 2021. *Leaving Breezy Street: A Memoir*. Henry Holt and Company.

## Service Needs

“...I was homeless and applied for a transitional housing program. I was told that I could not be in this program due to my credit – although I was approved by the [government] funding program to get rental assistance but I didn’t qualify due to my credit. There were no laws for protecting victims’ credit ... It took me many years to prove that my identity was stolen. I don’t think people truly understand how not only are you tortured mentally and physically, but your credit history is a collateral consequence of being trafficked and **creates barriers to regaining your independence.**” — Tina<sup>30</sup>

Survivor leaders also speak of the importance of culturally specific services.

“The **lack of culturally sensitive services** designed by members of the Black community, for women in the Black community, keeps women trapped in prostitution. Black women who are seeking to escape abusive and exploitative situations are forced to go to white agencies for help. ... white-dominated agencies are ill-equipped to understand and deal with the problems of poor Black women.” — Vednita<sup>31</sup>

“After 25 years of being trafficked between pimps across the Midwest, I fought to get out and now, all these years later, I fight to help other young Black girls who are caught in the cycle of degradation and exploitation.” — Brenda<sup>32</sup>

“It is a longer story to tell how I finally healed, left the situation, and founded Courtney’s House, the only African American-run, survivor-run program [in Washington, DC] that works with boys and girls who are trafficked. What happened to me is **still happening today** and we need your support to stop it.” — Tina<sup>33</sup>

““ After 25 years of being trafficked between pimps across the Midwest, I fought to get out and now, all these years later, **I fight to help other young Black girls who are caught in the cycle of degradation and exploitation.** — Brenda”

<sup>30</sup> Tina Frundt. 2018. Written testimony. “Following the Money: How Human Traffickers Exploit U.S. Financial Markets” hearing before the U.S. House Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the Committee on Financial Services. 115th Congress. <https://financialservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/hhrg-115-ba09-wstate-tfrundt-20180130.pdf>.

<sup>31</sup> Vednita Nelson. 1993. “Prostitution: Where Racism and Sexism Intersect.” *Michigan Journal of Gender & Law*, 81,1: 85. [https://repository.law.umich.edu/mjgl/vol1/iss1/6/?utm\\_source=repository.law.umich.edu%2Fmjgl%2Fvol1%2Fiss%201%2F6&utm\\_medium=PDF&utm\\_campaign=PDFCoverPages](https://repository.law.umich.edu/mjgl/vol1/iss1/6/?utm_source=repository.law.umich.edu%2Fmjgl%2Fvol1%2Fiss%201%2F6&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages).

<sup>32</sup> Brenda Myers-Powell. “Protect Black Girls in the Sex Trade, Not the Pimps Who Sell Them.” *Chicago Defender*, March 7, 2024. <https://chicagodefender.com/opinion-protect-black-girls-in-the-sex-trade-not-the-pimps-who-sell-them/>.

<sup>33</sup> Tina Frundt. 2021. “Tina Frundt.” Survivor Voices of Human Trafficking presented by the Combating Trafficking in Persons Program Management Office, U.S. Department of Defense. [https://ctip.defense.gov/Portals/12/Tina%20Frundt%20Story\\_1.pdf](https://ctip.defense.gov/Portals/12/Tina%20Frundt%20Story_1.pdf).



## Understanding the Sex Trade: “Sex Work” vs. Sexual Exploitation

Applying terms like “sex worker” uncritically to all people selling or sold in the sex trade can conceal differences in **power and privilege**, making it more difficult to understand whether a person is truly involved in commercial sex because they want to be. They may be in the sex trade because they lack options, they are being trafficked, or both.

“When I was ‘in the life,’ if anyone saw me in the club or on the pole, I suppose they could sugarcoat what they saw by saying I was ‘working’ when I was actually scared for my life every time a sex buyer came for me.” — Vednita<sup>34</sup>

“...[T]he common narratives around women in the sex trade are often dominated by young, progressive, white women who want to make additional income. Allowing the conversation around decriminalization to center the experiences of privileged women **erases the dominant narrative of women of color who are not there willingly**. For every woman who claims it’s her body and her choice to sell sex to make a little extra money there are scores of young Black girls in situations where they have no choices at all.” — Brenda<sup>35</sup>

“It’s neither sex nor work, but an inherently harmful practice, rooted in gendered violence and discrimination based on sex and race.” — Melanie<sup>36</sup>

“Black women and girls have been ‘prostituted’ since we landed on American soil, so in no way, shape or form is prostitution a ‘job’ and **I will fight to the end** to ensure that no legislator thinks it is.” — Vednita<sup>37</sup>

“I don’t know one sex-trade survivor who would call prostitution safe, empowering or an act of agency or autonomy.” — Melanie<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup>Taina Bien-Aimé. “What the Sex Trade Means for Black Women: A Legacy to Confront.” *At The Edge of the Margins, Coalition Against Trafficking in Women*. February 28, 2022. <https://medium.com/at-the-edge-of-the-margins/what-the-sex-trade-means-for-black-women-a-legacy-to-confront-57f2d6b0abf4>.

<sup>35</sup>Brenda Myers-Powell. “Protect Black Girls in the Sex Trade, Not the Pimps Who Sell Them.” *Chicago Defender*, March 7, 2024. <https://chicagodefender.com/opinion-protect-black-girls-in-the-sex-trade-not-the-pimps-who-sell-them/>.

<sup>36</sup>Melanie Thompson. “Legalize Prostitution? Hell No.” *New York Daily News*, March 1, 2019. <https://www.nydailynews.com/2019/03/01/legalize-prostitution-hell-no/>.

<sup>37</sup>Taina Bien-Aimé. “What the Sex Trade Means for Black Women: A Legacy to Confront.” *At The Edge of the Margins, Coalition Against Trafficking in Women*. February 28, 2022. <https://medium.com/at-the-edge-of-the-margins/what-the-sex-trade-means-for-black-women-a-legacy-to-confront-57f2d6b0abf4>.

<sup>38</sup>Melanie Thompson. “Legalize Prostitution? Hell No.” *New York Daily News*, March 1, 2019. <https://www.nydailynews.com/2019/03/01/legalize-prostitution-hell-no/>.

## Policy Perspectives: Full Decriminalization a.k.a. Decriminalizing “Sex Work”

Survivor leaders oppose claims that fully decriminalizing sex buying, pimping, and brothel owning is a safer or empowering policy option.

“There is a movement that is gaining steam around the country to decriminalize the sex trade entirely – including buyers, pimps and brothels. This policy would not just harm the community at large, but it would **fall hardest on Black and Brown girls** given they already are disproportionately impacted by sex trafficking across the country.” — Brenda<sup>39</sup>

“**There’s screaming hypocrisy here.** Some of the very same people who are working hard to raise consciousness about sexual abuse, harassment and exploitation through the #MeToo movement are ready to tell [state legislatures] that sexual violence, harassment and dehumanization, which are inextricable from prostitution, should be formally protected under our laws.” — Melanie<sup>40</sup>

“...[T]here is no good reason to decriminalize those who exploit us – the pimps, sex buyers and brothel owners, whose faces we see in nightmares for years to come.” — Brenda<sup>41</sup>

“I’m also absolutely convinced that giving this entire awful industry a legal seal of approval is just about the worst way forward.” — Melanie<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> Brenda Myers-Powell. “Protect Black Girls in the Sex Trade, Not the Pimps Who Sell Them.” *Chicago Defender*, March 7, 2024. <https://chicagodefender.com/opinion-protect-black-girls-in-the-sex-trade-not-the-pimps-who-sell-them/>.

<sup>40</sup> Melanie Thompson. “Legalize Prostitution? Hell No.” *New York Daily News*, March 1, 2019. <https://www.nydailynews.com/2019/03/01/legalize-prostitution-hell-no/>.

<sup>41</sup> Brenda Myers-Powell. “Protect Black Girls in the Sex Trade, Not the Pimps Who Sell Them.” *Chicago Defender*, March 7, 2024. <https://chicagodefender.com/opinion-protect-black-girls-in-the-sex-trade-not-the-pimps-who-sell-them/>.

<sup>42</sup> Melanie Thompson. “Legalize Prostitution? Hell No.” *New York Daily News*, March 1, 2019. <https://www.nydailynews.com/2019/03/01/legalize-prostitution-hell-no/>.

## Policy Perspectives: The Survivor Model

Survivor leaders advocate for the Survivor Model to curtail race and gender-based sexual exploitation.

“People selling sex need support; not arrests and forced police interactions. More importantly: the people who exploit them need to be held accountable for the violence they inflict.” — Brenda<sup>43</sup>

“The right way to fix the laws is to **decriminalize only us, the victims**. Stop arresting us, charging us with loitering or worse, abusing us, preventing us from moving on with our lives because of prostitution convictions. But ensure that it remains a crime – in fact a serious crime – to be a pimp, or to pay for sex. **That’s the only honest way to protect the people these legislators claim to care about.**” — Melanie<sup>44</sup>



---

<sup>43</sup>Brenda Myers-Powell. “Protect Black Girls in the Sex Trade, Not the Pimps Who Sell Them.” *Chicago Defender*, March 7, 2024. <https://chicagodefender.com/opinion-protect-black-girls-in-the-sex-trade-not-the-pimps-who-sell-them/>.

<sup>44</sup>Melanie Thompson. “Legalize Prostitution? Hell No.” *New York Daily News*, March 1, 2019. <https://www.nydailynews.com/2019/03/01/legalize-prostitution-hell-no/>.

# Policy Recommendations

## The Survivor Model

We must challenge legislative attempts that whitewash the reality of the sex trade. Listening to survivors and championing their advocacy is the true way forward. “The first time I realized I had power was when I told my story in front of the Illinois State Senate,” says Brenda Myers-Powell, a Chicago-based survivor leader and founder of the survivor-led organization, Ernestine’s Daughter. **“Getting caught up in the sex trade is easier than you think. Getting out is the hard part.”**<sup>1</sup>

We can support people who want to exit the sex trade by advocating for the survivor-led policy approach: the Survivor Model, or partial decriminalization. The goals are to

- End the arrest of people experiencing trafficking and people who are sold in prostitution
- Offer trauma-informed services and safe ways to leave the sex trade
- Hold buyers, traffickers, and other exploiters accountable

Following the leadership of survivors also means saying “no” to any policy proposal that seeks to fully decriminalize the sex trade. These policies remove accountability for traffickers, pimps, and buyers. Experts like Tina Frundt, survivor leader and executive director of Courtney’s House, and Yasmin Vafa, executive director of Rights4Girls, inform us that the “full decriminalization of [the] prostitution [system] in a major metropolitan U.S. city would greatly expand the industry, drive up the demand for paid sex by inviting more men to the market both locally and via sex tourism, and increase the need to fill the demand – threatening to pull in more women and girls of color via trafficking.”<sup>2</sup>

Full decriminalization will not solve the systemic issues that fuel the sex trade like gender and racial discrimination, LGBTQ inequity,<sup>3</sup> poverty and lack of jobs, and housing insecurity. It simply expands a harmful industry and pushes more vulnerable people into it. These proposals also misleadingly constrain our policy choices within a **false binary** by claiming that the only options are to either maintain the current system that criminalizes survivors, or to fully decriminalize the entire sex trade.<sup>4</sup>

The Survivor Model challenges the misguided vision of full decriminalization by offering a legislative approach that decriminalizes survivors and funds critical services — while still holding buyers, traffickers, and other exploiters accountable.

---

<sup>1</sup> Anne K. Ream. “The Dreamer: Brenda Myers-Powell.” *World Without Exploitation*. Accessed October 15, 2024. <https://www.worldwithoutexploitation.org/survivor/brenda-myers-powell>.

<sup>2</sup> Yasmin Vafa and Tina Frundt. 2021. “Looking Beyond Binaries: The Case for Partial Decriminalization of the Sex Trade.” *U.S. News & World Report*. <https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2021-02-10/why-the-sex-trade-should-only-be-partially-decriminalized>.

<sup>3</sup> Tayler Mathews. 2023. “Follow the Leadership of LGBTQ+ Sex Trade Survivors.” *Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation*. <https://www.caase.org/follow-leadership-of-lgbtq-sex-trade-survivors/>.

<sup>4</sup> Yasmin Vafa and Tina Frundt. 2021. “Looking Beyond Binaries: The Case for Partial Decriminalization of the Sex Trade.” *U.S. News & World Report*. <https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2021-02-10/why-the-sex-trade-should-only-be-partially-decriminalized>.

# Policy Recommendations



## Funding for Services and Opportunities to Exit

To tackle the harms of the sex trade, we need to recognize and respond to the vulnerability and victimization of survivors of sex trafficking and prostitution. By enacting the Survivor Model, we can **ensure survivors are not criminalized while also providing support and opportunities to exit the sex trade** by funding necessary services. Funding for survivors and anti-trafficking service providers through the Illinois state budget has been woefully inadequate when compared to the need of survivors in Illinois.

Funding is needed for services like **affordable and safe housing, legal aid, physical and mental health care, financial and identity recovery, universal basic income, and more**. Funding for survivor-led organizations must be prioritized, as survivors have specific expertise in recognizing the needs and experiences of fellow survivors. In Illinois, survivors and advocates struggle to find sufficient assistance as there are not enough safe homes for survivors to remain housed, legal aid to support with criminal records relief or immigration and family law needs, and medical care to heal from trauma. Survivors need the Survivor Model, with its multi-pronged approach, to increase services and decriminalize people experiencing trafficking and prostitution, now.

**Full decriminalization will not solve the systemic issues that fuel the sex trade** like gender and racial discrimination, LGBTQ inequity, poverty and lack of jobs, and housing insecurity. It simply expands a harmful industry and **pushes more vulnerable people into it**.

# Conclusion

The commercial sex trade is a nexus of injustice we cannot turn away from. While many assume that freedom from exploitation and enslavement has been achieved in the United States, these harms continue for people trafficked and sold in the sex trade. **Because sex trafficking disproportionately impacts marginalized groups like Black women and girls, their leadership, expertise, and experiences must be at the forefront to guide policymaking.**

“Illinois has an opportunity to be a leader in the Midwest by putting survivors first and ensuring no one is punished for the abuse they’ve suffered,” says Chicago-based survivor leader Brenda Myers-Powell. “It’s the true progressive way to bring about **meaningful change in the lives of those who need it most.**”<sup>1</sup>

Black women survivors who support the Survivor Model are clear on the harms of the sex trade. They are telling us how to confront a billion-dollar industry that profits from the buying and selling of children and adults. They are guiding our laws and policies toward support and understanding, and away from harm. To be in solidarity with survivors requires us to **listen and follow their lead.**<sup>2</sup>

## Advocate for the Survivor Model

You can support survivors by advocating for the Survivor Model — ending the arrest of people experiencing trafficking and prostitution, offering trauma-informed services and safe exit strategies, and holding buyers, traffickers, and other exploiters accountable.

## CAASE: A Record of Survivor-Centered Advocacy

CAASE has a record of policy advocacy in support of survivors of sex trafficking and prostitution in Illinois. Between 2010 and 2015, CAASE helped Illinois improve options for survivors to clear felony prostitution records, eliminated felony charges for prostitution, and led the campaign to pass the Illinois Safe Children Act — making Illinois the first state in the U.S. to prevent youth from being prosecuted for “prostitution” when they are victims of commercial sexual exploitation.<sup>3</sup> In 2023, CAASE successfully led the effort to pass the Prevent Unfair Sentencing of Youth Act, with our national partners at Rights4Girls and World Without Exploitation. This law confronts the abuse to prison pipeline<sup>4</sup> by alleviating extreme sentences for criminalized youth trafficking survivors who act in self-defense against an exploiter.<sup>5</sup>

## Legal Services at CAASE

A victims’ rights attorney can help a survivor navigate the criminal legal system. No matter how a person identifies their experience, people who’ve experienced sex trafficking and/or prostitution in Cook County, IL who are aged 13+ may be able to receive free legal assistance from CAASE. This includes consultation, legal advice, and representation. To speak with our team about legal services, please call **773-244-2230, ext. 205**, or email **legal@caase.org**. If CAASE cannot help you, we will try to connect you to another attorney and support resources.

<sup>1</sup> Brenda Myers-Powell. “Protect Black Girls in the Sex Trade, Not the Pimps Who Sell Them.” *Chicago Defender*, March 7, 2024. <https://chicagodefender.com/opinion-protect-black-girls-in-the-sex-trade-not-the-pimps-who-sell-them/>.

<sup>2</sup> Tayler Mathews. 2023. “Black Women are Still Fighting to be Free from Sex Trafficking.” *Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation*. <https://www.caase.org/black-women-are-still-fighting-to-be-free-from-sex-trafficking>.

<sup>3</sup> Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation. “6 Laws in 6 Years.” <https://www.caase.org/end-demand-illinois/>.

<sup>4</sup> Yasmin Vafa and Rebecca Epstein. 2023. “Criminalized Survivors: Today’s Abuse to Prison Pipeline for Girls.” *Center on Gender Justice & Opportunity at Georgetown Law*. <https://genderjusticeandopportunity.georgetown.edu/report/criminalized-survivors-todays-abuse-to-prison-pipeline-for-girls/>.

<sup>5</sup> Tayler Mathews. 2023. “HB 3414: Supporting Recovery for Youth Trafficking Survivors.” *Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation*. <https://www.caase.org/hb-3414-supporting-recovery-for-youth-trafficking-survivors/>.

# Learn More From Survivors and Partners



## Podcasts and Articles

- *Exit Wound: The Journey of Exploitation and Beyond* podcast series hosted by survivor leader Melanie Thompson: [www.podpage.com/exit-wound-the-journey-of-exploitation-and-beyond/](http://www.podpage.com/exit-wound-the-journey-of-exploitation-and-beyond/)
- “How Facebook and Instagram Became Marketplaces for Child Sex Trafficking” featuring survivor leader Tina Frundt and her organization, Courtney’s House: [www.theguardian.com/news/2023/apr/27/how-facebook-and-instagram-became-marketplaces-for-child-sex-trafficking](http://www.theguardian.com/news/2023/apr/27/how-facebook-and-instagram-became-marketplaces-for-child-sex-trafficking)
- “Exited Prostitution Survivor Policy Platform” co-authored by survivor leader Vednita Carter: <https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1133&context=dignity>
- “Brenda Myers-Powell: She Was Pimped Out, Left for Dead – Then Survived to Fight for Other Girls” featuring survivor leader Brenda Myers-Powell: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/jun/17/brenda-myers-powell-pimped-out-left-for-dead-survived>

## Organizations

The survivor leaders centered in this report have founded, serve in, and work with organizations that assist survivors and people who remain in the sex trade. Public policy and funding remain critical for meeting the needs of, and providing resources for, people who want to exit sex trafficking and prostitution.

- **Survivor-Led Organizations**
  - Chicago, Illinois - *Ernestine’s Daughter* [www.ernestinesdaughter.org](http://www.ernestinesdaughter.org)
  - Washington, D.C. - *Courtney’s House* [www.courtneyshouse.org](http://www.courtneyshouse.org)
  - St. Paul, Minnesota - *Breaking Free* [www.breakingfree.net](http://www.breakingfree.net)
  - Across the U.S. - *Sex Trade Survivor Caucus* [www.stscaucus.org](http://www.stscaucus.org)
- **National and International Survivor-Centered Organizations**
  - *Coalition Against Trafficking in Women* [www.catwinternational.org](http://www.catwinternational.org)
  - *Rights4Girls* [www.rights4girls.org](http://www.rights4girls.org)
  - *World Without Exploitation* [www.worldwithoutexploitation.org](http://www.worldwithoutexploitation.org)

# Acknowledgements

CAASE expresses gratitude to the survivors featured in this report for their leadership, advocacy, and permission to include their expertise.

In addition to centering Black survivor leadership, the author of this report prioritized including supporting literature written by Black women and women of color community leaders, scholars, and organizations. Please see the footnotes throughout this publication to learn more.

**Author:** Tayler J. Mathews

**Editor:** Madeleine Behr

**Graphic Design:** Lizzy Springer

*This publication is supported by Chicago's Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) as part of an award funded through the Domestic Violence Homeshare Fund.*





307 N. Michigan,  
Suite 1020  
Chicago, IL 60601

P: 773-244-2230  
[policy@caase.org](mailto:policy@caase.org)  
[caase.org](http://caase.org)