

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Lugar, and distinguished members of the committee and staff. It is an honor to be here with you all today to discuss the important issue of human trafficking.

In 1865, just 3 months after Congress approved the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery, Frederick Douglass addressed the American Anti-Slavery Society, urging the Society not to disband. "They would not call it slavery, but some other name," he said. "Slavery has been fruitful in giving itself names... and you and I and all of us had better wait and see... in what new skin this old snake will come forth."

Douglass was right, this old monster is still with us. Today there are an estimated 27 million slaves worldwide – more than at any point in history. We call these men, women, and children the victims of human trafficking. They represent every nationality, ethnicity and age group, and they can be found everywhere, including here in the United States. Here, almost one hundred and fifty years after the abolition of slavery in the United States, conservative estimates suggest that 40,000 people are enslaved on our own soil at any moment.

This is an ugly, and too often invisible, problem. Until recently, I – like many people – was unaware of its prevalence and magnitude. It took my 11 year old daughter Willow, who is here with us today, to bring it to my attention. After watching the Kony 2012 video and learning that children in Africa were being stolen from their families, forced into sexual slavery or used as child soldiers, she started doing some research. She discovered that this wasn't only happening to children in Africa or far off places, but that children in every country – including our own – are being forced into slavery. Spurred into action, I began to educate myself on this issue as well – reading, travelling, meeting survivors and service providers, law enforcement and public officials, and everyday citizens fighting against slavery.

Here with us today we have three incredible survivors that I would to recognize: Minh, Monica and Jamm.

Minh was sexually abused by her father beginning at the age of 3. At age 11, her father began selling her to other men. At 14, Minh's mother felt she wasn't receiving her fair share of the money Minh was generating so began selling Minh herself. All of this torture and abuse was taking place while Minh attended public school, received straight A's and played competitive soccer. It happened right under everyone's noses.

Running away from an abusive home, Monica, on the streets at the age of 15, was kidnapped by seven men. They all beat and raped her and eventually turned her over to another man, who would force her to sell her body for his financial gain. Monica was recidivated in and out of the juvenile justice system sixteen times between the ages of 15 and 17.

Jamm was an HIV negative child born to parents diagnosed with AIDS who died by the time Jamm was 10. Jamm was forced to live with her mother's sister, a woman who is a unified district schoolteacher in the Los Angeles Public School System. There, she experienced further sexual abuse from her aunt, her aunt's husband and her cousins. For four years, her aunt sold her to over a hundred pedophiles and child rapists. Trying to escape, Jamm stole her aunt's cell phone to try and call for help. Her aunt called the police to report the phone stolen and at age 15, Jamm was arrested and treated like a criminal.

Today through hard work, perseverance and the support of social programs, Minh is a graduate student at UC Berkeley getting her MSW and PhD in Social Welfare. The recipient of a prestigious fellowship, Minh is studying the long-term impact of child abuse and trauma recovery, and studying the health and well-being of survivors of human trafficking.

Monica was introduced to a program that serves commercially sexually exploited children (MISSEY, Inc.). She progressed on to become a part-time MISSEY staff member and began working part-time for Youth Radio. During her time at Youth Radio, Monica was one of two key reporters that produced "Trafficked", which later was awarded the Peabody Award, Gracie Award and the Edward R Murrow Award. Currently Monica is a full-time staff member at MISSEY and a part-time student.

Jamm was finally recognized as a victim and offered the specialized help that victims of human trafficking need. She is enrolled at West LA College for the fall term. She is working hard so that she can transfer to USC in the fall of 2013.

These women are just three of the faces of human trafficking, but they remind us of why we are here today. The United States has been a leader in the fight against human trafficking for more than a decade, and Congress has been at the forefront of those efforts. In 2000, and again in 2003, 2005, and 2008, members of both parties came together to pass the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), containing provisions to combat domestic and international trafficking and to assist victims of trafficking. The law also authorized millions of dollars in expenditures across a range of government agencies to support these efforts. I have met beneficiaries of those expenditures in the US and abroad. I have seen firsthand the transformative effects of those programs. Women, girls, men and boys whose lives were stolen and restored.

Despite these great efforts, the problem of human trafficking is growing, here in the United States and abroad. Meanwhile, the TVPA expired last year. While some TVPA programs have received appropriations for fiscal year 2012, future funding is not guaranteed. As a result, government agencies and their implementing partners are constrained in their ability to develop and implement long-term interventions.

As we look forward to the next decade, we must renew our commitment to ending the scourge of slavery. This means reauthorizing the TVPA and ensuring that anti-trafficking programs receive adequate funding. Fighting slavery doesn't cost a lot of money. The costs of allowing it to exist in our nation and abroad are much higher. It robs us of the thing we value most – our freedom.

We know what that freedom is worth. We have paid a high price to defend it here and abroad. For those of us joined in this effort now, let our legacy be to deliver on Emancipation's promise, making freedom a reality for all who have been victimized - like the women here with us today - and for future generations.