



Human trafficking: Rethinking Masculinity

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Young People Against Prostitution and Human Trafficking:

The Greatest Violence Against Human Beings

Casina Pio IV

Vatican City, 15-16 November 2014

Hello, I would like to start by thanking Mons. Sánchez Sorondo, Alicia (ndr Peressutti), and everyone else for giving me this opportunity and making it possible for me to be here. My name is Piero Picatto, I am 18 years old. I belong to the NGO "Vínculos en Red", to Lazos Blancos and to an association against violence against women and children. I coordinate two workshops. One is called "Healthy Relationships" against gender-based violence and stereotypes, and the other deals with trafficking of vulnerable people. I would like to tell you a little bit about my association "Vínculos en Red". I have a short video, perhaps you can show it.

I grew up in a home with parents who really considered voluntary work as a lifestyle choice. I remember my parents would come in and ask me and my brother, who was the age I am now, if we would go and sleep on a mattress in their bedroom so that we could leave our bedroom to people who needed it – young people, young women. And that's what we did. I remember that very often the people who would stay, would stay as long as they needed, to be cared for and assisted and to find another place to live and be a little more independent. So I grew up in a home where my father always taught us to respect people and in particular to respect women. I remember there were people who used to come to our home and ask questions – 'Why were we doing that? Why were we bringing all these prostitutes home?' And I remember my parents would answer, "No, they are not prostitutes, they are victims". My teenage years were not easy, but teenagers never have an easy adolescence, do they? We had a lot of problems and questions to ask. Now that I'm 18 I can say that I understand, I understand that prostitution exists because there are people, generally men, who exploit others and earn a lot of money from this exploitation, and because there are men who go with prostitutes and buy the lives of these people taking advantage of the fact that they cannot fend for themselves, they may be in a state of need, hunger, they can't meet their needs. In today's society we give importance to human rights and to justice. But then we allow millions and millions of people to be abused, and raped, and sold for money. We work for human rights, but we still allow our women and children to be treated like pieces of meat, used and sold like human flesh by these men.

Masculinity, being a man, being "macho", is based on seeing our daughters and wives as people who are like us, and on how to respect them, and take care of them, see their value, and have healthy relationships with them that are based on love and life. I think that we, as men, have to find other paths, think of other ways to interact and reject any form of violence against women and human beings that in any way affect human life and human dignity, because when a person is destroyed and his/her rights are destroyed it takes a very long time to recover. We know that Pope Francis is very much in favour of this perspective, and has challenged powerful people, has denounced the atrocities that destroy millions of lives and many families. A family where human trafficking or prostitution takes away a daughter or a mother is destroyed for three generations. What mother would say 'my daughter is a prostitute', what daughter would say 'my mother is a prostitute'? What society is that?

I admire the Pope for his courage, his piety and for standing up and defending these women who otherwise would be forgotten, would fall sick and die alone. They die in total solitude, they are forgotten. And when a mother has been a prostitute, her daughter often ends up doing the same thing. There is often no other option. They grow up in a world where there are no choices and a lot of violence. So I admire the Pope because he stands up and defends these women who otherwise would be totally abandoned. There would be no prostitution if everyone imagined these women as their sisters or mothers.

Pope Francis has become a leader for young people and we know we have to change the world. We have to eradicate violence at its very root. He is holding our hand and the hand of those who are suffering and giving voice to those whom no one listens to. Pope Francis is the Pope of young people and I would like to thank him

here for what he has done, for supporting us and our work to put an end to prostitution and human trafficking, particularly of women and children. I thank and admire Pope Francis because he is becoming the voice of those who do not have a voice, a voice that is calling out for the right to justice and non-violence.

We, the young people, have the right to live a life without violence, and so I thank everyone, I thank Antonia and thank Alicia of course. And that's why we need to have young people who are leading actions, who are playing a political role in this area. One of the points I think is really very important in order to put an end to human trafficking is to promote adequate laws that will condemn criminals and restore the rights of those who have been abused, and ensure that in every country we have a dialogue among civil society, NGOs and the Church, and between civil society and the State to understand how human trafficking prevention programs work. And then in every country we must have shelters – we call them “Medio Camino” (lit. “mid-way homes”, “half-way homes”) – we inaugurated one in March, and hopefully in March 2015 we will open another one in Argentina. They are run by NGOs and receive State support. The human rights of the victims of trafficking are also often violated by the States who have the legal obligation to invest in caring and rehabilitation programs, programs that could be set up using funds obtained also from confiscating the assets of the traffickers. Money the traffickers obtained through the torture and exploitation of victims. I think it's also important that we have lots of workshops in secondary schools, but also for communities, public debates for young people and Churches, community centres, public areas, and training for teachers, professors, and those who work in law enforcement, health care professionals, psychologists. We have two courses, for instance, one on gender-based violence and human trafficking and one on drug trafficking, with a final diploma. There are 8 different meetings, one per month, and there is an evaluation. We have professionals who come and talk, and we try to bring in external experts to discuss and teach how to help others and lead them out of those situations.

So that's all I wanted to say, thank you very much.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop a world youth network to lobby countries to enact appropriate laws to condemn criminals and re-establish the damaged rights of the victims.
2. Lograr en cada país mesas de diálogo entre la sociedad civil-ONG-Iglesias y el estado, para evaluar el funcionamiento de los programas de combate y prevención de la trata de personas. Que en cada país se abran 3 casas a Medio Camino para la reparación de los derechos de las víctimas. A cargo de ONG y sostenidas con programas del estado. Los derechos humanos de las víctimas de Trata son violados por los Estados los cuales tienen la obligación legal de invertir en programas de asistencias y reparación. Utilizando como fondos lo obtenido con el decomiso de los bienes de los tratantes. Bienes que obtuvieron con la tortura y la explotación de las víctimas.
3. Programas de prevención en cada país a través de talleres llevados a cabos en escuelas secundarias. Charlas – debates para jóvenes en iglesias centros comunitarios y espacios públicos. Formación de docentes estudiantes de: profesorado, aspirantes a las fuerzas, de carreras de salud, de psicología, etc. a través de seminarios y diplomados.