

Augusta, Georgia: Home of The Masters and Human Trafficking

Augusta, Georgia is the quintessential picture of Southern charm. A regional giant in manufacturing, medicine, and military operations, the city holds a profound history and natural beauty, in addition to hosting the world's most famous annual golf tournament, The Masters. However, an ugly secret hides beneath all of the charm and bustle; Augusta is facing a massive human trafficking problem. In order to effectively combat human trafficking in Augusta, Georgia, law enforcement and service providers should be better equipped to serve trafficking survivors, and corporations in the area, especially the Masters franchise, should take a proactive role in mitigating the human trafficking that it draws to the city.

Human trafficking affects an enormous number of individuals; in 2016, it was estimated that around 40.3 million people were trafficked globally, in just that year (International Labor Office, *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery*). Safe Horizon, a well-known victim advocacy organization, defines human trafficking as “the practice of exploiting adults and children for use as commodities, or objects, in conditions of sexual and labor servitude” (“Human Trafficking Statistics and Facts”). This business of selling humans is one with low cost and astronomical profit; human trafficking is estimated to bring a profit of \$150 billion dollars annually, making it the second most profitable industry worldwide after the drug trade (UNICEF USA, “How Trafficking Exists Today”). Because there is so much money in this enterprise, dismantling human trafficking is a massive undertaking, one that must be aggressively tackled by the international community. The plight of modern slavery has infiltrated even the most idyllic of towns. Augusta, Georgia, famous for its annual Masters tournament and beautiful scenery, is a huge trafficking hotspot; the golf tournament, drawing hundreds of thousands to the city each year, is the second largest sporting event for human trafficking, following only the Super Bowl

(Johnson, “Human Trafficking Awareness Raised for the Masters”). Just between October 2020 and March 2021, nearly 30 cases of child sex trafficking were reported in Richmond County (ABC News Channel 6, “27 Cases of Child Trafficking Out of Augusta Reported to Child Trafficking Hotline”). Clearly, Augusta is in the midst of a severe human rights crisis.

Fortunately, there has been legislation passed in the United States addressing human trafficking. The Trafficking Victims Protection Act, a Clinton-era bill signed in 2000, “is the centerpiece of US anti-trafficking legislative efforts” (Okech, David, et. al, “Human Trafficking: Improving Victim Identification and Service Provision”). The TVPA introduced a three-pronged approach to tackling human trafficking: prosecution, protection, and prevention (US Department of State, “3 Ps: Prosecution, Protection, and Prevention”). The prosecution clause of the TVPA maintains that human trafficking should be prosecuted and punished like any other serious crime (US Department of State). In an ideal world, this would constitute a “victim-centered legal framework [that] authorize[s] court-ordered restitution or compensation to victims in conjunction with the successful conviction of traffickers” (US Department of State). In addition to a victim-centered prosecution process, the TVPA calls for victim-focused protection, with the implementation of comprehensive identification of trafficking victims and access to restorative services for these survivors (US Department of State). First responders, like law enforcement and healthcare providers, should be aware of the characteristics and behaviors of human trafficking survivors, and these survivors are also entitled to “emergency and long-term services”, like “housing, food, medical and dental care, and legal assistance” (US Department of State), even including the right for foreign trafficking victims to reside in the United States on a special “T” visa (US Citizenship and Immigration Services, “Victims of Human Trafficking: T Nonimmigrant Status”). The final prevention clause calls for intervention programs for at-risk

populations and new legislation that better protects these individuals (US Department of State). This could look like increased education for individuals facing homelessness, undocumented immigrants, and all women and children and more stringent labor and sex laws that protect the vulnerable from exploitation (US Department of State).

Yet, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act has failed miserably at preventing human trafficking. In 2016, the United States Department of Justice reaffirmed that “human trafficking is the world’s fastest growing criminal enterprise [...] [and] the world’s second most profitable criminal enterprise” (Human Trafficking). Since the TVPA was implemented in 2000, it would be expected for human trafficking to be on the decline in years following, if this legislation had been effective – however, this has clearly not been the case. Even on a local and state level, the situation has yet to improve. Atlanta was named “one of the cities with the highest incidences of child sex trafficking” in 2014 (Tabitha’s House, “The Statistics”). And, while there is not much definitive information the developments in human trafficking in Augusta since 2000 because of the underground nature of the industry, based on reliable patterns about the crime, it is presumable that human trafficking in Augusta has only worsened in recent years. Statistically, young girls that are trapped in the sex trade are exploited by an adult man 3 times a night on average (Tabitha’s House, “The Statistics”); yet, this number dramatically increases, perhaps up to 10 times a night, if there is an “event in the city that draws large crowds” (Tabitha’s House, “The Statistics”). The Masters Tournament has been known to bring at least 50,000 patrons to the course alone (Golf Net News, “Masters Attendance:How many Patrons Attend Augusta National Each Year?”), with tens of thousands of more tourists staying in hotels and resorts around the area. So, using this logic, Augusta, especially during the Masters, is crawling with traffickers, despite the Trafficking Victims Protection Act.

However, one reason that the Trafficking Victims Protection Act has been ineffective might be due to the method in which it was implemented, rather than some fault in the actual legislation itself. In “Misery and Myopia: Understanding the Failures of US Efforts to Stop Human Trafficking”, an article published by the Fordham Law Review, author Jennifer Chacon proposes that the TVPA “emphasizes the law enforcement components of anti-trafficking initiatives in a way that undercuts the Act’s humanitarian goals of assisting trafficking victims”. While the TVPA has done very little effectually to date, if the legislation it proposed was enacted under a different approach, perhaps there would be a more successful outcome. The current prosecution centered approach should be replaced with one that prioritizes prevention of human trafficking and protection of survivors just as highly as the prosecution of exploiters. In addition, in cities like Augusta, much of the trafficking industry is fueled by industries like tourism, which legislation like the TVPA struggles to address. However, some scholars suggest that businesses and corporations have a social responsibility to help dismantle the trafficking that is ongoing within their communities. In “Addressing Modern Slavery”, a breakthrough piece published in the *Journal of Human Trafficking*, authors Nolan and Boersma are “emphatic” that “the business sector must play a role in ending modern slavery” through “developing their social conscience”. This social conscience means that businesses should hold some type of regard for the community in which they reside, and in turn, use its resources to stop any exploitation in the area.

Using these guidelines, Augusta can begin to stop human trafficking by improving identification and restorative service for trafficking survivors and by asking franchises like the Masters to do better by implementing more stringent policies that deter trafficking. Personnel like law enforcement, first responders, health care providers, and educational professionals should be required to take courses that teach them how to recognize signs of sex or labor

trafficking. Since these individuals are most often in contact with high-risk groups, by being more aware of what human trafficking looks like Augusta can save more victims from the industry and potentially capture the abusers that perpetuate this cycle. In addition, the Richmond County government should take steps to partner with the many organizations in the area that provide services for at-risk individuals and trafficking victims, like iCare, a local non-profit that runs a safe home for trafficking survivors and gives them the resources to move forward in life. By partnering with organizations like iCare, the government can streamline resources for survivors, giving these victims the best potential for a successful recovery without risk of being exploited any further. Furthermore, the Masters should take the initiative to condemn trafficking at home and abroad and use its great wealth to help cleanse the Augusta community of the slave trade that it brings to the city each year. One way that the Masters could do this is by requiring detailed background checks on any staff it may hire and by ensuring that any third-party services that it may employ during events is guaranteed to be free of forced labor. In addition, the Masters should mandate training for all of its employees on how to recognize trafficking, how to avoid becoming a victim of trafficking, and how to respond if an employee perceives that somebody is being forced to work against their will.

In conclusion, through a more victim-focused approach in the local government and first responder and proactive regulations by corporations like the Masters, human trafficking can be eliminated in areas like Augusta. The road to a city without the dark stain of human trafficking might be long, but is certainly possible if all of the pertinent local entities decide to be proactive in implementing change. While Augusta may be known for the Masters, the community should long to be known as a city free of exploitation and human trafficking.

Works Cited

- “27 Cases of Child Trafficking out of Augusta Reported to Child Trafficking Hotline.” *WJBF*, ABC News Channel 6, 11 Mar. 2021,
<https://www.wjbf.com/news/27-cases-of-child-trafficking-out-of-augusta-reported-to-child-trafficking-hotline/>.
- “3PS: Prosecution, Protection, and Prevention.” *Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons*, U.S. Department of State, 9 Jan. 2021,
<https://www.state.gov/3ps-prosecution-protection-and-prevention/>.
- Chacon, Jennifer M. “Misery and Myopia: Understanding the Failures of US Efforts to Stop Human Trafficking.” *Fordham Law Review*, vol. 74, no. 6, 2006, pp. 1–66.,
<https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4173&context=flr>. Accessed 10 Nov. 2021.
- Global Estimates of Modern Slavery*. International Labor Office, 2017,
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_575479.pdf.
- “How Trafficking Exists Today.” *UNICEF USA*, 6 Jan. 2016,
www.unicefusa.org/stories/how-trafficking-exists-today/29715.
- “Human Trafficking.” *The United States Department of Justice*, 10 Aug. 2016,
<https://www.justice.gov/usao-ri/human-trafficking>.

“Human Trafficking Statistics & Facts.” *Human Trafficking Statistics and Facts*, Safe Horizon, 29 Apr. 2020,

<https://www.safehorizon.org/get-informed/human-trafficking-statistics-facts/#definition/>.

Johnson, Autumn. “Human Trafficking Awareness Raised for the Masters.” *WJBF*, ABC News Channel 6, 7 Apr. 2019,

<https://www.wjbf.com/csra-news/human-trafficking-awareness-raised-for-the-masters/>.

“Masters Attendance: How Many Patrons Attend Augusta National Each Year?” *What You Need to Know about Golf*, Golf News Net, 7 Apr. 2021,

<https://thegolfnewsnet.com/golfnewsnetteam/2021/04/07/masters-attendance-how-many-patrons-attend-augusta-national-each-year-112863/>.

Nolan, Justine, and Martijn Boersma. “Addressing Modern Slavery.” *Journal of Human Trafficking*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2021,

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23322705.2019.1693863?scroll=top&needAccess=true>. Accessed 12 Nov. 2021.

Okech, David, et al. “Human Trafficking: Improving Victim Identification and Service Provision.” *International Social Work*, vol. 55, no. 4, July 2012, pp. 488–503, doi:10.1177/0020872811425805.

“The Statistics.” *Tabitha’s House*, <https://tabithashouseint.org/resources/statistics/>.

“Victims of Human Trafficking: T Nonimmigrant Status.” *Victims of Human Trafficking and Other Crimes*, U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services, 20 Oct. 2021,

<https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/victims-of-human-trafficking-and-other-crimes/victims-of-human-trafficking-t-nonimmigrant-status>.