

What is your story?

There are thousands of pressing issues in the world that could use some drastic attention, however (me being just a person) I cannot attend to all of them. Nevertheless, that does not mean I cannot help at all and, therefore, is this small story diving into the problem of human trafficking. To clarify, I have personally never been in a position before concerning the topic and will hopefully never have to experience that pain. For those who happen to be unaware, Missouri (my home from the past seven years) is one of the fifty states located in the centre of the United States. Due to its centralized location, its hotspot for a majority of American highways, the attraction of tourism, and agricultural hub, the issue of human trafficking is a genuine concern for many.

When taking a quick glance at the statistics, Missouri is currently ranked the 8th worst in the number of cases on a scale of all of the states. Although it is generally unpleasant to hear stories about other people's horrific experiences and, being a smaller female myself, it is not an unrealistic idea that I could somehow be one of those stories you read about in the local newspaper. To my surprise, was there also not much being done to help correct the situation.

That is when a couple of friends and I decided to push for a change in the 2020-2021 school year. In communication with our school, we put together a presentation about the topic of human trafficking, paying some extra attention to the subsection sex trafficking, ending with a word of encouragement to our student body (along with others in our community) to write to the Missouri state senate to support the Missouri House Bill 279. The goal of the bill is to bring more awareness to this issue by requiring that any person who works in a field that places them

alongside the rest of society (salesman, gas station worker, waiter, e.t. ) to receive training in the art of recognition of the signs of human trafficking.

Since our little movement, the bill has passed with flying colours and change is already evident. To be fair, the bill would have probably passed anyway - but that does not mean my friends did not have an impact either. Anyone working with people is now more informed on the issue of human trafficking with details on how to identify and deal with it. Knowing now that when I go to a gas station or a convenience store there will be there looking for me almost feels like a protective wall to lean on. While there is still much work to be done with this issue, that bill was a great start offering just a small sense of security and hopefully a drop in future cases!