

THE RED CORD

ISAIAH 61:1

JULY 2022

Monthly Newsletter of the Red Cord



FREEDOM, FAITH AND A STRONG FUTURE

FREEDOM. AS AMERICANS, WE HOLD SACRED OUR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS. BUT WHAT IS FREEDOM REALLY? HOW WOULD YOU FEEL IF YOU WERE HELD CAPTIVE BY YOUR OWN FAMILY? BY YOUR OWN FATHER?

THAT WAS MICHELE RICKETT'S CHILDHOOD STORY. TODAY, MICHELE IS THE FOUNDER AND CEO OF SHE IS SAFE (SIS), AN INTERNATIONAL NONPROFIT THAT PREVENTS, RESCUES AND RESTORES WOMEN AND GIRLS FROM ABUSE AND SLAVERY IN HIGH RISK COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE WORLD, EQUIPPING THEM TO BUILD LIVES OF FREEDOM AND FAITH FOR A STRONG FUTURE. [HTTPS://SHEISSAFE.ORG/](https://sheissafe.org/)

(CONT.)

(CONT.)

As a girl, Michele was abandoned by her mother and left in the home of her father who was a pedophile. She could not imagine being free from his constant abuse. Until one day, a friend from school intervened and reported Michele's father to authorities. Very quickly, Michele was rescued and her life changed forever. Michele explained how it felt to be free. "I was one of the silent ones who suffered Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. (CSEC

<https://nche.ed.gov/csec/>). For most of my life, I did not identify myself as a victim of human trafficking. CSEC is an umbrella term for various crimes which include the sexual exploitation of a child through force, fraud or coercion in exchange for food, shelter, money, and protection.

Because I spent most of my childhood hiding, I was in disbelief when the authorities told me that I need never go home again. I could live with a foster family. My rescue happened so quickly. I was called into the counselor's office in my high school. The Dept. of Family and Children Services sent caseworkers to talk with me, and by nightfall, I was in a new home. I kept looking over my shoulder thinking that my dad would find a way to get me back in his clutches. For many years, even after my dad passed away, I had nightmares that he was still alive. In my nightmare, he would burst through the front door to take me. I reasoned that people only told me that he was dead so that I wouldn't live in constant fear." Once an enslaved person is set free, then healing comes. Sometimes that journey is slow, as was Michele's case. "My healing was deep and beautiful, but very gradual. I became a Christian at 18 years old through the loving witness of a boyfriend, Daniel, and his family. They loved and accepted me, as broken as I was, and had a genuine love for Christ.(cont.)

ONCE AN ENSLAVED PERSON IS SET FREE,
THEN HEALING COMES. SOMETIMES THAT
JOURNEY IS SLOW,
AS WAS MICHELE'S CASE.
*"MY HEALING WAS DEEP AND BEAUTIFUL,
BUT VERY GRADUAL. "*

MICHELE RICKETT
CEO/FOUNDER
SHE IS SAFE
[HTTPS://SHEISSAFE.ORG/](https://sheissafe.org/)



(CONT.)

As a young Christian, newly married to Daniel, I was befriended by an elderly woman, Anna, in my church. She knew that Jesus could help me gain a new identity, full healing and come to know the love of a perfect, heavenly “Father”.

One of the hardest, best lessons my mentor shared with me was about forgiving those who betrayed and abused me. In a crisis of obedience, I wrote the word “Forgiven” across the face of each list, and threw those documents into a fire.”

The word “freedom” is in the mission statement of SIS. Michele explains why. “As we formed She Is Safe, we began by interviewing women from the Middle East, across Asia and Africa to complete a book, Daughters of Hope, for InterVarsity Press. We learned that there were places where it is common practice to use girls as slaves. In some communities, the entire economy is based on renting out or selling girls for sex and/or labor.”

“Because of what I had suffered as a child, I could feel the longing for freedom each woman or girl expressed. And I knew that it is on God’s heart that His children participate with Him to set captives free. She Is Safe focuses on girls and women in high-risk communities that normalize the abuse and sale of girls: Red light districts, refugee communities and source villages.

These women and girls often live under the control of oppressors and are not free to speak, to go where they choose, to hold their own beliefs, nor to follow their giftings and passions. This lack of freedom makes them completely vulnerable to exploiters. When girls are dehumanized and considered a commodity within a community, they can be abused without anyone being held to account. This godless view of females explains why 99% of all sex slaves are women and girls.

“Freedom in Christ is the most powerful thing that anyone can experience. Victims often revert to what they believe about themselves – that they are unworthy of better treatment. Only Christ can bring to life the new person we are meant to become. We are not worthless. Through His life-changing work in our spirits, we can change, grow and believe what He says about us: that we are brand new, being transformed into His lovely image, completely free from guilt, and endowed with gifts that will glorify Him and bless the world.”

Michele’s experience led to her vision, “She Is Safe envisions every at-risk girl free and equipped to become the person God created her to be.” Learn more about Michele’s journey at <https://sheissafe.org/the-she-is-safe-story/>

Ahsha Morin, President, The Red Cord

JULY BLOG: This is what True Freedom Looks Like

Freedom is the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants without hindrance or restraint.

Human trafficking victims live a life that is the opposite of this definition. They may “look free”. Many people will say “I saw her walking around by herself, she could have run away from the situation”. But in reality, they are not free. This is why human trafficking is considered “modern day slavery”. They do not have the freedom, power to act, speak, think, or make choices. The trafficker will use mind control and manipulation to make the victim “think they have a choice”. They may indicate that the victim is free to leave the situation, while in reality they will have to fight for their life to leave. Much of the time it is the lack of mental freedom that really keeps a victim trapped. It is the chains of the brain, not the hands that has the victim in a continual cycle of slavery and control.

Let the Healing Begin

There are several steps that a survivor will go through to heal from a trafficking situation. And though not everyone is the same, or done in a linear fashion, there are some basic steps.

- Get to a safe place.
- Assess immediate needs.
- Assess health issues.

The healing process: Essential to building a strong healing foundation is overriding trauma-related neural pathways that years and years of victimization create. This can look like:

- Weekly trauma counseling serves to help break Stockholm Syndrome-like trauma bonding symptoms, where survivors may unconsciously feel sympathy and support for their trafficker.
- Art and equine therapies help survivors develop needed skills and attributes, such as accountability, responsibility, self-confidence, problem-solving skills, and self-control. In this way, the therapies distance survivors from their traffickers by showing how they are their own person and have inherent value.
- Boundary and self-defense classes permit further confidence growth and increased self-worth.
- Learning and Implementing Life skills: (CONT.)



Ahsha Morin

JULY Blog – CONT.

- establish healthy life rhythms, such as waking up and going to sleep at the same time, beginning to exercise, and doing their own grocery shopping.
- accessing identification (as most survivors' identifications have been taken by their trafficker in order to keep them from escaping);
- learning how to be responsible with money (budgeting and getting a bank account);
- furthering education (getting a GED or even beginning college);
- getting healthcare (dental and medical).
- search for other housing and gainful employment, both of which are significantly more difficult to access than they may seem.

(Source - <https://fightthenewdrug.org/what-happens-to-sex-trafficking-survivors-after-theyre-rescued/>)

Let the Healing Continue

In some cases, it may take 6-7 attempts to exit “the Life” before a permanent exit occurs. This happens for the same reason it takes multiple exits for domestic violence victims – the emotional bond to the trafficker. Sometimes they become frozen in their thought process. They understand the dysfunctional place they were in, and they know how to navigate that, but when they come out of “the Life”, they don’t understand how to maneuver the outside world. It’s supposed to be safe. It’s supposed to be predictable. But when it becomes unpredictable, they get scared and retreat into a world that they know how to maneuver. Mental health must be the foundation to help build survivors towards their healing process and keep them from returning to their trafficker. Unfortunately, in the USA, we are still struggling with having enough housing and resources in each community to help sustain the exit process for survivors. Lack of resources is a big issue to keep someone from returning to “the life.”

Free Forever

For me, being free in Christ means that Jesus is the Lord of my life and that, thanks to his work in me, sin does not control my actions any longer. This is the reality of those of us who are children of God! From the moment we allow Jesus to reign in our lives, to fill us with his presence and transform us, he gives us the strength to obey him. With His help we say no to sin and yes to God’s will. We stop being slaves to sin and move on to live the full life that God wants for us.



Coming in July

Monday, JULY 18 -- Monthly Community Training, 6:30 – 8:00 pm; Fort Sill Federal Credit Union 1614 NW 67th St, Lawton, OK 73505

Saturday, JULY 30 -- World Day Against Trafficking In Persons. Learn more: (<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/endht/index.html>)

Gala Info:

- Purchase your tickets NOW for \$25 each. Price will increase to \$30 each on August 1st. <https://theredcord.org/upcoming/>
- Donate to our Gala Silent Auction. The money raised will support The Red Cord with awareness events and materials for Southwest Oklahoma as well as support facilities throughout Oklahoma that provide for victims from Oklahoma.

Silent Auctions items you may consider are gift cards, services, or products from your business. For more information and a donation form, contact us: redcord@theredcord.org