

On behalf of Florida Abolitionist, Inc. (FA), a special thanks to Chairman John Thune, Ranking Senator Bill Nelson, and all the members of the committee for the invitation to this informational hearing. Unfortunately, the horrific crime of human trafficking also known as modern-day slavery is evident in each of our communities. Only through the partnerships and collaboration of governmental, non-governmental organizations, faith communities and the private sector can we adequately and efficiently address this issue.

It was 13 years ago this week that former U.S. Senator Sam Brownback of Kansas introduced me to the issue of human trafficking while presenting the Trafficking In Persons 2004 report to his staff. Upon my return to Central Florida I began to research what was occurring in my state pertaining to awareness, advocacy, prevention, prosecution and who were the stakeholders in my own backyard. What I discovered was that Florida had one of the first successful prosecutions, 'The United States vs. Tecum'. This was a historic case and the survivor was the first recipient of the T-visa in the United States. Since then dozens of cases of both sex, labor and domestic servitude have been successfully prosecuted in our state.

In 2005, I facilitated the first human trafficking seminar in Brevard County, FL. where over 100+ individuals and organizations attended. An outcome of this seminar was the formation of the Space Coast Human Trafficking Task Force. (Formerly the Space Coast Rescue & Restore Coalition).

Upon moving to Orlando in 2006 there was a need to begin organizing key stakeholders in the fight against human trafficking. As a victim advocate I partnered with the Orlando Metropolitan Bureau of Investigation and began specialized advocacy upon the recovery and/or identification of victims. This was the beginnings of creating a 24/7 human trafficking hotline that my agency staffs and the key partnership with the National Human Trafficking hotline through the Polaris Project.

In 2007, I cofounded the Orlando Rescue and Restore Coalition to network law enforcement, civic groups, service providers, educational entities and community/faith based agencies to work together to create a safety net and make preparations as victims are identified, rescued and restored in Greater Orlando region.



Florida Abolitionist

PO Box 536832
Orlando, FL 32853
407-495-5846 – office
407-504-1319 - hotline
www.FloridaAbolitionist.org

Board of Directors

Dr. Anthony Davis
Chairman

Dr. Richard Lapchick
Vice Chairman

Suzanne Burgess
Treasurer

Commissioner Pete Clarke
Secretary

Amy Smith
Survivor Advocate

Dick Batchelor
Director

Judge Wilfredo Martinez
Director

Commissioner Tony Ortiz
Director

Executive Director
Tomas J. Lares



In January of 2009 a small group of abolitionists facilitated the first Human Trafficking Awareness march in downtown Orlando at the famous Lake Eola park. Preparations are being made to celebrate the 10th Annual Human Trafficking Awareness Day on January 27, 2018. Since that first march tens of thousands of Central Floridian's have been educated and made aware of the issue. This is evident by the number of calls documented by the National Human Trafficking hotline and the calls made to the Florida Department of Children and Families abuse hotline as well.

In 2014, as a result of our collaboration the Orlando Rescue and Restore Coalition was relaunched as the Greater Orlando Human Trafficking Task Force, Inc. whose mission is to provide human-rights based, victim centered community forum and mechanism to combat all aspects of human trafficking in the Greater Orlando area through collaboration and partnerships with key stakeholders. The task force has grown to include dozens of members, subcommittees, working groups and a multitude of community volunteers. This is the power of collaboration that makes our community stronger, advocates for the most vulnerable and works along side our law enforcement and first responders.

At Florida Abolitionist, Inc. our mission is to end modern-day human slavery. We accomplish our mission by networking and facilitating preventative and restorative solutions. We believe that awareness and education is vital to inform and equip students, parents, administrators and teachers in our communities. We are also committed to the restoration of victims and/or survivors whether they are male, female, foreign born, domestic, sex or labor trafficking victims.

Throughout all these years of advocacy I believe more than ever the African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child." This is also true if we are going to be true abolitionists in the 21 Century as we stand together declaring, 'Not On Our Watch'.

Florida Abolitionist

PO Box 536832

Orlando, FL 32853

407-495-5846

www.FloridaAbolitionist.org

Board of Directors

Dr. Anthony Davis

Chairman

Dr. Richard Lapchick

Vice Chairman

Suzanne Burgess

Treasurer

Commissioner Pete Clarke

Secretary

Amy Smith

Survivor Advocate

Dick Batchelor

Director

Judge Wilfredo Martinez

Director

Commissioner Tony Ortiz

Director

Executive Director

Tomas J. Lares