Metro Students Raise Human Trafficking Awareness In Nigeria

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Human trafficking destroys lives across the globe. From Nigeria to Brooklyn Park, the vulnerable are exploited for their money, labor and bodies. One student at Metropolitan State University is using her story to illustrate that fact and help those at risk. Her name is Bukola Oriola and she is founder of a local non-profit called The Enitan Story. She will be touring six universities in Nigeria to raise awareness about the dangers of human trafficking. The tour is called “Bringing the Story Back Home,” and it will run from Sept. 10-Sept. 20, 2015.

Oriola is not only the founder of The Enitan Story, she is also a survivor of human trafficking. She was raised in Nigeria, but fell victim to human trafficking while living in the north Metro area. She said her experience inspired this tour. “Since I stepped out in 2007, from the first day I stepped out at Winnona State University to tell my story, the question I got was ‘What are you doing to bring your story back to your home country?’” she said. “I’ve been thinking about taking this back to Nigeria, and I’ve been planning it for three years. I’m glad it’s becoming a reality.”

“Bringing the Story Back Home” will be The Enitan Story’s first trip to Nigeria. While on this tour, Oriola will teach college-aged Nigerians about the risks of traveling abroad and about human trafficking in general. Oriola said many people in Nigeria dream of travelling abroad to find a better life. While the potential to flourish in another country exists, international travel can increase the risk of victimization. She said traffickers will often lure victims with promises of employment, education or love. She does not want to discourage the youth from travel or success, but, rather, she wants to equip them with the tools to protect themselves. “I believe education is the key to prevention,” she said.

The decision to focus on college students was deliberate. “The reason I have chosen this audience is that they are the youth and they are armor bearers in the community,” she said in a press release. “They form the perfect niche to spread the message to the younger generation and also leverage it to the older folks in the community.”

Oriola will visit six institutions of higher learning over a ten-day period. At each school, there will be events and speeches teaching the students about the dangers of human trafficking, ways to prevent it, and ways protect themselves.

During the tour’s finale, Oriola will premiere a documentary produced by The Office for Victims of Crime called “The Faces of Human Trafficking.” She will also be giving away copies of her book, “Imprisoned: The Travails of a Trafficked Victim.”

Three other survivors of human trafficking will be featured alongside Oriola on a survivor panel. The other panel members will be Shandra Woworuntu, Harold D’Souza and Evelyn Chumbow. They are a diverse group of both women and men, all of whom were born in different countries and subjected to different forms of human trafficking. However, they share a common thread: all of these survivors were originally victimized in the United States. Oriola said the mix of individuals will show that human trafficking is not bound by national lines or a potential destination.

The tour will also aim to increase the Nigerian knowledge of human trafficking that occurs within its own borders. Sex trafficking, labor trafficking (particularly in children) and organ trafficking were issues Oriola mentioned. The State Department’s 2014 Trafficking in Persons report found Nigeria to be both a source and destination for victims of human trafficking. It reported women and girls being forced into domestic servitude and forced prostitution, and boys and men forced into labor ranging from mining or begging to the use of child soldiers by Boko Haram.

Oriola will be working with the U.S. Consulate and the National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) on the tour. NAPTIP is the Nigerian police force dedicated to fighting human trafficking. NAPTIP has founded school clubs where the youth can discuss human trafficking. Oriola said she hopes to incorporate these clubs into the tour. Likewise, they will be looking for other opportunities to partner and increase Nigerian awareness.

While this will be the first tour The Enitan Story has taken in Nigeria, Oriola plans on making these advocacy tours a regular event. This year, the tour’s focus is awareness, but that will change for the next visit. She plans to use evaluation methods to see how much the students have absorbed her message. Moreover, the evaluations will be used to gauge student interest in this line of work. In future years, she said she will look for changing behaviors in Nigerian college and university students.

Nigerian college and university students are required to complete “National Youth Corp Service” as part of their education, according to Oriola. The final piece to that service is a community project. Oriola hopes graduates will begin grassroots prevention projects as part of their service.

The Enitan Story, founded by Oriola, is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization. Its mission is to advocate for victims of human trafficking and empower survivors. For just over a year, The Enitan Story has been referring victims and survivors towards social and psychological services, providing educational outreach programs, offering support to survivors and maintaining a community garden. The organization produces a public access television show called “Imprisoned Show,” which was recognized by the Obama administration for its work last year. In 2015, the organization started a program that teaches sewing to low-income survivors of human trafficking as a means toward economic and psychological empowerment.

To donate or learn more about “Bringing the Story Back Home,” visit bukolaoriola.com/bringingthestorybackhome/.

To learn more about The Enitan Story, visit enitan.org.

Sidebar:

What is Human Trafficking?

* The United Nations broadly defines human trafficking as the “acquisition of people by improper means such as force, fraud, or deception, with the aim of exploiting them.”
* The forms of exploitation that victims are subject to include forced prostitution, forced labor, forced criminality and debt bondage. Illegal organ trafficking is also an issue. Child soldiers are considered victims of human trafficking.
* Human trafficking is often confused with human smuggling, a different crime that can sometimes be connected with human trafficking.

By the Numbers:

* The International Labor Organization estimates that 20.9 million people are trafficked annually.
* According to estimates by The Polaris Project, there are more people enslaved today than at the peak of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade.
* The Polaris Project estimates that there are several hundred thousand victims of human trafficking in the United States and that 100,000 of them are sexually exploited children.
* In 2014, the National Human Trafficking Resource Center hotline received 21,431 calls and 1,279 text messages from victims in all 50 states.
* In 2003, the Federal Bureau of Investigation identified Minneapolis as one of 13 cities with a large concentration of child prostitution enterprises.
* A 2008 Wilder Foundation study found that 14-20 percent of homeless youth in Minnesota have engaged in survival sex or prostitution.
* Forty-four percent of homeless lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) youth have been approached for prostitution, and 19 percent have engaged in survival sex.

Photo Caption:

First picture: Kevin Human trafficking article.jpg

Bukola Oriola is founder of The Entian Story, a non-profit that advocates for victims of human trafficking and empowers survivors.

Photo Credit: ?

Second Picture: Kevin Human trafficking article 2.jpg

Oriola on the set of Imprisoned Show, The Enitan Story’s public access television show that promotes awareness on human trafficking.

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