

A Passionate Practice

Addressing the Needs of Commercially Sexually Exploited Teenagers

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This article draws practice expertise from three women who work with an underserved group of victims of human trafficking—teenagers who have been commercially sexually exploited. The women share what they have learned about working with these girls, the similarities between this field and the early days of work in domestic violence, and the importance of empowering these girls to be part of turning their lives around.

Keywords: *child prostitutes; commercial sexual exploitation; domestic victims of human trafficking; human trafficking*

A new group of clients is challenging social workers, law enforcement personnel, and victim service practitioners to develop appropriate responses and services. One of the challenges is whether to refer to these clients as “victims.” Is the term demeaning and one to be avoided, as has been argued in feminist theory, which refers to clients as “survivors” of domestic violence? Or is it necessary to refer to them as “victims,” as some advocates argue? These advocates believe that viewing these clients as victims is critical to mobilizing an appropriate response from the criminal justice and social services systems.

These clients are sometimes referred to as victims of commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) or as domestic minor victims of human trafficking. One disturbing reality is that many of these victims have been in our systems before as victims of child abuse, domestic violence, or sexual assault. Their current victimization, being sold for sex, is considered the most profitable organized crime enterprise after drug and weapons trafficking.

I came across these women and girls through my work at the Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse (IDVSA), a program within the School of Social Work at the University of Texas at Austin. Under the direction of Principal Investigator Noël Busch-Armendariz, IDVSA has established a strong body of research in the area of human trafficking. Throughout various projects, it became clear that while there is a growing focus on human trafficking, there is still a dearth of appropriate services for survivors. As in the past, when serving victims of domestic violence or sexual assault required developing the road map, today’s solutions are being forged by people who are drawn to this work with a passion to help and an ability to rally scarce resources to create something that works.

In this article, you will meet three women who are doing just that. In my interviews with them, each described her work as more of a calling than a career. Although the women come from different perspectives, all share a passion for this work and a willingness to pass on what they have learned. Lisa Goldblatt Grace (interviewed on October 6, 2008) is a licensed independent clinical social worker and codirector of My Life, My Choice, a program within the Home for Little Wanderers in Boston. Rachel Lloyd (interviewed on October 15, 2008) is the founder and executive director of Girls Educational & Mentoring Services (GEMS), the only organization in New York that is specifically designed to serve

girls and young women who have experienced CSE and domestic trafficking. Libby Spears (interviewed on October 16, 2008) is a documentary filmmaker and founder of the Nest Foundation, a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to raise an awareness of the CSE of children around the world, including those born in the United States.

As I asked each of them similar questions in telephone interviews, common themes emerged. I was fascinated by the familiar interplay among components that we know are critical to serving victims: understanding the victimology, multidisciplinary collaborations, and the need to educate the community in general about these victims. I was struck by how similar this process is to the one that the field engaged in to serve victims of domestic violence (just as we saw in the early days of work in domestic violence, this story has its own kitchen table!) The starting point was similar for each of the women: what happened to one girl was the catalyst for getting them involved. In Rachel Lloyd's case, it was her own story.

A Passionate Practice: Interviews

Kalergis (Interviewer): How did you get into this work of helping girls who were commercially sexually exploited?

Rachel Lloyd: I am originally from England and was a victim of child sexual exploitation in Germany. I was 22 and had been out of the life 3 years when I came to the States in 1997 to do missionary work with women who were in the commercial sex industry.

I began to see 10-year-old girls whom the older women would send my way and say, "She's 15, and she needs help. I'm 44, and it's too late to help me; you should go talk to her." I would see these girls being sent to Riker's Island in New York, the largest penal institution in the country. New York is one of a few states that still put children under age 18 in adult correctional facilities. Kids would get arrested and be put in there, and when I talked with them, it was obvious that they were trafficked.

I started to feel a much stronger connection with the younger girls who had literally fallen through the cracks, people not knowing what to do with them. So I started GEMS in 1999. It started from my kitchen table. Young girls would stay at my house, sleep on my couch. It was a grassroots operation with no funding. We hired our first staff in 2001, and now we have 19 staff members, which is kind of crazy. When I decided to start GEMS, I had no idea it would consume the next 10 years of my life.

Lisa Goldblatt Grace: In 2001, a young woman named Latasha was living in a group home funded by the Department of Children and Families (DCF), the child protective services (CPS) department in Boston. She was 17. Unbeknownst to any of the group home staff or her DCF worker or the family in her life, she had a pimp and was being exploited through prostitution.

And she was murdered. She was found in a parking lot. The wisdom is that she was likely killed by her pimp. At that time, a lot of people in the Boston area came together to ask, "Was this an isolated incident, or was this the tip of the iceberg?" We quickly found out that it was the tip of the iceberg. Latasha's death brought together divergent folks to look at this issue: child protective services workers, juvenile justice people, community-based nonprofit organizations like mine, survivors, law enforcement personnel, and the courts.

The agency I work for, the Home for Little Wanderers, which is the oldest child welfare agency in the country, was at the table at the beginning. The agency received some money from the CPS department to start some initiative to look at prevention. The question was,

Could we put together a curriculum that would be aimed at preventing sexual exploitation in the most vulnerable girls and base it on evidence-based practice? Not just make up fun activities, but take what we know and have learned from the public health perspective, the violence-prevention movement, and the teenage pregnancy-prevention movement and integrate it all into an exploitation-prevention curriculum.

Another piece of the project was to look at what was clearly missing in Latasha's death, and that was to have the staff at the group home or the CPS worker know the signs that a girl is being exploited and then know how to respond to her once they realize that she is. In hindsight, we have this list of red flags, and Latasha had all of them. If folks had known what to look for, they would have been able to say, "Something's going on with her. This is what I think it is; let's talk about it directly and see if we can get her help."

So the project was launched as an initiative aimed at prevention, identification of victims, and early intervention with sexually exploited youths, and that is what I was hired to do. It became clear that there was a level of urgency around the work. It was a moment in time when there was actually funding, there was some attention. I said, "This is what I need to be doing right now, and we need to reach as many providers as possible."

Filmmaker Libby Spears was exposed to the child sex industry while working on a film in Southeast Asia. Following leads about children being trafficked into the United States, Libby returned to the United States. As she followed the story in and around cities and small towns, Libby realized that this global problem not only had universal roots, it also had local ones. She decided to narrow the focus of her film, called *Playground*, to American-born children who are trafficked and sold for sex within the United States. "Michelle" is one of the girls whose story is part of *Playground*. The day that I called Libby, she had just gotten off the phone with Michelle.

Libby Spears: Michelle's mother prostituted her when Michelle was 5 years old, and there was a continuum of abuse throughout her entire childhood. Now she's 19, and she just got out of jail. It was hard enough before when she was 5, and no one helped her in a way that was sustainable. Now she's 19, and, as an adult, there's really nothing for her.

Michelle's life is not just a pattern, but a continuum, of never getting a break, not having an opportunity to get out. All the things she needs she's never gotten—a mentor, a job, emotional support, and therapy for what happened to her.

Now that she's out of jail, she's been given telephone numbers to call to go to classes, and half the numbers they gave her don't work any more. She has no money, no transportation to the places she needs to go. If you're a 19-year-old woman, just out of jail with no place to sleep, no money, no job, and no skills, what are you going to do? She's so bright, but she's slipping right back where she left off.

It's this vicious cycle. Most of the girls I interviewed (for *Playground*) were wards of the state. I'd say 90% of them. And many of them were sexually exploited when they were young, like Michelle, and somehow they did not get services to help them then.

This problem is just getting worse. It's risen to the next level of sexual exploitation. It starts with sexual abuse at home, and now it's ratcheting up to where the girls are being sexually exploited on the streets of America. These girls are so overlooked. It's happening to so many girls, and it's a horrible thing and no one sees it or wants to see it. I hope that by telling the story of girls like Michelle in the film, I can give them a voice.

Kalergis: A lot of what you do is create awareness of the issue of CSE youths. What challenges do you see in identifying them as victims, when many of them were engaged in prostitution?

Lisa Goldblatt Grace: In terms of your writing, be careful about language. We never refer to kids as child prostitutes or teenage prostitutes because the image that comes to mind for folks when they read that is really specific, there's a visual they get . . .

Kalergis: I see Jodie Foster in *Taxi Driver* . . .

Lisa Goldblatt Grace: Right, which is very different from what you get when you use the term *commercially sexually exploited child*. People talk about CSEC victims or exploited girls, or you could even say prostituted girls. Language is really important. It's not a "PC" thing. It is about shifting the way people see this issue and helping them understand that it is something that happens to a young person. It is a form of abuse, and it doesn't define who a girl is.

The thing to challenge your readers to think about is that there is nowhere in this country that a 14- or 15-year-old girl is allowed to consent to have sex with her boyfriend. You could have a 14-year-old who is head over heels in love with an 18-year-old, and regardless of that, as a society we say, "You are just not old enough to consent to sex." However, if the same 14-year-old has sex with a 40-year-old and he gives her money, she is a criminal. She has consented, she has made a choice, and therefore she should be punished for her actions.

It is such a clear contradiction and such clear hypocrisy. If we don't believe that she can make a choice about sexuality in a consensual relationship, why do we then say that she is making a choice in what is clearly not consensual or something she would choose? We need to wrestle with that issue from a moral and ethical place as social workers.

Libby Spears: What makes the battle hard is the image of the cute little 5-year-old girl being exploited versus a 12- or 13-year-old girl. People focus on the 5-year-old, and you say, "But I want you to care about the 13-year-old who may have been exploited since she was 5."

And they think 13 is an adult, and they want to focus on the sensational stories, so all you hear is the 5-year-olds, and that's not the majority of CSE youths even on a global scale. Every day 300,000 young teenagers are being exploited in this country.

These aren't cute 5-year-old girls; these are teenagers and not the easiest kids, but they deserve opportunities, too. Michelle was 5 when it first happened, and she still hasn't received the services she needs.

Rachel Lloyd: The average age of entry into commercial sexual exploitation is 12 to 14 years. Some girls started when they are 10 years old, and *they* define that as a choice because that's what they've been told.

Everyone says you made a choice to do this. The pimp tells them. Their families told them. Cops have told them. You made this choice. The system tells them it was a choice by arresting them and tossing them into the courts. So I ask people, "Where were you when you were 11?" "What was happening at home?" and what is actually on the table, "Are you the same person you were at 11?"

You see lights go on, and the girls begin to recognize, "I was systemically recruited. The man who came after me knew exactly what he was doing. It was not a chance encounter; he was purposefully looking to sell me." Then they come to, "I am not inherently bad," which is so critical for these girls to see what was done to them by adults.

The challenge is, if I think of you as a prostitute and I call you a prostitute, you begin to take that on yourself. That stigma and the sense of shame and the level of disgust about who you are are so strong. You feel like you don't have any ability to move forward from who you are. You're bad and dirty, and you're always going to be bad and dirty, so you may as well stay with people who accept you as bad and dirty, and that's your pimp. If you look at this as something that happened to you, that a man took advantage of you, and you did not

have a choice, by removing that facade of choice, you actually give young people the choice back.

Kalgis: The word *choice* seems to come into play a lot.

Rachel Lloyd: A choice for young people is different from a choice for adults. We talk about it in terms of empowerment versus rescuing. If you frame it as “rescuing” them from trafficking, it’s sensational, but “empowering” them is better in terms of helping them heal and be a part of that healing. They found their strength, and that’s where their choice comes in.

Lisa Goldblatt Grace: The name of our program in Boston is My Life, My Choice. These girls have not had the opportunity to make a choice yet, and the idea of trying to claim your body, your life, your soul, back from people who’ve taken it, because they have not had a choice yet.

Kalgis: I told Rachel about Lisa’s earlier comments about the words I use, noting that I want to be sure that the article stresses the importance of language.

Rachel Lloyd: It’s huge. We talk to the field a lot about all the reasons why language makes a difference. There is a different perception in the media and to survivors themselves. At GEMS, girls know that we don’t use the “P” word ever. We just don’t say it. It’s freeing to the girls.

I facilitate a weekly recovery group with girls who are still kind of in the life. We did a group last week around the concept of being a trafficking victim. For these girls, it was the first time they’d ever heard that. No one had ever broken it down in that way, so to be able to see themselves as victims is actually really an important step in being able to move forward and not feel like a victim anymore. That’s why we push so hard to change the language because the words *child prostitute* or *teenage prostitute* tend to define who they are as opposed to a victim of CSE or of human trafficking as something that happened to you that does not have to define you for the rest of your life.

At GEMS, we talk about “leadership” not “treatment.” We engage survivors as leaders in helping other girls. By getting girls to understand as they tell their stories, they get insights into what happened to them. That understanding is critical in providing a framework. In our leadership program, we talk about the billion-dollar industry that is trafficking them, what puts young people at risk and the political factors that go into that, how race plays a role, how class plays a role, how poverty plays a role, and how systems interact.

We literally see girls walk away from that saying, “It is a billion-dollar industry. I was trafficked for these reasons. I have a place where my frustration and anger go. I recognize why the Johns are not arrested and I am, and I can make a choice to change.”

Kalgis: What advice do you have for practitioners on how to work with these girls?

Rachel Lloyd: Apply lessons we’ve learned from other populations. One of my challenges is that the field has become so victim focused and that it does not look at this situation through the lens of this is a young person who has the same needs and deserves the same opportunity for development as another young person.

Yes, we need that victim context, but doing youth development around recovery is the big challenge. These girls need job skills, need to know how to have a positive relationship, need to have the same opportunity for adult leadership like other youths, for talking to a crowd, and how do you foster these opportunities? Sometimes we forget that the same lessons apply to this population as well. If we view them only through a victim paradigm, we don’t get the opportunity to help them grow as young people.

Kalgis: It seems similar to some transitions that we went through developing services for domestic violence clients. Practitioners thought that they failed if a battered woman

went back to her abusive husband. We didn't fully understand the complexity of the relationship with the batterer.

Rachel Lloyd: That's a really important point. This field is where the domestic violence movement was so many years ago. Folks haven't quite made the shift yet that was made in that movement. If we continue to talk about these girls as child prostitutes, rather than commercially sexually exploited youths, we've missed the boat.

We'd never say to a domestic violence victim, "Why don't you leave?" It's not acceptable to say that like it was 27 years ago. There are lots of reasons why someone may choose to remain in an abusive relationship. These women have their reasons for going back, yet we feel like these victims are resistant and difficult to help. Our approach could be different—to engage them in a way that's conducive to where they are. The trauma bond with their abusers is so strong. It's going to take a lot more work to break it.

Practitioners have to be incredibly patient with the level of trauma that these girls have experienced and understand why going back may sometimes seem like a real option for them and understand that it's part of the process, or you'll become extremely frustrated and get burned out quickly.

You need to be realistic upfront about what you can and cannot provide. Be frank about that. You have to be really genuine. Young people, particularly teenagers, can see quickly how genuine you are and how much you are going to keep it real, how consistent you're going to be.

If you are in the field, you have to realize that this work goes beyond usual 9 to 5 boundaries. These girls are out working at night and in the early morning hours, so a call may come at 2 o'clock in the morning, and you need to be available to provide real support, real service.

Lisa Goldblatt Grace: The other hard part is that these are not victims who are likely to come forward and say, "I'm a victim, please help me." That happens sometimes, but what happens so much more often is that these are victims who, when they are approached, say, "Don't worry about me, I am fine, I'm happy, I chose this; this is what I want."

Understanding that reaction means understanding the impact of trauma and the Stockholm syndrome and how they set girls up not to ask for help. It also speaks to the intensity of denial that you need to turn 10–20 tricks a night, over and over again. You just have to do that or else it's like the human psyche cannot handle it, to have to integrate what is really happening and the level of degradation, the level of violence.

We know that somewhere between 68% and 95% of girls and women in the life have been sexually abused as children, specifically the vast majority through incest. It has been said that incest is boot camp for prostitution.

If you think about the lessons that kids, especially girls, learn who have been victims of sexual abuse, it's the same lessons that the pimps want to teach them. So if they are halfway there, three quarters of the way there, they are easy targets.

For many children who have been sexually abused, the lesson is that they are valued only for sex—"that's who I am, that's what I am valued for"—to know that you are not in control of your own body; it's the thing adults control. You learn how to keep secrets and to know that there is no one who can protect you.

Pimps actively look for girls with that kind of orientation. It is a much easier sell once a pimp has gotten a girl to fall in love with him, which is the normal pattern, and says, "Can you do this for me?" and "Think of what we can have together if you do." It's not such a leap for her to say, "Well, that's what I have to do now." It kind of makes sense to her. Practitioners need to understand that.

Kalergis: Your efforts seem to benefit from having survivors themselves involved.

Rachel Lloyd: There is definitely a real need for people who are not survivors to be in this work. It is not just limited to survivors, but those of us who are survivors have a personal connection to this issue. There is the outward layer of really needing to do it to help others in the life. It does not pay well, and it is difficult and challenging work, but it is incredibly rewarding. Obviously, as a survivor, I can cut through the B.S. rather quickly! As we develop leadership at GEMS, because I've been down that road as a young leader-survivor, you have a little bit of a road map that I did not necessarily have.

I can talk to a girl about how much of her story she wants to share. She doesn't have to share it all. How do you deal with the media about this stuff when it begins to feel like you're being exploited again, and how do you make sure you protect yourself and heal yourself and at the same time still be a good advocate?

It's important for young women to see people who have had those experiences be in a different place in their lives. So I make a big deal about finishing school and getting a degree and make sure a girl knows that she can do it, that it is possible. The message is, "You don't have to be defined by things that happened to you."

Lisa Goldblatt Grace: When we sat down to do the curriculum project, I worked with a survivor named Denise Williams, an amazing woman. We wrote that curriculum together and quickly found we were a good team.

Denise had been in the life from the time she was 13 to her early 30s. She brought a wealth of personal experience plus the experience of all the women she'd come in contact with across the country because she had been trafficked back and forth.

My role was to synthesize these experiences with prevailing research nationally, which there wasn't much of 6 years ago, and what we learned through other kinds of public health issues. When it came time to start doing groups with adolescent girls, it made sense that she and I would do it together. The field has really grown over the past 6 years, and we just finished the third revision of the curriculum, so it is a work in progress.

Survivors are still a part of the program. I am the program director, and my assistant director is another survivor, Audrey Porter (Denise stepped away from the work). One service we offer now is that when a young person is identified, we can offer a survivor as a mentor, someone who provides initial support at the time of crisis. This connection increases the likelihood that the girl will use other services. The survivor will meet her in court or the hospital and say, "I've been here, you can do this, you'll get through this, and I'll help you."

Kalergis: How did you draw on best-practice knowledge from the field for prevention groups and training of providers?

Lisa Goldblatt Grace: Since my degrees are in social work and public health, I looked at what we know we need to do to make significant behavioral changes: We need to influence attitudes, knowledge, and skills. Even from a primary prevention standpoint, if you want to inoculate a young person or, as the police call it, "target hardening," so she will not be exploited, you need to do that. So each session of the curriculum that we developed makes sure that you're hitting all these points.

In terms of attitude, the shift you want to make is to get young people to go from seeing prostitution as glamorous or exciting to really understanding that it is debilitating and degrading. There is no glamour in the life. To make that attitude shift required that the curriculum be pretty raw and use lots of authentic testimony, so the model is every group is cofacilitated as much as possible by a survivor and a clinician. The social worker's role

is to bring clinical insights and knowledge, assess suicidal ideation, and the like, and the survivor's role is to keep it authentic, which is really important.

In terms of knowledge, we wanted girls to know real specifically what recruitment looks like, to really understand it. Pimps use the same tactics over and over again across the country. It's amazing. I did interviews around the country and was amazed that people told the same stories in San Diego, as they did here in Boston; little of even the language was changed.

We want girls to know how calculated it was, how specific it was, what the lines looked like, so the next time they were on the run at a bus stop and a guy approached them and said, "xyz," or they got an e-mail message that said "Saw your My Space page, and you're so beautiful. I think you could be a model, come over, and I'll take pictures." Whatever it was, we wanted the girls to say, "Wait a minute, I heard this before."

In terms of skills, we wanted to focus on developing the girls' ability to avoid exploitation—knowing what to do if someone is trying to recruit you, how to respond, knowing where to find help in your community to prevent, both yourself and people you care about, from getting in.

We want a young woman to have the skills to know that a line is really just a line so that she doesn't fall in love, follow him to his "studio," or take that road trip with him. It is about him no longer seeming like this great guy she just met, but knowing in her gut that he is a predator, based on what she learned. We know it won't work all the time, but we feel confident that it is a protective factor for girls who are very much at risk.

So unlike women survivors in their 40s who've been in the life for 14, 15, or 16 years, we wanted to shorten that time, so if a girl did get pulled in, she would be able to get herself out in a shorter period because she'd know where to go. If the girls found themselves out there, they'd know what a "path out" looks like, a way to leave the life.

The curriculum includes an awareness segment to increase understanding of the issue in all its complexity and what's the best response for providers, which varies if the audience is law enforcement personnel or CPS workers. We also did a partnership with the local trauma center and took the center's expertise on trauma and its impact and our expertise on these girls and did something together on trauma-informed care. We also do a "Train the Trainers" session on how to use the curriculum.

Kalergis: Why do you keep doing this work? What makes you hopeful? What are the rewards? What's in this for you?

Lisa Goldblatt Grace: For the past 20 years, my focus has been on adolescent girls and girls' sexuality. I did a lot of work with teenage moms, with girls who have been arrested as juvenile offenders. I loved all that work. This feels like a natural other piece of it, and there is a sense of urgency, a feeling that I am at the right place at the right time. I am privileged to work with these incredibly strong, thoughtful, funny, smart women and survivors, and I love being in a room with adolescent girls.

Libby Spears: When we screened *Playground* in Dallas at the national Crimes Against Children Conference last August, the audience was everyone who worked in the field—law enforcement, FBI, social workers. Their response is what makes me hopeful. The field is hungry for information.

I can't tell you how many people came up to me or called or e-mailed me afterward. One woman who had been a social worker for 25 years came up to me crying. She said, "Your generation has to change this. My generation lived with it; we were social workers, and we knew victims who were being trafficked domestically and we could not even talk about

sexual exploitation, much less this, which is a whole different level. We had no tools. We didn't know how to deal with it, either therapeutically or in any other way."

A woman using the film in her class came up to me and said that she'd had about 40 people comment on the film with words like "powerful" and "life-changing," and not mostly women, but men, were moved by it. That makes me hopeful. I had a male police officer come up to me, too, and when you have men come up, that makes me hopeful.

One female vice detective who is profiled in the film told me that some people made fun of her because of her job, saying things like "You work with a bunch of prostitutes," and she'd always correct them and say, "No, I work with young girls who were prostituted." One of her coworkers saw the film and was so moved that he didn't say anything to her for several days. Then he finally came to her and said, "I get it. I am really sorry." He gained some respect for what she did.

Change is happening within the group who will make change because these are people who have first contact. And I am hopeful because we have people like Rachel who work in the field, and people want to know what they can do to help.

Rachel Lloyd: It's hard to pick one example of what makes this work rewarding, what makes me glad I am doing what I am doing. It's like asking a mom which child she is most proud of. Not to be funny, but if I don't get that every single day, I guarantee I get one of those moments at least once a week. Yesterday I got to make a photocopy of one girls' high school diploma. That was a pretty cool moment.

Seeing girls doing outreach is rewarding. Seeing them go out to juvenile detention centers and group homes, actually the same settings they come from, and see them there in leadership roles. I took three girls to the conference in Texas, and they knocked it out of the park. That made me so proud.

Particularly seeing girls as they develop, move past just recounting their stories and being able to give an analysis of the issue, recognizing that with their voice that they have a lot more to say than just their stories. They talk about the morality of this; they have opinions about what works and what doesn't, and they are helping to inform the field and policy on this issue.

One recent reward was the passage of the Safe Harbor for Exploited Children Act in New York. Before, in New York as in many other states, young people could be arrested for acts of prostitution, and while we call them trafficking victims, they don't qualify under the definition of international trafficking. We felt that it was unfair that a 12 year old cannot consent to sex, yet she can be arrested and sent to juvenile detention.

For the past 4 years, GEMS fought to get that legislation changed, and this year, it passed. New York is the first state in the country to have a law that defines these girls as victims in line with the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, the federal legislation focused on international victims.

The real advocacy work around the Safe Harbor for Exploited Children Act was done by girls at GEMS, who trekked to Albany year after year and spoke at legislative hearings. It was a difficult experience for these girls. Their audience was generally male legislators, and the girls told their stories and answered questions like "What was it like to be raped?"

[The day that] the governor signed the bill into law, we were all crying, and it was a big moment for them. It was a big thing for them to realize that their voices were heard. For many of the girls who testified, it will not affect their lives. But they felt that it was important enough for them to put themselves out there for other girls. They helped shape public perceptions in New York about who these girls are and are now fulfilling leadership roles, and it is exciting to know that folks are watching around the country.

All three women were excited about the fact that this article is going to be read by social workers, and they offered these final words.

Rachel Lloyd: My vision for every sexually exploited kid in the state and in the country is that we do our best to equip the people who are coming into contact with them and give them knowledge and skills that they need and begin to think about this issue.

Libby Spears: I hope through the film to be able to bump up awareness about this issue just a notch. If we get to screen *Playground* at a festival in Ohio, for instance, we will reach an audience who would never know about this issue otherwise. I am also going to get out the phone book and call the local university school of social work, police department vice unit, and so forth and talk to them about the issue. It's also about talking to people about extending their services, people who work with runaway teenagers and in other areas where we know there's a crossover.

Lisa Goldblatt Grace: One other goal of the curriculum that we teach and the work itself is that if at the end of 10 weeks, girls are angry about this, we've done our work right. There is so much to be angry about: the fact that this is a multi-billion-dollar industry that's set up to exploit these kids, the fact that there are men out there who buy kids and get a slap on the wrist at best. I want the girls to be outraged, and I want them to be fired up to do something about it, and that I get to play a role in the process, either in their prevention or their recovery, seems like a privilege.

The three women who are interviewed agreed to provide their names and additional information for practitioners who would like more information. Their contact information is as follows:

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