

---

## **DOMESTIC CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN GIRLS**

### **WHAT IS DOMESTIC CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING?**

**Domestic Child Sex Trafficking (DCST)**<sup>i</sup> is a form of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) here in the United States. As defined in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, it is the “recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, soliciting or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act” where the victim is a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident under the age of 18.<sup>ii</sup>

### **RISK FACTORS**

Childhood trauma and instability make children more vulnerable to being trafficked. Risk factors for domestic child sex trafficking include, but are not limited to<sup>iii</sup>:

- Being between the ages of 12 and 14
- Having a history of sexual and physical abuse
- Community and family instability and dislocation
- Poverty
- Being female
- Being a runaway or homeless youth
- History of child protective services and/or foster care involvement

### **AFRICAN-AMERICAN GIRLS ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY AT-RISK**

African-American girls are more likely to experience the risk factors listed above. Studies report that African-American girls become trafficked at younger ages than their racial counterparts.<sup>iv</sup> They are more likely to experience poverty, and consequently more likely to be disconnected from schools and other community supports.<sup>v</sup> African-American girls experience physical and sexual abuse at young ages<sup>vi</sup> and witness and experience multiple forms of violence at higher rates than their white peers<sup>vii</sup>. In 2012, 26% of children in the foster care system were African-American.<sup>viii</sup>

### **THE MAJORITY OF VICTIMS OF DCST ARE AFRICAN-AMERICAN GIRLS**

According to the FBI, African-American children comprise 52% of all juvenile prostitution arrests—more than any other racial group.<sup>ix</sup> In a two-year review of all suspected human trafficking incidents, 40% of victims of sex trafficking were African-American.<sup>x</sup> In Los Angeles County, 92% of girls in the juvenile justice system identified as trafficking victims were African-American. Sixty-two percent of those children were from the child-welfare system and 84% were from poor communities in the southeastern part of LA County.<sup>xi</sup> In Alameda County, California, 66% of all youth referred to a community agency exclusively serving CSEC were African-American.<sup>xii</sup>

### **CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES CANNOT INTERVENE**

Because children are not always trafficked by a family member or legal guardian, child protective services (CPS) cannot always respond to reports of child sex trafficking. Without CPS as a resource, and in the absence of formal protocols mandating a child welfare response to child sex trafficking, law enforcement officers often respond by arresting child victims for prostitution. African-American victims of domestic minor sex trafficking are much more likely to be arrested on prostitution charges<sup>xiii</sup>, leaving them more vulnerable to re-traumatization in the juvenile and criminal justice systems, subject to the consequences of having an arrest and juvenile record, and deprived of appropriate intervention and treatment services.

---

<sup>i</sup> Also known as “domestic minor sex trafficking,” “survival sex,” “child prostitution,” & “juvenile prostitution.”

<sup>ii</sup> 22 U.S.C. §§ 7102(9)-(10).

<sup>iii</sup> Kate Walker, California Child Welfare Council, [\*Ending the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: A Call for Multi-System Collaboration in California\*](#) (2013), pp.18-20.

<sup>iv</sup> Lisa Goldblatt Grace & Francine T. Sherman, *The System Response to the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Girls*, in [\*Juvenile Justice: Advancing Research Policy, and Practice\*](#), 336 (Francine T. Sherman & Francine H. Jacobs eds., 2011).

<sup>v</sup> Lauren Frohlich, Janel George, Fatima Goss Graves, Lara S. Kaufmann, & Leticia Smith-Evans, NAACP Legal Defense Fund & National Women’s Law Center, [\*Unlocking Opportunity for African American Girls: A Call to Action for Educational Equity\*](#) (2014), p.7.

<sup>vi</sup> American Bar Association Commission on Domestic and Sexual Violence, [\*Survey of Recent Statistics: Domestic Violence Statistics\*](#) (accessed 2015).

<sup>vii</sup> National Center for Victims of Crime, Action Partnership on Interventions for Black Children Exposed to Violence and Victimization, [\*Black Children Exposed to Violence and Victimization\*](#) (accessed 2015).

<sup>viii</sup> Child Welfare Information Gateway, [\*Foster Care Statistics 2012\*](#).

<sup>ix</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, [\*Crime in the United States 2014\*](#), Table 43B.

<sup>x</sup> Bureau of Justice Statistics, [\*Characteristics of Suspected Human Trafficking Incidents, 2008-2010\*](#) (April 2011).

<sup>xi</sup> Los Angeles Times, “[Campaign to halt sex trafficking launched in L.A. County](#)” (May 31, 2012).

<sup>xii</sup> Kate Walker, California Child Welfare Council, [\*Ending the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: A Call for Multi-System Collaboration in California\*](#) (2013), p.22.

<sup>xiii</sup> David Finkelhor, Kimberly J. Mitchell, & Janis Wolak, Crimes Against Children Research Center, [\*Sex Trafficking Cases Involving Minors\*](#) (November 2013), p.5.