

Learning gives hope

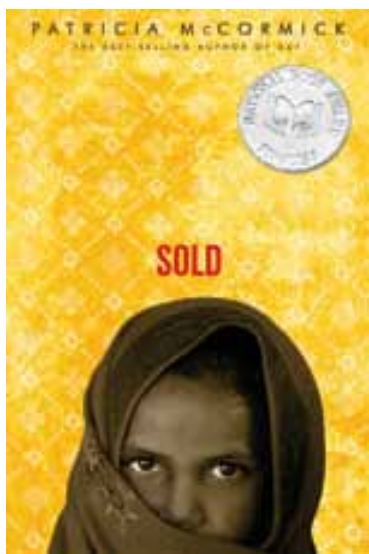
by Heidi Martin

Slavery and human trafficking is an overwhelming subject on many levels. First, it is overwhelmingly sad. The increasing numbers of those trapped in slavery are also overwhelming. There is an overwhelming amount of information on the topic, and we feel overwhelmingly helpless in knowing how to get involved.

One small way to get involved in human trafficking is to become educated on the topic. Allow me to share a few sources that I have found helpful when getting started.

Sold, written by Patricia McCormick, is a National Book Award Finalist. Though a novel, the book is based on fact as McCormick

traveled to both India and Nepal to interview women of Calcutta's red-light district and girls rescued from the brothels. Written in vignettes, the story describes the life of thirteen-year-old Lakshmi who lives in the Himalayan Mountains. She heroically agrees to take a job as a maid to support the family after a monsoon destroys their crops, but Mumtaz is not a wealthy woman in need of a cleaning service. She owns a brothel and Lakshmi must begin work immediately.



Born into Brothels offers a different perspective on human trafficking. The 2004 documentary also takes place in the red-light district of Calcutta, but this film features the children born and raised in the brothel environment.

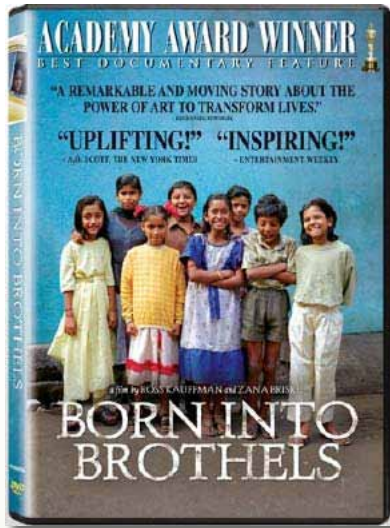
Photographer Zana Briski traveled to the red-light district of India in 1997 and quickly grew attached to the children growing up in the brothels. Wanting to see life through their eyes, Briski gave each child a camera and began teaching a weekly photography course. In time, the children opened up, describing their daily living conditions and chores as well as their dreams of education and escape.



The documentary film highlights eight children who share their stories through a series of interviews. As part of the film, Briski records the difficult journey of securing an education for these children who have few documents or medical records, not to mention the difficulty of their status as outcasts with criminal parents. The film also describes how photography literally changes their lives.

Finally, check out Sisters in Service (SIS). This organization works in the US and overseas to offer restoration and hope to abused and exploited women. They focus on topics such as child marriage, malnutrition, illiteracy, poverty and exploitation. They offer information, training and simple ways to volunteer. Go to www.sistersin-service.org to find out more.

In all these sources, there is still an overwhelming amount of sadness, but gone is the feeling of overwhelming helplessness. It is replaced by an overwhelming amount of inspiration, motivation, encouragement and, most of all, hope. 📷



Stirrings