

NightLight

July 13, 2009

I'm hesitant to share this journal. Stories of miracles and angels are easier to share. The truth is that much of what we do addresses deep seated issues that keep women in bondage. There is always another side that reveals darkness. This journal is a reflective piece on an encounter with two streetwalkers. It is not a feel good story but please read it because it is part of the story. Maybe you will be more confused; maybe you will better understand. Either way, pray, for pain runs as deep as the roots of bondage and change doesn't happen overnight.

Above Selling Tomatoes

The African woman greeted me. The beer she was drinking was hidden in a plastic bag. Her face was glamorous; her hair braided and colored with highlights. Seductive clothing and body language gave her away. Carin slumped and sighed, "My body is tired. I hate this work. I don't f--- for love you know. I don't enjoy any one of them. I'm tired. My body is tired." "So when are you going to quit, Carin?" I asked her.



"I don't have enough money. You know I had to pay the agent \$30,000 (it had gone up from \$22k in the last conversation). I did all that for nothing. Why should I sell my body and give all the money to someone else? Now, I do it for me."

I looked at her sympathetically but I asked, "How much is enough? When is it going to be enough?"

"When I have enough to start a business - \$7000, enough for a small boutique and I can travel and buy things to sell."

"7000? That's a lot for your country. Why don't you start small," I asked her. "Why not start with \$500 and work your way up?"

"500?" She and the other woman got excited. They started gesturing and their voices raised, "500?" "You know what you can do with 500? You can sell tomatoes with 500."

"What's wrong with selling tomatoes? I asked them." Carin looked at me shocked. She looked off to the side with her head high and said, "I am above selling tomatoes."

I smiled at the irony. They continued to explain to me that it would cost \$250 a month to rent a small space for a boutique. "In our country, which you whites call "developing" it would take another 100 years for us to have 20% of what you have in America." They were clearly offended and shaking their heads at my obscene suggestion.

"We have priorities," Tracey said, "When I have a house, a car, and money to travel then you will not see me here on the street. Pray to God for us to get the money we need so we can stop doing this." They felt the need to remind me of a prostitute in the Bible whom God forgave.

"God does forgive," I agreed. "But God also asks us to change our ways when what we are doing is harmful. Money is not going to make you happy. No matter how much you get, it will never be enough. You are suffering for your priorities. Your bodies are suffering; your soul is suffering."

"I'm tired, Carin said. My body is so tired."

"I'm sure it is, Carin. Quit before your body quits on you. I will pray to God to provide what you need and to provide good jobs in your country."

Appraisal of the Streetwalker's Life

The above summarizes an intense discussion with two Ugandan streetwalkers in Bangkok. The assistance we had once offered was not what they wanted though they always asked for prayer. What started as a means of survival has now become a pursuit of the "American Dream." They started penniless, desperate, trafficked, and exploited. Now, before they are used up and tossed aside, they want some benefit to come from all this suffering.

In the movie "Civil Action," a lawyer takes on a lawsuit and ends up losing everything in his pursuit of truth and justice. Empty-handed he appears before his creditors and the judge who says, "After all these years as a lawyer you expect us to believe you have nothing? Where did it all go? You know, all those *things*: the house, the car - the *things* that measure a person's life?"

Carin and Tracey stood there on the curb in Bangkok's red light area, soliciting; selling their tired bodies. "Above selling tomatoes," they were gambling everything they had left in pursuit of their dream. Somehow, somewhere, they caught a glimpse of the "American Dream" and believed the lie that it is the *things* that measure your life. Exploited, used, abused, Carin and Tracey now believe that it will only be in accumulating those *things* that they will be redeemed. If they have those *things*, then their lives will be measured and found to still be of value. Sadly, there is truth in the lie.

You see, if Carin and Tracey go home with nothing after all they have lost, their lives **will** be measured. They **will** be appraised and they **will not** come out above selling tomatoes but as: "**prostitute.**" The thought is unbearable. Deep down they know they are better than that; deep down they are afraid they are just that. Their bodies are tired; the dream is still out of reach. Nevertheless, they pursue it relentlessly because it is not God they are afraid of answering to. They believe God forgives. It is society they fear. Society measures us by the *things* we have then judges those who lose themselves seeking those *things*. No one wants to be measured by society and appraised as nothing but a prostitute.

As long as Carin and Tracey are pursuing the dream they can believe they are above that and above selling tomatoes. If they fail . . . well, they can't risk it. The appraisal of their life hangs in the balance and if the scales of justice tip it won't be in their favor. Unless . . .that is . . .they were to discover the **Truth**.

Thank you for your prayers and support. We have 85 women employed today (4 new ones this month!)and have assisted 13 traffcked victims to date. Sometimes it happens so fast, the miracle is obvious; other times it takes years of reaching out, praying, and loving. We are in it for the long journey because we believe the Truth will set them free. These are challenging days and we ask for your continued support and prayers which encourages us and sustains us in the journey.

Sincerely,

Annie Dieselberg
NightLight

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