

1 in 4 Trafficking Victims Are Children

The Compelling Need to Educate the Children

*Excerpts of remarks by [U.S. Rep. Chris Smith \(R-New Jersey\)](#) USA
Principal Sponsor of Supplementary
Item—"[Educating Schoolchildren to Avoid Human Trafficking](#)"
[OSCEPA Special Representative on Human Trafficking](#)
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Twenty years ago at the 1999 OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in St. Petersburg, Russia, I sponsored the [first human trafficking supplementary resolution](#) designed to encourage all participating states to develop policies to prevent trafficking in all of its ugly manifestations; rescue and protect victims; and prosecute, convict and jail the traffickers.

A year later the U.S. Congress approved and the President signed legislation that I authored—the [Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000](#)—a comprehensive whole-of-government policy to combat these barbaric crimes in the United States and around the world.

Pursuant to that law, on June 20th, U.S. Secretary of State Michael Pompeo released the [2019 Trafficking in Persons \(TIP\) Report](#)—a global analysis and ranking of every country including my own.

Many parliamentarians in this room—working with your colleagues back home—sponsored historic legislation in your country to combat this insidious evil.

You have accomplished amazing things.

Combatting human trafficking is—and will always be—a team effort, requiring cooperation at every level.

As the Parliamentary Assembly's Special Representative on Human Trafficking, [I've offered 20 resolutions over the years which the PA approved](#)—each focusing on new and effective strategies to be merged with each nation's ongoing work.

Today, I am respectfully asking you to consider creating another life-saving policy initiative—if you haven't done so already—to educate schoolchildren to avoid human trafficking.

This past January, I authored legislation that was signed into law—[The Frederick Douglass Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Act](#). The new law honors the extraordinary legacy of one of the greatest Americans who ever lived.

Born a slave in 1818, Frederick Douglass escaped slavery when he was 20 and dedicated his entire life to abolishing slavery and after emancipation, to ending Jim Crow laws, all the while struggling for full equality. A gifted orator, author, editor, statesman and Republican, he died in 1895.

America celebrated the 200th anniversary of his birth last year.

Working with Frederick Douglass' great-great-great grandson Kenneth Morris we crafted a comprehensive new initiative designed to ensure that school-aged children are educated in the classroom to recognize, resist and report any attempt to recruit or coerce them into the cruel world of human trafficking.

Kenneth Morris is here with us and will be speaking along with other experts at a luncheon event on July 6th at 12:30-2:30 pm, Room E, European Convention Center.

Title I of the Frederick Douglass Act authorizes the U.S. government to provide grants to local education agencies in partnership with NGOs to establish, expand and support programs:

- to provide age-appropriate information to students on how to avoid becoming victims of sex and labor trafficking;
- to educate school staff to recognize and respond to signs of sex and labor trafficking.

The need for educating the children and training school officials in each of our countries is compelling.

According to the [International Labor Organization \(ILO\)](#) one in four trafficking victims are children.

Out of the 24.9 million people trapped in forced labor, 16 million people are exploited in the private sector such as domestic work, construction or agriculture; 4.8 million persons in forced sexual exploitation, and 4 million persons in forced labor imposed by state authorities.

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by forced labor, account for 99 percent of victims in the commercial sex industry, and 58 percent in other sectors.

Traffickers exploit children due to their lack of awareness about the threat and a child's vulnerability can be compounded by poverty, a previous history of abuse and neglect, institutionalization, running away from home, being an unaccompanied minor, disability, belonging to a minority group, lacking citizenship or birth registration, being an asylum seeker, refugee or internally displaced persons (IDP).

Today as never before, traffickers are using internet communication technologies (ICTs) to lure children into trafficking.

According to a National Center for Missing and Exploited Children study the average age of online enticement that can result in being trafficked was 15.

A number of NGOs have developed school courses including the [Frederick Douglass Family Initiatives Project](#), [A21](#), [Just Ask](#), and [the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children](#).

If your country has a program to educate children, we'd like to know about it so it can be shared.

The requested action paragraphs of the resolution ask you to:

- initiate prevention education for children and teachers and where feasible integrate courses of instruction into other courses;
- collaborate with school districts, law enforcement, child and family welfare agencies, faith communities, shelters for runaway and homeless youth and anti-human trafficking NGOs;
- develop a protocol for responding to child victims;
- pay particular attention to preventing traffickers' abuse of internet communication technologies (ITCs) by offering comprehensive and ongoing education to children to avoid high-risk behaviors online.

Again, 1 in 4 trafficking victims are children. Each of us, I believe, can and must do a better job protecting the weakest and most vulnerable from exploitation. The need to educate the children on human trafficking and how to avoid it is absolutely compelling.