

# A Journey of Healing and Hope

By Jeri Williams



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As we commemorate the anniversary of the Faces of Human Trafficking, I find myself reflecting on how this pivotal project has profoundly impacted my life.

Being a part of this project was more than just narrating my story; it was about connecting with a community that genuinely cared. The moment I stepped into those discussions, I felt an overwhelming sense of validation. For a long time, I never believed anyone cared about the trauma I endured. But that trip, that experience, remains one of the highlights of my life. It reinvigorated my resolve to work harder, knowing that the government not only listened but truly heard us. It was a time of hope, a period marked by the belief that change was possible.

I am a proud member of the Klamath tribes. My grandmother carries scars from fleeing a boarding school as a child. My journey to healing began in 1989 after I escaped trafficker and started counseling. Before that, I often blamed myself for the atrocities I faced.

The journey has been long and multifaceted, but I want to highlight a few critical points about violence and healing. One of the most crucial lessons I've learned is that everything is connected. Treating one part of ourselves means recognizing the entire person. Childhood sexual abuse, domestic violence, and trafficking are interlinked. This interconnectedness extends to labor trafficking with other forms of trafficking and exploitation.

Often, we only address the symptoms, not the root causes. Despite the progress, there is still a long way to go, but the work initiated in 2014 was a catalyst for my involvement in this movement. As we navigate the challenges posed in our future, we must find ways to continue our work. It's vital to remember several key points: the expungement of crimes committed by victims while trafficked and the necessity for comprehensive medical care for survivors.

Today, we honor the Faces of Human Trafficking project and the hope it has inspired in countless lives, including mine. Let us continue to work together, heal together, and strive for a world free from exploitation and violence.

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