

# Pornland, Oregon: Child Prostitution in Portland

Host, Dan Rather Reports

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*Note from Pastor Kevin Lea: Parents need to be aware of the increasing dangers that are lurking to destroy their children's lives. Sexual immorality is sweeping the land and many lives are being ruined as a result. God has commanded us to refrain from evil and to protect our families by teaching them the truth.*

*Many children are turning away from the warnings of their parents and as a result they are being deceived into a life of darkness and death. I encourage parents to sit down with their sons and daughters to warn them of the sex slave dangers lurking to devastate their lives, and encourage them to flee from those who may try to ensnare them. If you go to the web link above, you can watch a short video clip of Dan Rather interviewing a vice cop and a mother who lost her daughter to the sex slave industry.*

Child prostitution has become a national problem in this country. Yes, I know that you have trouble believing that. You don't want to believe it, so you tend not to. "Widespread sex trafficking in children?" you may be saying to yourself. "Sure, it happens overseas in places like Thailand and Moldova, and while there may be some of it here there's not that much of it in our country."

Based on a months-long investigation and some reportorial digging, I'm here to tell you that you are wrong. We all are. We're in denial.

In covering news for more than 60 years, I'd like to think that few stories shock me anymore. But this is one of them. We ran across it late last year and the more we dug, the more disturbing it became.

Eighty-year-old men paying a premium to violate teenage girls, sometimes supplied by former drug gangs now into child sex trafficking big time? You've got to be kidding. Nope. That's happening and a lot more along the same lines. The business is booming. One of the worst areas for it runs along lines running roughly from Seattle to Portland, to San Francisco and Los Angeles, to Las Vegas. But no place in the country is immune.

To pick just one example among many, Portland, Oregon is without doubt one of the nation's treasures. It has been voted one of the best places to live and work. But according to police, the city and its outlying communities has become a hub for the sexual exploitation of children. In a recent nationwide sting by Federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, Portland ranked second in the country for the number of rescued child prostitutes. And according to Doug Justus, the workhorse sergeant in charge of Portland's tiny Vice Detail, many of the children caught up in this are middle class kids from the area.

The girls, sometimes as young as 12, often 13 to 16, are lured by a "front man" in his mid-to-late teens. He becomes her "boyfriend," taking her to dinner, buying her nice things, sometimes meeting her parents. The girl eventually moves in with him. Then he says they need money to continue being together. First, she's enticed to sleep with his friends to pay the rent. Soon she's turning tricks for what police say is an endless supply of older men willing to pay top money for sex with very young girls. Other times convincing the young adolescent girls to sell themselves happens very quickly.

“It is an out-of-control problem. It’s unbelievable,” say Justus. “I’ve only done this vice-squad job for three years. I’ve been a cop for 29. If you had told me three years ago that a 14-year-old girl would go to a food court, meet a guy, and three hours later be selling herself, I’d a said, no frigging way. It happens every single day, every day.”

It is a very lucrative business, according to Justus. “An average pimp with one kid will make between \$800 and \$1,000 a day. That’s seven days a week, 30 days a month,” he said. And the pimps usually have a stable of young girls. No wonder so many criminals in the drug trade have turned to it which they have in droves. There’s less chance of being caught, less chance of being prosecuted if caught, lighter sentences -- if any -- if convicted.

There is, and has been for a long time, a national “War on Drugs.” There isn’t one on child prostitution and what amounts to a slave trade. Only feeble efforts at best. Justus is frustrated that the Portland police have only two full-time vice investigators, compared to dozens of drug investigators.

“I’m not a politician. I’m just a cop. But if I’m a criminal and I got busted for drugs and I had a regional (drug) task force over here. And there’s another task force over there, and there, and then I know there’s only two vice investigators in the city of Portland, let me think. I think I’ll sell women because what are the chances of me being caught?”

The story we’ve prepared is not about prostitution per se. This is about child abuse. This is also about statutory rape and compelling prostitution among the young. All are difficult to prove. A major reason, according to police, is that it’s extremely difficult to convince a young girl to testify against their pimps and “johns”. They are afraid.

Sgt. Justus told us the story of a 16-year-old girl whom he convinced to “roll” on her pimp. But before she could testify against him she disappeared – and her pimp walked free. Justus has spent the last year looking for her and fears she’s dead.

How many children are being peddled on the streets of Portland and in other cities and towns, to say nothing of the Internet (Justus and other law enforcement people say Craigslist, along with other Internet sites, are major factors in the spread of child prostitution)? Hard to know about the real numbers. The most conservative estimates are that at least 100,000 American children are being victimized. Many experts say they believe it’s closer to 300,000 or more. Whatever the number, it is a national outrage and disgrace. And the problem is growing, not diminishing.

Based on our investigation, we’ve prepared an hour long program on this problem. We’ve spoken with parents who never dreamed their young daughter would be caught up in underage prostitution but was. We’ve also interviewed several girls who lived to tell about their experiences of being sold. Tuesday night at 8pm Eastern time on HDNet, via satellite and cable.