

## THE BEGINNING

A letter from our founder

*There are an estimated 27 million trafficking victims in the world today.*  
- The Salvation Army

*After drug dealing, trafficking of humans is tied with arms dealing as the second largest criminal industry in the world, **and is the fastest growing.***  
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

*Each year, **more than two million children** are exploited in the global commercial sex trade.*  
- U.S. Department of Trafficking In Persons Report 2007

Three years ago, I was one of many people who thought slavery in the world was a thing of the past. One day, however, I randomly picked up a magazine and came across an article on slavery in the Sahara. I was appalled. Could slavery still exist today? I went to my computer and googled human trafficking. I couldn't believe what appeared. Site after site contained staggering statistics, unbearable suffering. The statistics listed above were just the beginning of what I learned. On and on it went ... I was sick.

It was at that point that I heard the still small voice of God whisper, "Bonnie, you can help do something about this." My reply was, "No way, it's too big, too huge. What in the world could I ever do about any of this?" And God's response was, "Don't think about how small you are, think about how big I am." "But God," I continued, "even if I could help one of those women or girls, what is that in the face of such overwhelming numbers?" And again, I felt God patiently and gently answer, "To that ONE, it is everything."

My life changed at that moment. And the U Count Campaign was birthed.

Basing the campaign on Jeremiah 29:11, we believe every life counts and that God has a plan for good, hope and a future for every person on this big planet. We believe that we are part of His plan to bring that hope to those who cannot stand for themselves, and to cry out on behalf of those who have no voice.

The campaign was launched at our church; we made plans to host a Human Trafficking Awareness Conference and partnered with Project Rescue, a multi-dimensional rescue ministry to trafficking victims and their children. Through Homes of Hope women and girls are aided mentally, emotionally, and spiritually on their new path toward healing and recovery. We agreed to provide one of these homes in Calcutta, India.

And then my husband, another church staff member, and I, boarded a plane and went there.

After growing up in a third world country and traveling extensively, nothing could have prepared me for our trip. From the moment we landed in Calcutta, I was gripped with raw emotion throughout every experience. We visited Project Rescue Homes of Hope for daughters of prostitutes. Had they not been rescued, these little girls would have faced being marketed themselves, usually at nine years of age. Some had not been rescued soon enough. With radiant smiles, the girls took us by the hand to proudly show us their bunk beds, these whose only former personal space had been the space under their working mother's beds.

We went to Homes of Hope for rescued prostitutes and heard heart shattering stories of parents selling them as little girls into the sex industry, some as young as seven years old.

We visited vocational training centers where former prostitutes are taught new trades. They were so proud of their work!

We served communion to and prayed for women at a red light district church in Bombay—women still slave owned, unable to leave the brothels, but able to escape their living hell for a brief two hours in order to come worship Jesus before returning to their lives of imprisonment. Their bodies weren't free, but their hearts were.

I am home now, but forever changed. I had read the stories before I went; now I have touched them. Slavery is real. I found out that just beyond the thin veil of my own comfortable world lies a world of anguish and despair, and a market in human flesh thrives. Not just across the ocean, but down the road, as well. And I intend to do something about it.

I now have a wonderful team of compassionate, committed men and women who have each said, "I can count for someone else, I can help make a difference." Join us as we raise our voices and say 'NO MORE.' Together we can help change the lives of countless victims of sexual slavery. U COUNT!

Bonnie Northrop  
U COUNT Campaign, Founder