

Know the Language of Human Trafficking

OCTOBER 1, 2014

As with many criminal enterprises, there are common terms and slang phrases used by perpetrators of human trafficking. It is important for law enforcement officers to know such terminology to help identify potential cases.

Here is a list of common terms and definitions used by traffickers:

Automatic: A term denoting the victim’s “automatic” routine when her pimp is out of town, in jail, or otherwise not in direct contact with those he is prostituting. Victims are expected to comply with the rules and often do so out of fear of punishment or because they have been psychologically manipulated into a sense of loyalty or love. All money generated on “automatic” is turned over to the pimp. This money may be used to support his concession/phone account or to pay his bond if he’s in jail.

Bottom or “Bottom Bitch”: A female appointed by the trafficker/pimp to supervise the others and report rule violations. Operating as his “right hand,” the Bottom may help instruct victims, collect money, book hotel rooms, post ads, or inflict punishments on other girls.

Branding: A tattoo or carving on a victim that indicates ownership by a trafficker/pimp/gang.

Caught A Case: A term that refers to when a pimp or victim has been arrested and charged with a crime.

Choosing Up: The process by which a different pimp takes “ownership” of a victim. Victims are instructed to keep their eyes on the ground at all times. According to traditional pimping rules, when a victim makes eye contact with another pimp (accidentally or on purpose), she is choosing him to be her pimp. If the original pimp wants the victim back, he must pay a fee to the new pimp. When this occurs, he will force the victim to work harder to replace the money lost in the transaction. (See *Reckless Eyeballing*)

Circuit: A series of cities among which prostituted people are moved. One example would be the West Coast circuit of San Diego, Las Vegas, Portland, and the cities in

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between. The term can also refer to a chain of states such as the “Minnesota pipeline” by which victims are moved through a series of locations from Minnesota to markets in New York.

Coercion: Threats or perceived threats of serious harm to or physical constraints against any person; a scheme intended to cause a person to believe that failure to perform will result in serious harm to or physical restraint against any person.

Commercial Sex Act: Any sex act on account of which anything of value is given to or received by any person.

Cousin-in-Laws: Victims of pimp partners who work together.

Daddy: The term a pimp will often require his victim to call him.

Date: The exchange when prostitution takes place, or the activity of prostitution. A victim is said to be “with a date” or “dating.”

Exit Fee: The money a pimp will demand from a victim who is thinking about trying to leave. It will be an exorbitant sum, to discourage her from leaving. Most pimps never let their victims leave freely.

Facilitators: It is important to realize that human trafficking operations often intersect or exist alongside legitimate businesses. As a result, certain industries may help to enable, support, or facilitate human trafficking. This “support structure” may include a wide range of individuals, organizations, businesses and corporations, and Internet sites and practices. Common facilitators on which traffickers frequently rely include:

- Hotels and motels
- Landlords
- Labor brokers
- Taxi and other driving services
- Airlines, bus, and rail companies
- Advertisers (Websites like Craigslist.com and Backpage.com; Phone books; Alternative newspapers)
- Banks and other financial services companies
- Inmate pen-pal services

Family/Folks: The term used to describe the other individuals under the control of the same pimp. He plays the role of father (or “Daddy”) while the group fulfills the need for a “family.”

Finesse Pimp/Romeo Pimp: One who prides himself on controlling others primarily through psychological manipulation. Although he may shower his victims with affection and gifts (especially during the recruitment phase), the threat of violence is always present.

Force (Federal TVPA Definition): Physical restraint or causing serious harm. Examples of force include kidnapping, battering, kicking, pushing, denial of food or water, denial of medical care, forced use of drugs or denial of drugs once a victim is

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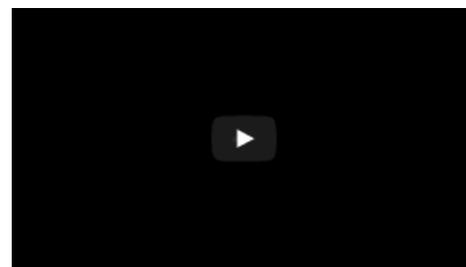
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addicted, forced to lie to friends and family about their whereabouts, being held in locked rooms or bound.

Fraud: Knowingly misrepresenting the truth or concealing an actual fact for the purpose of inducing another person to act to her/his detriment. Examples of fraud include false promises for specific employment, being promised a certain amount of money that is never paid, working conditions are not as promised, being told she or he would receive legitimate immigration papers or a green card to work but the documents are not obtained.

Gorilla (or Guerilla) Pimp: A pimp who controls his victims almost entirely through physical violence and force.

Head Cut: A victim getting beaten down by their pimp.

Human smuggling: The facilitation, transportation, attempted transportation, or illegal entry of a person or persons across an international border, in violation of one or more countries' laws, either clandestinely or through deception, such as the use of fraudulent documents.

In-Pocket: Not paying any other pimp than the one controlled by the victim. Not speaking to any other pimp.

“John” (a/k/a Buyer or “Trick”): An individual who pays for or trades something of value for sexual acts.

Kiddie Stroll: An area known for prostitution that features younger victims.

Loose Bitch: Pimps call a loose bitch a victim who keeps choosing different pimps.

Lot Lizard: Derogatory term for a person who is being prostituted at truck stops.

Madam: An older woman who manages a brothel, escort service or other prostitution establishment. She may work alone or in collaboration with other traffickers.

Out of Pocket: The phrase describing when a victim is not under control of a pimp but working on a pimp-controlled track, leaving her vulnerable to threats, harassment, and violence in order to make her “choose” a pimp. This may also refer to a victim who is disobeying the pimp’s rules.

Pimp: A person who controls and financially benefits from the commercial sexual exploitation of another person. The relationship can be abusive and possessive, with the pimp using techniques such as psychological intimidation, manipulation, starvation, rape and/or gang rape, beating, confinement, threats of violence toward the victim’s family, forced drug use, and the shame from these acts to keep the sexually exploited person under control.

Pimp Circle: When several pimps encircle a victim to intimidate through verbal and physical threats in order to discipline the victim or force her to choose up.

Pimp Partner: Two pimps who are friends and allow their victims to work together.

Quota: A set amount of money that a trafficking victim must make each night before she can come “home.” Quotas are often set between \$300 and \$2000. If the victim returns without meeting the quota, she is typically beaten and sent back out on the street to earn the rest. Quotas vary according to geographic region, local events, etc.

Reckless Eyeballing: A term which refers to the act of looking around instead of keeping your eyes on the ground. Eyeballing is against the rules and could lead an untrained victim to “choose up” by mistake.

Renegade: A person involved in prostitution without a pimp.

Seasoning: A combination of psychological manipulation, intimidation, gang rape, sodomy, beatings, deprivation of food or sleep, isolation from friends or family and other sources of support, and threatening or holding hostage of a victim’s children. Seasoning is designed to break down a victim’s resistance and ensure compliance.

Serving a Pimp: The actual phone call one pimp makes to another after “taking” his victim.

Squaring Up: Attempting to escape or exit prostitution.

Stable: A group of victims who are under the control of a single pimp.

The Game/The Life: The subculture of prostitution, complete with rules, a hierarchy of authority, and language. Referring to the act of pimping as ‘the game’ gives the illusion that it can be a fun and easy way to make money, when the reality is much harsher. Women and girls will say they’ve been “in the life” if they’ve been involved in prostitution for a while.

Track (a/k/a Stroll or Blade): An area of town known for prostitution activity. This can be the area around a group of strip clubs and pornography stores, or a particular stretch of street.

Trade Up/Trade Down: To move a victim like merchandise between pimps. A pimp may trade one girl for another or trade with some exchange of money.

Traffickers: Traffickers are people who exploit others for profit. They can be any demographic, individuals and groups, street gangs and organized crime, businesses or contractors.

Trick: Committing an act of prostitution (*verb*), or the person buying it (*noun*). A victim is said to be “turning a trick” or “with a trick.”

Turn Out: To be forced into prostitution (*verb*) or a person newly involved in prostitution (*noun*).

The Wire: (1) A pimp hotline, like a phone tree pimps use to get the word around, to find out which city is on/off. (2) Wiring money from victim to pimp in different cities/states (“put it on the wire”).

Wifeys/Wife-in-Law/Sister Wife: What women and girls under the control of the same pimp call each other.

For more information about how to identify potential victims of human trafficking, here are some [tips for police officers](#).

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