



## The Fight to Escape my Traffickers

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Okoedion Blessing

My name is Okoedion Blessing from Nigeria, am 28 years old from a family of nine. I was trafficked into this country Italy in the year 2013 by a Christian Nigerian woman.

Although Nigeria is a land that is blessed with different natural resources, we found ourselves living the poorest type of life as a result of mismanagement of our economy. The rate of unemployment increase tremendously every year due to corruptions and ignorance.

I happened to be a victim of human trafficking and this is my story: after five years of my graduation from university where I studied computer science, I had no Job, then I went to a roadside computer repair center to learn how to repair computers, then when I finished learning I started repairing computer system for people especially church members where I met one Christian woman who was so nice to me. One day, she told me about her plan for me to travel abroad to work in an African computers and accessories shop that is owned by his brother, I was so happy and I accepted the proposed job. The woman prepared for me my documents which included a working Visa for 2 years as I was to travel by plane to Spain. Unfortunately the visa was a false document and they stopped me at the airport. Then a man came and talked to the officers and they let me go. I remain in Spain only for a week then my Madam told me that they had to change the place where I was supposed to work, that was in Italy. By plane I travelled from Spain to Bergamo and from there to Napoli by train. At that point I started to be confused and when the madam told me that I own the 65.000 Euro and that I could get such an amount of money only by working on the streets I was terribly shocked but I did not react. I therefore had no other alternative therefore I started to do it, following the example of other young girls leaving the same situation. I felt guilty and confused having found myself in such an unwanted and unpleasant situation and in a country where no one wanted to listen to me due to a communication gap.

Disappointed and tired of such a miserable life living on the streets I took courage and one day I went to a police station asking for help to return to my country. Due to a language I was turned down. I refused to go out of the police station until I met someone that helped me to interpret my request. I was then taken to a room where there was a police man that understood English language. After listening to my story and my requests he brought me to CASA RUT, a shelter run by Sisters to rescue young victims of human trafficking mainly for sexual exploitation on the streets.

When I arrived in CASA RUT I felt immediately a different atmosphere, a life full of joy and friendship. There I also met other girls from different parts of the world with different, though similar stories of enslavement and exploitation. My live was then filled with peace of liberation.

Since then I have had a lot of experiences in CASA RUT, I have heard a lot of heart breaking stories from young girls that are between the age of 13 to 17 years that came from Libya, and how wasteful their lives were in Libya, while waiting to reach Italy.

Meeting them and sharing their stories I came to realize that the majority of such trafficked girls are from remote villages, because the traffickers, being aware that those in the cities are now aware of their tricks of empty promises therefore traffickers and mamans have moved to the remote villages in search of victims. An idle mind is the devil's workshop, therefore poor young girls from remote villages lacking a sound primary and secondary educations they accept any proposal to go abroad to earn money for themselves but moreover for all the members of their large families.

The above situation in the rural area of my country keep bringing into my mind so many question of when will this modern day' slavery stop. Will the creation of the awareness resolve the problem of idleness? Will the creation of awareness satisfy the hunger? Will the creation of awareness remove the pressure that poverty brings? Unfortunately we are living in a society where the poor are being humiliated by the rich, in the process of trying to revenge, we try to acquire riches at all means without looking at the implications. It is my hope and desire that young people, me included, will become more aware of such a risk of becoming the new slaves of an opulent society where with money everything can be bought and sold, even a boy of a child for pornography and prostitution, begging and organs transplant, child labour and false marriages. As young people we too have a role to play to offer our contribution to stop human trafficking so that every human being, mainly youth can enjoy the gift of freedom and dignity as given to us by God the Creator.

Thank you.

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