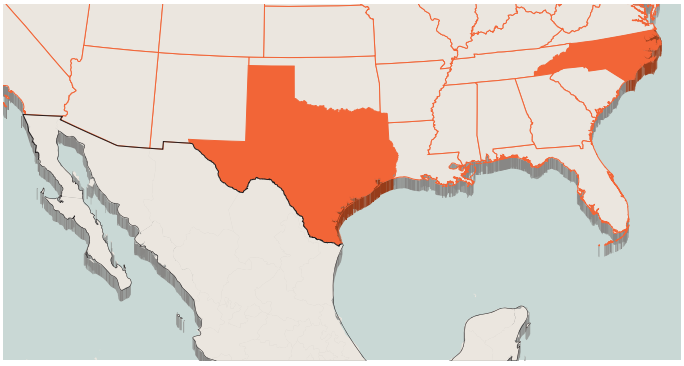
IMPACT REPORT 2023

UNITED STATES

The United States is considered one of the top five largest countries by area, with a population just shy of 332 million people.[1] As both a source and destination country, there have been documented reports of human trafficking across all 50 states and the District of Columbia of both domestic and foreign national victims.[2] Due to the nature of victimization, trafficking cases are considered to be severely underreported. Traffickers in the United States tend to target those with experiences of compounding forms of vulnerability, such as various forms of discrimination, violence, or interactions with government-sponsored programs (such as the criminal justice system, runaway and homeless youth services, foster or institutional care, and the immigration enforcement system).[3] While A21 USA (A21) provides prevention and awareness efforts, training, and remote services to survivors of human trafficking throughout various parts of the United States, robust intervention and aftercare services are offered around the areas surrounding Charlotte, North Carolina (A21 NC) and Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas (A21 TX). As the United States government continues to prioritize human trafficking as an issue of critical importance, A21 is committed to collaborating with the US government and non-government partners to combat modern-day slavery across the nation.



In 2023, A21 continued its focus on the trafficking and identification of foreign nationals and the widespread problem of domestic sex trafficking. As a service provider, A21 works to address gaps in the community to provide holistic support. If left unmet, the needs of trafficking survivors can compound, leaving them vulnerable and at risk for revictimization. In providing services to foreign national survivors, A21 has noted the primary need, regardless of age, to be legal services and financial support. Meanwhile, adult domestic survivors typically need assistance with broader case management services focused on connection to community services and housing support. A21 observed that due to preexisting vulnerabilities, the recruitment and exploitation of victims occurred or began when they were minors, with most exiting their trafficking situation and receiving direct services for the first time as adults. Over the last two years, A21 TX has received referrals from increasingly varied sources, specifically the hospital system. Female sex trafficking survivors comprised the primary population of those referred. A21 TX continued to receive referrals from law enforcement agencies requesting crisis intervention for these women exiting their trafficking situation. Through its participation in various task forces, A21 NC has been made aware of an increase in familial trafficking.

A21'S RESPONSE

As human trafficking in the United States persists as a growing issue, A21 uses a holistic approach to combat this issue. Continuing its focus on public awareness campaigns in 2023, A21 brought prevention programs to vulnerable communities and launched an education curriculum for schools across multiple states. A21 provided specialized training to frontline professionals and participated in identification efforts alongside law enforcement agencies. Through referrals and identifications, A21 supported 105 survivors in the Aftercare Program in 2023. Through programs tailored specifically for each survivor, including legal services when warranted, A21 provided sustainable pathways for each survivor in A21's Aftercare Program to achieve long-term restoration.



Combating human trafficking requires a comprehensive approach from law enforcement, government, service providers, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) across the United States. Without this depth of engagement across various sectors and partnerships between them, the severity of the problem would continue to increase. This collaboration also ensures that the needs of survivors are prioritized and addressed in a comprehensive,

trauma-informed manner. A21 routinely receives requests to assist potential victims and survivors from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), U.S. Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), local law enforcement, government officials, U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO), and partner organizations. As a critical front-line responder, healthcare providers are likely to interact with a potential victim of human trafficking.[4] With this in mind, A21 TX prioritized partnerships with local hospitals, which proved to be a new avenue of contact with potential victims and survivors based on referrals in 2023. A21's prevention and awareness efforts routinely result in partnerships with schools, universities, airports, train stations, businesses, government, law enforcement, and other NGOs. Partnerships are foundational to A21's ability to meet education and training demands, as well as the ever-growing needs of the targeted population.

PREVENTION & AWARENESS

Human trafficking remains an ever-present issue in the United States, as seen through the over 400,000 reports made to the National Human Trafficking Hotline since its inception, with the data citing 55,000 reports in 2021 alone.[5] A21 has witnessed firsthand the power of awareness, prevention, and education in combating trafficking. Consequently, it has continued its efforts in the United States by targeting key states, focusing on community engagement, growing established awareness campaigns, and launching new prevention education programs. Through these efforts, A21 distributed 330,713 materials, reached over 44,000 people with awareness, and provided more than 6,000 new prevention resources (e.g., storybooks, comic books) to minors.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Focusing on building relationships in 2023, A21 attended over 50 events and identified Texas as a key state. As such, A21 facilitated 23 "Human Trafficking 101" presentations with community groups in Texas to equip them with the knowledge and prevention resources needed to counter human trafficking in their communities.



In October, A21 hosted its annual Walk For Freedom (WFF) with 116 walks in 38 states across the United States. Much of WFF's success in 2023 can be attributed to the hosts who engaged their communities, planned walks, and supported the mission. One host in Florida shared, "The thing that stood out for me most was seeing the people that showed up and standing back and looking at everyone, and thinking that I was able to bring these people together for a great purpose."

CAN YOU SEE ME?

A21's *Can You See Me? (CYSM?)* campaign is a public awareness campaign designed to equip the general public to recognize common human trafficking scenarios in the United States and empower them with tools to report their suspicions through a referral mechanism. *CYSM?* assets continued to be advertised in airports, train stations, schools, and on billboards throughout the US, culminating in over three billion impressions by the end of 2023, tripling that of 2022.

The relaunch of the campaign's billboard efforts in Texas contributed to its success in 2023, with over 300 new digital and print billboards running in over 70 cities throughout the year. Additionally, A21, through a partnership with InRange Advertising and Southland Transportation Company, began a new initiative where semi-trucks featured *CYSM?* scenarios on 30 truck skirts on some of the busiest highways in the United States, totaling more than six million impressions over 3 months.



K-12 EDUCATION CURRICULUM LAUNCHED

In 2023, A21 officially launched its K-12 Human Trafficking Education Curriculum (K-12 Curriculum) with digital and hard-copy Educator Guides and Student Guides in Florida, Michigan, and Texas. The K-12 Curriculum is an age-appropriate, evidence-informed, and research-based curriculum with engaging lessons that are classroom-tested and aligned to standards. The K-12 Curriculum empowers educators and students with tools to safeguard against exploitation and human trafficking. Since 2022, A21 has trained more than 2,000 educators who, in turn, have taught more than 310,000 students. The resulting stories from classrooms have highlighted this current gap in prevention education and have illustrated the need for this program.



IDENTIFICATION & INTERVENTION

TRAINING AND COLLABORATION WITH FRONTLINE PROFESSIONALS

In 2023, A21 launched a Counter-Trafficking Toolkit (Toolkit) for frontline professionals to provide much-needed resources to a targeted group – those most likely to encounter a potential victim in their daily work, including law enforcement, transportation, healthcare, and hospitality sectors. Available upon request, the training material includes detailed information on human trafficking, including identifying trafficking and additional resources specific to each frontline sector. Through these materials, frontline professionals can apply practical strategies to employ human trafficking intervention efforts and implement processes for identifying and engaging with victims of human trafficking. A21 officially launched the Toolkit at the Amtrak National Conference, where 61 law enforcement officials received specialized training on recognizing human trafficking in the transportation sector and applying a victim-centered approach when interacting with potential victims.

Training a wide range of frontline professionals provides key individuals in various industries with the necessary tools to recognize a potentially exploitative situation, respond appropriately, and promptly provide survivors with the option of direct services. In 2023, A21 conducted 10 training sessions for 246 professionals with effective counter-trafficking response protocols tailored to their industries. Training participants included a wide range of professionals from across law enforcement, emergency and transitional housing programs, the legal community (including prosecutors and attorneys), and city service providers, such as property managers and homeless resource centers. In 2023, A21 engaged with 129 individuals either identified by A21 as victims of human trafficking or referred to A21 for services. A21 facilitated some of the survivors' exit from their immediate trafficking situations, whereas, for others, A21 responded to a referral from a trusted partner to provide an already identified trafficking survivor with long-term services.



GROWING PARTNERSHIPS WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT AND HOSPITALS

In 2023, six different law enforcement agencies requested A21's assistance to support victims encountered during nine law enforcement operations. The involvement of A21 in these operations highlights the importance of continued collaboration between law enforcement and service providers to support survivors as they leave their trafficking situation. In January 2023, A21 provided victim support services in response to requests by HSI and a local police department during their investigation of a suspected sex trafficking ring. Forty-eight hours after being alerted by law enforcement, A21 traveled to the site to provide care packages, safety plans, and other services for potential victims. This operation resulted in the discovery of two trafficking victims. A21 provided emergency services, food, clothing, shelter, and relocation services, to these survivors. In March, A21 TX received a Certificate of Appreciation from the Dallas Police Department's VICE Unit in recognition of A21's work, highlighting the value of such partnerships.

Calls from local hospitals in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex increased exponentially this year due to increased intentionality in strategically connecting with hospital personnel who may be interacting with potential victims of trafficking in their departments. A significant factor contributing to this increase was A21 TX's growing partnership with local hospitals through their Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program. Such partnerships provide opportunities for A21 to not only support hospital staff in identifying potential victims of trafficking but also to provide collaborative assistance to those victims needing assistance to exit their trafficking situation.

AFTERCARE

In 2023, A21's Aftercare Program welcomed 47 new survivors, with the three most common recruitment methods being loverboy (i.e., the trafficker uses a romantic relationship for recruitment) (34%), false job opportunities (26%), and tricked/sold by a family member or friend (19%). Sexual exploitation remained the most common form of trafficking for survivors entering the A21 Aftercare Program in 2023, continuing the trend from 2022, with 79% of survivors victimized by sex trafficking or child sexual exploitation. Labor trafficking survivors, both forced labor and domestic servitude, comprised 19% of the remaining cases. A21 continues to observe that individuals, both domestically and internationally, are at risk of trafficking in the United States. Consistent with the most recent Trafficking in Persons Report from the United States, survivors from the United States, Mexico, and Honduras comprise the majority of those receiving direct services from A21 in 2023.[6]

NORTH CAROLINA'S COMMUNITY MODEL CONTINUES TO LEAD TO RESTORATION EIGHT YEARS AFTER OPENING

A21 NC has observed that consistent Freedom Center attendance increases a survivor's likelihood of becoming interwoven with the community, increasing the chance of empowerment and

independence. In 2023, A21 NC closed 29 cases, with 11 of those cases only needing immediate crisis assistance before closure. Of the 18 closed cases that received holistic support beyond crisis care, 78% successfully transitioned out or graduated from A21's Aftercare Program, signifying their stability and financial independence. Notably, survivors determined to have successfully transitioned or graduated have access to or knowledge of the process of accessing essential resources initially introduced to them during their time in the aftercare program.

The Assessment of Survivor Outcomes (ASO) tool assesses the progress of survivors of human trafficking towards restoration in key areas of functioning, including safety, legal protection, mental well-being, economic empowerment and education, social support, and physical well-being.[7] Caseworkers complete the ASO at survivor intake, case closure, and 12-month follow-up. A21 has been using the ASO since 2019 on all survivors receiving assistance beyond crisis intervention. At closure, 68% of A21 NC cases were considered "Restored," with an average ASO score of 3.20. As the ASO provides a score of 3.00 as indicative of being "Restored," this assessment indicates that, on average, survivors leaving A21 NC's Aftercare Program are restored with a low vulnerability to revictimization; this is in contrast to an average starting score of 2.83 when survivors first enter A21 NC's Restore program. Of the one-year follow-up scores collected from survivors in 2023, 86% had a score that identified them as "Restored." Maintaining restoration upon leaving A21's program is a protective factor against survivors being revictimized.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SURVIVOR RELOCATIONS

Survivors exiting their trafficking situation are confronted with a deluge of decisions, a primary one being the possibility of relocation. For many survivors, remaining in the location where they were exploited may not be ideal due to a myriad of factors, such as safety concerns, the lack of sustainable housing, or because they never chose that area. Assisting with relocations has become an increasing need, especially in the crucial first days after exiting trafficking. A21 has witnessed relocation dramatically increase the likelihood of a survivor's successful journey toward healing and restoration. Whether it be a flight back home or a comprehensive, supportive housing program in the survivor's preferred location, A21 works alongside partners to support survivors in taking the necessary and significant steps toward building a safe and stable life of independence. In 2023, A21 assisted 14 domestic survivor relocations.

THE POWER OF LIFE PROGRAMS

A21 provides comprehensive trauma-informed aftercare services for survivors of trafficking, according to each individual's needs, to assist them at each stage of their progression from crisis intervention to restoration and independence. The A21 Aftercare Program employs a community model of service that assists survivors in reintegrating safely and independently back into their community through accessing local services. In 2023, 47 survivors utilized available services at A21's Freedom Centers (drop-in day centers central to A21's community model for case management), attending events with other survivors, engaging in A21 aftercare services, participating in Life Programs, and accessing free resources in the "Grab'N'Go" space and community resources available in English and Spanish.



Additionally, survivors in A21's Aftercare Program increased their engagement in Life Programs with 27 survivors participating throughout the year. A21's Life Programs address beneficial topics, including developing practical life skills, building self-esteem and confidence, strengthening relationships with other survivors, and being equipped with strategies to manage the impact of trauma. When reflecting on their participation in Life Programs, one survivor expressed that through the program, she had learned "that I am resilient and can do whatever I put my mind to." Another survivor, commenting on the impact of their participation in the Financial Foundations Life Skill, said, "thank you; now I know how to budget and pursue my goals and dreams." The Job Readiness Life Program and vocational training offered through partner organizations at the Freedom Center have provided survivors with long-term employment skills. While the percentage of survivors in A21's Aftercare Program who obtained new employment in 2023 only slightly increased compared to 2022, at 19%, those overall employed remained in stable jobs with less employment transition than observed in previous years. Through partnerships with corporations such as Marriott International, A21 offered specialized training sessions on job skills and career paths to survivors, contributing to survivors maintaining long-term employment from year to year.



Survivors participating in A21's Financial Foundations Life Skills Program at the Freedom Center.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

A21's Legal Assistance Program provides survivors in its Aftercare Program globally with a wide range of access to legal services, from hiring attorneys to represent survivors in legal proceedings to referrals to pro bono attorneys. Legal cases include both criminal and civil cases, including, at times, the criminal defense of survivors prosecuted for crimes committed while trafficked. A21 staff works closely with legal providers in their communications with the survivors to secure evidence to support the survivor's legal position. Moreover, A21 supports the survivors throughout the legal proceedings with any necessary direct services.

In addition to the services listed above, A21 also works as a survivor advocate in the criminal prosecutions of those responsible for the trafficking. In this role, A21 staff advocates to protect the survivor's legal rights throughout the prosecution process, from the grand jury investigation to sentencing. Furthermore, A21's wraparound services ensure that the survivors' practical and psychological needs are met during the pendency of the prosecution. Providing holistic aftercare service to survivors, often key witnesses in the criminal prosecution against their trafficker, ultimately strengthens the likelihood of attaining a conviction and significant sentence in the case.

In 2023, A21 assisted 44 survivors with 57 legal cases in the United States through its Legal Assistance Program. Of the 56 legal cases managed by A21 NC, 32 were civil cases and 24 were criminal prosecution support. A21 NC assisted survivors receiving criminal prosecution support by serving as an intermediary for the survivor and the investigation and prosecution team to ensure that the survivors were consulted and their rights upheld throughout the various stages of prosecution. In 2023, this support included assisting in both drafting and gathering victim impact statements for sentencing, liaising with pro bono immigration attorneys to assist the foreign national survivors interested in obtaining trafficking visas, and facilitating communications with the prosecutors and foreign national survivors who had been repatriated to their home countries. A21 also supported survivors testifying in trial by providing transportation, food, clothing, and any other support needed by the survivors for both trial preparation sessions and trial testimony. Moreover, A21 accompanied survivors to trial prep, trial, and sentencing upon the survivor's request as support during these court proceedings, which were often daunting and difficult for the survivors.

One particular domestic sex trafficking case involving five survivors in A21's Aftercare Program presented complex issues where the trafficker used drugs and physical abuse as the primary means of coercion. A21 supported these survivors from the commencement of the grand jury investigation through sentencing and provided them with services unique to each survivor's needs. A21 NC not only acted in the capacity of caseworker, Life Program facilitator, and provider of restorative programming, but also ensured that each survivor was well informed about their rights throughout the process, and advocated to ensure their voices were heard. All of the survivors voluntarily chose to testify, and the jury ultimately returned with a guilty verdict at the end of the trial. As a result of the survivors' testimony, amongst other evidence, the court sentenced the trafficker to six life sentences and ordered $914,401.07 in restitution to the survivors.

In 2023, A21 NC supported a total of 23 survivors in four significant federal human trafficking prosecutions, across both North and South Carolina, resulting in the conviction and sentencing of five defendants to collectively 46 years of imprisonment, and one defendant to six life sentences to run concurrently.

In addition to criminal prosecution support, A21 NC assists survivors with civil legal support and representation. Through its civil representation services, A21 pays attorneys directly to assist in a survivor's civil matters. In civil legal support, A21 connects survivors with pro bono legal services and then assists the survivor similar to the level of coordination and support in the criminal support program. A21 often obtains the appropriate documentation and supports survivors through their civil legal process, from walking through the steps of a survivor's immigration process to ensuring relief from expungement of a criminal record to supporting survivors through family court as they seek to regain custody of their children. As a result of strong relationships built with the legal community, A21 NC often receives referrals for survivor aftercare and legal support services from pro bono attorneys for their current clients. In 2023, A21 NC assisted 30 survivors with civil legal support and provided two with civil legal representation.



MIGRANT WORKERS TRAFFICKED IN AGRICULTURAL FIELDS IN SOUTH CAROLINA FIND JUSTICE

A monumental labor trafficking case in South Carolina came to a close in 2023 due to the effective collaboration between A21, the USAO, HSI, and multiple victims' attorneys. The defendants in the case, a father and daughter, operated a business that provided agricultural contract workers to farms in South Carolina. The traffickers used the Department of Labor to obtain H-2A temporary agricultural work visas for migrant workers for its business. Although the perpetrators had received the necessary paperwork to lawfully conduct their business, they chose rather to exploit the migrant workers. They traveled to Mexico to recruit Mexican nationals with promises of legitimate employment, fair pay, and proper working conditions. The Mexican migrant workers relied on this promise and traveled to the United States for that employment opportunity. However, upon arrival, the traffickers confiscated the migrant workers' passports and visas and violated the terms of employment by requiring double the amount of work, at times up to 90 hours a week, while paying for only 40 hours. The traffickers re-routed some of the workers' pay to account for the cost of the visas, transportation, food, and equipment, in violation of the workers' terms of employment. The traffickers kept the workers there, using both physical and psychological means. They locked the sleeping areas, used armed guards, displayed guns, and threatened deportation. Moreover, the traffickers neither provided medical care nor sufficient meals.

Federal law enforcement requested A21's assistance with the victims at the execution of the search warrant in December 2021. Upon execution of the warrant, federal officers found 31 Mexican male labor trafficking victims at the facility. Law enforcement arrested the two traffickers and seized guns and ammunition, amongst other evidence. A21, using bilingual staff, spoke with the survivors and provided necessary services that day, including food, clothing, and emergency shelter. The survivors thereafter entered A21's Aftercare and Legal Assistance Programs, where additional services were provided. A21 assisted the survivors desiring relocation or repatriation back home, and others with attorneys to assist with their Continued Presence (CP) visa applications and any other immigration issues. One of those survivors, Mateo,* chose to stay in the US and work with A21 despite being in a country where he knew no one nor the language. While working with A21 over the next two years, Mateo rediscovered his love for art and music. Mateo now feels like he has a new life that would not have been possible without the work of A21 and other partners to ensure his exploiters were held accountable.

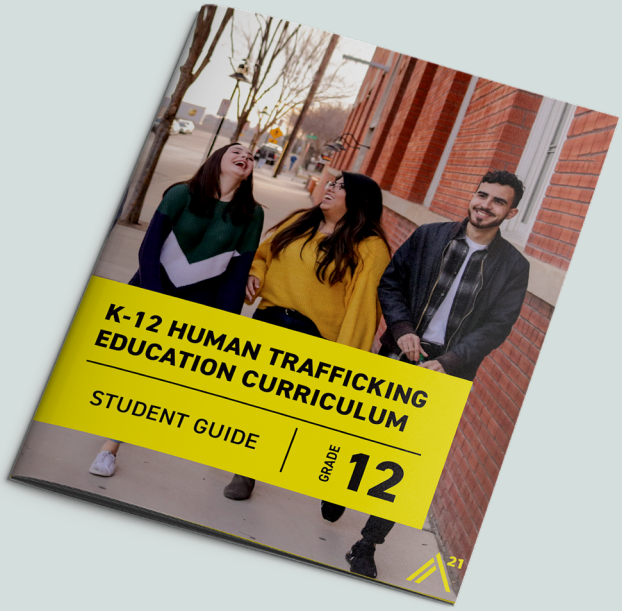
In 2023, both traffickers entered a guilty plea, and sentencing was scheduled. As a large number of survivors had returned to Mexico, the prosecutors had difficulty communicating with them and obtaining victim-witness impact statements to support the sentencing. A21 successfully advocated for a postponement of the sentencing to ensure that each survivor could submit a victim impact statement. A21's efforts resulted in the submission of 11 victim impact statements from survivors, eight from A21 direct coordination, and three from the survivors' immigration attorneys. Although the survivors lived in various locations across the United States and Mexico, through the combined efforts of A21, immigration attorneys, and a legal aid organization, a total of 15 victim impact statements were submitted to the court for consideration at sentencing. At the sentencing, the court cited these statements directly before sentencing the perpetrators. Moreover, the corporation the perpetrators used to facilitate the trafficking was also found criminally liable and ordered to pay over half a million USD in restitution to the survivors.[8]

*Name changed to protect the survivor's identity.

K-12 CURRICULUM LEADS TO MINOR'S DISCLOSURE AND ARREST OF PERPETRATOR

"What I just learned in class, I believe, is happening to me."

One brave teenager self-disclosed online sexual exploitation to a school resource officer after learning about digital safety through A21's K-12 Human Trafficking Education Curriculum. Because the school resource officer had previously participated in A21's Human Trafficking 101 Training, they recognized the risk to the student and reported the situation to the police immediately. Due to the seriousness of the details disclosed by the teenager, the investigation included numerous law enforcement agencies including the county Sheriff's Office, State Police, and the FBI. The various agencies worked in concert in this investigation, ultimately leading to the arrest of the perpetrator at the airport as he traveled to meet the victim.[9] At the time of his arrest, the perpetrator had multiple electronic devices and hard drives on his person that were seized as evidence.[10] At his arraignment, the perpetrator faced multiple charges, child sexual abusive activity, distributing child explicit material involving children, and using a computer to commit a crime, with additional charges possible in federal courts.[9] In reflecting on the case, the County's Police Chief credited A21's K-12 Human Trafficking Education Curriculum, stating, "this education provides students with information regarding, grooming, red flags and safety measures pertaining to human trafficking. Through this education, it gives students a voice to report any suspicions to a trusted adult."[10]



ENDNOTES

1 U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). *Explore Census data: United States*. Accessed 21 March 2024 (Website). https://data.census.gov/profile?q=United%20States&g=010XX00US

2 National Human Trafficking Hotline. (2024). *National Statistics*. Accessed 7 February 2024 (Website). https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/statistics

3 U.S. Department of State (June 2023). 2023 *Trafficking in Persons Report*: United States. https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/united-states

4 Exeni McAmis, N. E., Mirabella, A. C., McCarthy, E. M., Cama, C. A., Fogarasi, M. C., Thomas, L. A., Feinn, R. S., & Rivera-Godreau, I. (9 March 2022). *Assessing healthcare provider knowledge of human trafficking*. PLOS ONE, 17(3). https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0264338

5 U.S. Department of State (June 2023). 2023 *Trafficking in Persons Report*: United States. https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/united-states

6 Ibid.

7 International Justice Mission. (2018) *Assessment of Survivor Outcomes Guidance Manual*. pp. 4, www.ijm.org/documents/studies/ASO-Guidance-Manual.pdf

8 For more information about the prosecution, please see the U.S. Department of Justice press release https://www.justice.gov/usao-sc/pr/three-lexington-county-defendants-sentenced-federal-court-labor-trafficking-and-fraud

9 Edwards, L., & Harmon, Z. (2023, January 20). Grant High School student comes forward as victim of human trafficking. FOX 17 West Michigan News (WXMI). https://www.fox17online.com/news/local-news/michigan/newaygo/grand-high-school-student-comes-forward-as-victim-of-human-trafficking

10 Human Trafficking Arrest in Grant. (2023, January 20). Near North Now. https://www.nearnorthnow.com/news/human-trafficking-arrest-in-grant

© A21 USA, INC. 2024. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.