



National Survivor Network (NSN) Response to the Misrepresentation of Human Trafficking in the SOTU

As a group of over 300 survivors of human trafficking, the NSN would like to share a few of the following known facts about human trafficking

- Traffickers thrive in environments where the people who have the power to stop them look elsewhere
- The climate of fear directed at immigrant communities helps traffickers by creating more vulnerability and fewer safe places to seek help
- Systemic oppression, displacement, socio-political and economic vulnerabilities are the conditions that create and allow human trafficking to thrive
- Migrants coming here legally on visas are being coerced or forced into debt bondage and domestic servitude, forced labor and/or commercial sex (as are domestic victims)
- Migrants (in most cases using a legal point of entry into the U.S.) are being forced or defrauded into human trafficking schemes by residents of the United States and immigration status is being used as the main weapon of coercion
- Funding for legal assistance that allows us to reclaim our lives has been slashed. Advocates now risk losing their funding if they help us have our criminal record vacated, even though these were crimes our traffickers forced us to commit
- Domestic trafficking is a national epidemic and public health crisis
- Though smuggling and kidnapping can happen while someone is being trafficked, these experiences are situational and not the predominant narrative amongst the survivors in our community

This dialogue of duct-tape, desert border-crossing and increased surveillance at the southern border speaks clearly to a racial animosity and myth that the border with Mexico is not secure. It is a flagrant attack on indigenous, brown, black, queer and trans lives, as individuals are being arrested without question in courtrooms attempting to obtain status, separated from their children, and ostracized.

We condemn the misleading and deceptive claims about human trafficking presented by Donald Trump that have been used to support building a wall along the southern border of the United States.

We object to having our lives and narratives distorted and used to suppress refugee and asylum seekers. This heinous attempt to systemically marginalize people from programs and services built into the Trafficking Victims Protection Act and reauthorized in the U.S. as law is a travesty to our Country, our spirit of Justice, and our spirit as a Refuge to people in need.

You cannot proclaim on one hand you are working to eradicate human trafficking while standing on policies, agendas and biases that directly support traffickers, imprison victims, and sponsor genocide.