



Trafficked Children and Youth in the United States

Reimagining Survivors

by Elzbieta M. Gozdzik

DESCRIPTION

Trafficked children are portrayed by the media—and even by child welfare specialists—as hapless victims who are forced to migrate from a poor country to the United States, where they serve as sex slaves. But as Elzbieta M. Gozdzik reveals in *Trafficked Children in the United States*, the picture is far more complex.

Basing her observations on research with 140 children, most of them girls, from countries all over the globe, Gozdzik debunks many myths and uncovers the realities of the captivity, rescue, and rehabilitation of trafficked children. She shows, for instance, that none of the girls and boys portrayed in this book were kidnapped or physically forced to accompany their traffickers. In many instances, parents, or smugglers paid by family members, brought the girls to the U.S. Without exception, the girls and boys in this study believed they were coming to the States to find employment and in some cases educational opportunities.

Following them from the time they were trafficked to their years as young adults, Gozdzik gives the children a voice so they can offer their own perspective on rebuilding their lives—getting jobs, learning English, developing friendships, and finding love. Gozdzik looks too at how the children's perspectives compare to the ideas of child welfare programs, noting that the children focus on survival techniques while the institutions focus, not helpfully, on vulnerability and pathology. Gozdzik concludes that the services provided by institutions are in effect a one-size-fits-all, trauma-based model, one that ignores the diversity of experience among trafficked children.

Breaking new ground, *Trafficked Children in the United States* offers a fresh take on what matters most to these young people as they rebuild their lives in America.

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