



FREEDOM, HERE + NOW: Conference ends, Conversations begin

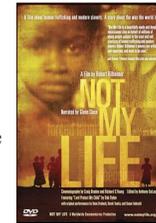
View videos from speakers and panels

On May 8th, a cross-sector crowd of over 300 individuals statewide convened at the University of Minnesota's Ted Mann Auditorium for *FREEDOM, HERE + NOW: Ending Modern Day Slavery* – an afternoon of compelling programming designed to illustrate, inform and engage key constituencies in the fight against human trafficking here in Minnesota and globally.

After remarks from local issue champion [Marilyn Carlson Nelson](#) and a keynote address from U.S. State Department Ambassador [Luis CdeBaca](#), a number of dedicated national and local leaders from business, nonprofits, and government shared their deep understanding of the issue. This [10-minute video](#) captures highlights from some of these remarks.

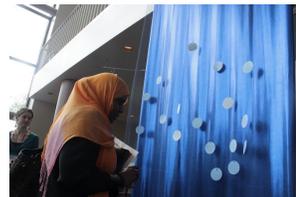
Participants then had the opportunity to see the Minnesota premier of *Not My Life*, a documentary depicting the life threatening practices of modern slavery on a global scale, followed by a Q&A session with Director Robert Bilheimer.

While the day included many tragic and potentially shocking statistics about the depth of the problem – including the fact that Minneapolis ranks in the FBI's list of the top 13 cities in the nation for the sex trafficking of children – there was also hope inspired by efforts already in motion to combat this crisis. Many actors are determined to make Minnesota a nationwide model in the fight to prevent the sex trafficking of children:



- Carlson Companies has been a long-term advocate around this issue, most recently working to help launch the Business Coalition Against Trafficking (BCAT). While in town, Ambassador CdeBaca met with members of BCAT at Carlson headquarters, as covered in [this May 10th Star Tribune feature](#) on his visit.
- *MN Girls Are Not for Sale*: A Campaign of the Women's Foundation of Minnesota is infusing the movement against sex trafficking in Minnesota with new resources and an even higher level of coordination and advocacy.
- Due to the tireless efforts of many advocates, in July 2011, Minnesota successfully passed Safe Harbor legislation ensuring that minors who are prostituted are not treated as juveniles, but victims. Minnesota is only the 5th state to pass this legislation.

It is clear that those in attendance on May 8th shared this vision. In the brief breaks between panels, individuals contributed to the co-creation of a public work of art: **Ripples of Action**. Designed to look like ripples on water, it was created based on the belief that ideas and intent matter; that multiple actions travel and spread. A summary of the "ripples" is posted under "Resources" at www.incommons.org/freedomnow.



May 8th was truly just the kick-off for a series of dialogues – both online and offline - about the issue of human trafficking, concluding with a Distinguished Carlson Lecture October 25th by New York Times reporter Nick Kristof.

Anyone interested is welcome to [visit an online forum](#) where individuals can post resources, participate in conversation, and connect with other leaders statewide to organize around efforts to end slavery in Minnesota.

On July 16th, from 5:30 – 8 p.m., CIL will host a community conversation about this issue. All are welcome – regardless of whether or not you were in attendance on May 8th. We'll show a brief 30



minute clip from Not My Life followed by a world café-style conversation to deepen our shared understanding, collaboration, and commitment to ending modern day slavery here in Minnesota. [Register here.](#)

We hope many of those who participated on May 8th will find ways to engage in meaningful ways both personally and professionally to bring an end to this most crucial issue. As one panelist challenged, *What could it look like if whole communities across Minnesota stood up against trafficking and committed to being a safe harbor for their residents?* Freedom, Here & Now. It is possible, but will take the actions of many.

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Last modified on January 9, 2009