



How runaways
become part of the
slave trade

Running Away In America



By Allen P. Cardoza, CPI

About Allen Cardoza

Allen Cardoza is a licensed private investigator, an instructor of Non-Violent Crisis Intervention, a radio talk show host, an author, a public speaker, and the founder and president of a private corporation that has successfully located and returned thousands of runaway children to homes, hospitals and schools for three decades.



Radio Talk Show Host

As part of his effort to raise public awareness about parenting concerns, adolescent issues, and personal development, Allen co-hosts a weekly radio talk show with Dr. Melody Foxx, a California Licensed Psychologist and Marriage and Family Therapist.

The radio talk show is geared towards advising families in crisis. He speaks to various experts in their fields about their books, work and experiences. For instance, he recently interviewed such well-know personalities as Shawn Achor, the professor for Harvard's Happiness Course, and New York Times best-selling author James Redfield, who just published *The Twelfth Insight*.

The talk show discusses myriad topical issues affecting families. For example, his latest episodes discussed parenting troubled teens, the adolescent project in Haiti, demystifying autism, hypnotherapy and building self-esteem.

Author

Through his speeches and articles, Allen offers practical solutions for parents and teens, as well as raises awareness about the secret underground world of human trafficking and child slavery.

He is a co-author with world renowned motivational speaker, Les Brown entitled, "Fight for Your Dreams" that is scheduled for release in late April of 2011.

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West Shield Investigations

According to the National Runaway Switchboard, each year 1 to 3 million youth run away. West Shield Investigations (WSI) has successfully assisted youth in crisis for the past 30 years.

Utilizing a unique systematic approach: locate, mediate, and facilitate. This method is exclusive to West Shield Adolescent Services (WSAS). It draws upon the experience of its sister company West Shield investigations, adding psychological assessment and intervention. They also work closely with exceptionally qualified educational consultants, therapists, and therapeutic schools and programs.

Through his investigation firm, therapeutic transport services, radio talk show, seminars and public talks, Allen has made a positive difference in the lives of thousands of people. Despite his previous success and broad influence, Allen says, "I will not stop until I have made a positive difference in the lives of millions of people".

He is currently planning to release his follow up book, Running Away in America, in 2012 while continuing his speaking tour and launch a TV series.

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A Day In The Life of a Detective

The developed leads directed me to a particular house and I set up my surveillance equipment in the dark, settling in for what might be a long night.

I observed what I thought was a party.

I had been hired to find a runaway girl by her frantic mother.



Although the parents had divorced, I was told that both had agreed that when the girl was found she would go to a specialized drug rehab program.

It seemed like a teenage party, maybe a girl's birthday party. I kept watching. The hours dragged on. Then, what looked to be the party goers' parents, mostly Dads, started arriving. The party was breaking up and they had come to take their daughters home.

I watched all this from a distance, through my binoculars.

Then I saw a young woman who fit the description of the 15-year-old daughter of my client. A man, who appeared to be in his mid-forties, came to pick her up. I'm surprised, assuming that he must be her father. I figured he was helping harbor her from the Mom. Maybe this was a divorce where the parents lied to each other.

Although her ex-husband may have had a different idea about her care--despite what he'd said--we now knew her whereabouts and activities. It looked like the case was almost wrapped up. All I had to do now was follow them so that I could complete my report to the Mom.

But I was in for a terrible shock.

I followed the two to a trailer park and watched them enter a dilapidated trailer.

But now I was suspicious. Something appeared terribly wrong. I quietly walked up to the side of the trailer, peeked through the window, and saw that they were having sex.

I had made a shocking discovery--these weren't fathers picking up their daughters, but men renting underage girls!

That shocking event happened 30 years ago. And it changed my career as a detective.

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It was my first glimpse into the underground world of what happened to children who ran away from home, a horrifying revelation of the fate of runaway teens caught up in human trafficking.

From that day on, I have dedicated my life to rescuing “at risk” youth! Today, when I look back, I still remember that evening as if it had happened yesterday. Although I’ve now worked with more than 15,000 at-risk teens, as well as their parents, guardians, special education coordinators and juvenile court officers, I will not stop until I have revealed this underground labyrinth of criminality to millions of people. It cannot go on to this degree. You and I must speak up about this degradation of children until this human slavery is abolished.

Fortunately, the case I just told you about was successfully resolved.

Here’s what happened...

Although I learned that the girl I followed was not my client’s daughter, I eventually found the right girl. She was being sold to older men by a woman who moved her from one house to another.

I solved the case by getting close to the people who were selling her and finding the house where they hid her.

In the middle of a summer night, listening in at an open window, I overheard a chilling conversation:

“We’re getting too much heat on her,” said an angry man. “I need you to move her to the “orange” house and change her name. If this problem continues, off her. That’s right...off her!” He mentioned her name once or twice during the conversation.

I shared my discovery with law enforcement agents. They set up units on both the first house and the “orange” house, whose address they found through phone records.

I set up surveillance on the “orange” house, until the girl came out. Then, once she was safe, the police swooped in on both houses.

Tragically, running away is nothing new, nor the exploitation of children and teenagers. Running away in America can be traced back to our early history.

The Early History Of Running Away in America

Thousands of teens took the advice, made popular by New York newspaper publisher Horace Greeley in an 1865 editorial: "Go West, young man, and grow up with the country."

Adolescents have rebelled throughout human history.

Early American colonists took in thousands of young immigrants, most of them runaways from Europe.



As the 17th and 18th century colonists developed a farm economy, adolescents became important members of the family work force. The colonists passed severe laws to prevent teens from running away.

Factories and widespread transportation changed the human landscape. Adolescents began to leave home. By the middle of the 19th century, teenage workers were common in U.S. factories. Nearly half of them were runaways.

Then in the late 19th century, unions, wanting to control and maintain standard hourly rates, pushed forth legislation to reduce the number of workers under the age of 16.

This put many runaways out on the streets of American cities. Without jobs, delinquency rose sharply. Small towns and city neighborhoods began to look on adolescents as hoodlums, a nuisance and threat to the local community.

Running away in America is still occurring. And it is worse than ever. We will now look at some horrific statistics about running away in America today.

Running Away In America Today

The statistical information about runaways in America is alarming.

The National Network for Youth, made up of community-based organizations, estimates that 2.5 million runaway, homeless and “disconnected” young people are living on U.S. streets today.

The U.S. Department of Justice has estimated that one in seven kids between the ages of 10 and 18 will run away at some point.

According to estimates of the U.S. State Department, the Human Rights Center at the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of Pennsylvania, 100,000 to 300,000 American children are involved in commercial sexual exploitation.



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According to The National Runaway Switchboard, funded by the federal Department of Health and Human Services, most runaways return home within two days to two weeks, but among those who stay out for months, or years, 5,000 a year will die from assaults, illness or suicide.

It's estimated by other groups that 3 million teens (through age 19) are prostituted in the U.S. each year.

While all of this tragedy generally happens behind the scenes, the media will occasionally report some of the more ghastly stories.

Traumatic Stories In The Media

The media will occasionally reveal some of the tragic events unfolding for young people who have lost the security and protection of a safe home.

I have selected a few stories from The Desert Sun, The Press, MSNBC, and Seattle Post Intelligencer to illustrate how the untold story of child abuse, murder, rape, and slavery are still happening in America.

The Desert Sun

Sentencing Today for Man Who Killed Runaway
Teen in Moreno Valley

The Press OF ATLANTIC CITY

Jury Recommends Death in Killing of Teen Runaway

msnbc

2 Teens Kill Stepdad in Order to Run Away

Seattle Post-Intelligencer

Charge: Seattle Woman Attempted to Use
Runaway Kids in 'Escort Service'

The Desert Sun story involved two young men who met a 16-year-old girl who ran away from a group home for troubled teens, in Moreno Valley, California. They spent three days partying and having sex in an abandoned duplex apartment. Then the men slashed and stabbed the young woman to death—133 stab wounds with knives and a screwdriver... because one of them was worried that she might become pregnant.

The Press story shows the jury's recommendation for one of the young men charged with murdering that young runaway girl. He orchestrated her murder, set her hair on fire and finally drowned her in a bathtub before attempting to burn the duplex down around her.

The MSNBC web article is about two teenage boys in Indiana who wanted to run away to

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Arizona to sell marijuana so badly that they killed one boy's stepfather, with his own handguns, when he tried to stop them.

In the Seattle Post Intelligencer article, a woman running an escort service out of her apartment was charged with keeping four female runaways and pimping them on the Internet. One of the young women was a 17-year-old with a history of mental illness and drug abuse.

These are disturbing stories. Unfortunately, they will continue unchecked until people like you and I get the word out about the plight of runaway children.

While most people only spend a few minutes reading about stories like these before turning away in disgust, I have had many firsthand experiences with the lost children of America. I have seen their confusion and witnessed their suffering, pain, and rage.

My Own Firsthand Experiences

In my own experience, while technology may have changed the world we live in, we are still as morally benighted as in the early days of American history. The exploitation of children continues behind closed doors. America may talk about being the home of the free and the brave, but the reality behind our idealism is something else entirely.

Human traffickers target naïve and lonely children in particular.



Human trafficking is a terrible and growing threat to our nation.

I don't speak from an academic perspective, but from the perspective of a detective who has peered into windows, knocked on doors, listened in on telephone conversations, and infiltrated criminal organizations by pretending to be one of their base members. Frankly, the world of television detectives like Barnaby Jones, Joe Mannix, Remington Steele, Thomas Magnum, David Addison, Adrian Monk and Jim Rockford are mild-mannered interpretations of what it takes to be a detective.

Sometimes, I have had to travel around the world to resolve a case.

I'm thinking of the time, back in 1997, when I traced a runaway girl on behalf of her family. After following a long series of leads, I found her working as a captive prostitute in Amsterdam. I went undercover as a client to hire her.

When I got her to a hotel room, I showed her pictures of her family and said that they wanted her back.

In return, she showed me photos from her controllers. I saw a picture of her sister in the crosshairs of a rifle scope. They were threatening to harm her family if she tried to escape.

I flew back to the States and arranged to have the family moved to a safe location.

Weeks later, I went back to Holland and managed to convince the enslaved girl that she could leave Holland without consequences to her loved ones.

I brought her home safely.

Often enough, the nefarious networks that traps children like the one I just mentioned, is

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right under your nose. Technology, even websites designed to facilitate information and interaction, have been exploited by criminals.

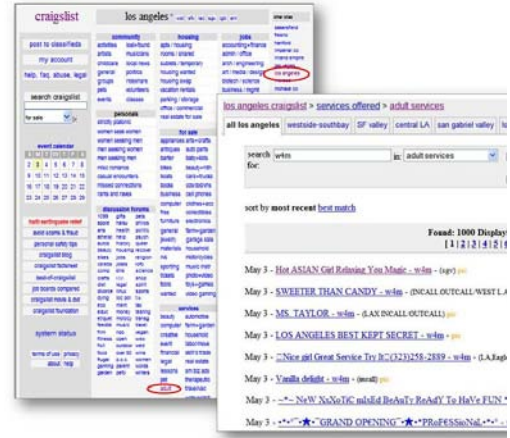
Craigslist, for example, is not just a friendly and useful Internet portal to advertise your next garage sale or look for a job in your city. It, like many other popular websites, has been used by criminals. Craig's List has its dark side.

The Dark Side of Craigslist

This is the first few pages of a long list of ads for prostitution on a recent Craigslist page for Adult Services in Los Angeles.

In fact, Craigslist has become a big player in the business of human trafficking and the prostitution of runaways.

A New York Times report last month found that ads that blatantly offer the sexual services of women are expected to bring in \$36 million to Craigslist this year—three times as much as the year before.



And as the Times reporter emphasized: “Law-enforcement officials have been fighting a mostly losing battle to get Craigslist to rein in the sex ads. At the same time, officials of organizations that oppose human trafficking say the site remains the biggest online hub for selling women against their will.”

The Mafia is also getting involved in interstate sex trafficking.

In April, the FBI arrested 14 members of the Gambino crime family on various charges, including selling the sexual services of girls from 15 to 19 years of age, on Craigslist.

Now that we know the enormity and the ubiquitous web that criminals have spun around us to trap our children, let us look at two practical things we can do to prevent our adolescents from stepping into harm’s way.

First, let’s explore what can we do to connect with our troubled teens? How can we talk to them in a way that connects with their

Second, let’s see what we can do during the summer months to keep volatile teenagers from acting out by running away.

How To Talk To Your Troubled Teens

The first step toward improving communication skills is to improve one's listening skills.

Parents need to listen first and strive to understand.

Children need to listen to what is asked of them.



For example: A parent says to his or her son, "If you don't get your grades up from D's to B's by this summer vacation, you're going to have to go to summer school."

The child could respond with, "I accept that consequence, but if I do get my grades up to a B average, can I extend my curfew from 10:00 p.m. to midnight for this summer?"

In this dialogue, both sides have the opportunity to feel good about the collaborative decision. It is also easier for the teenager to accept the consequence if he does not reach the goal.

The Family Contract

One tool that drastically reduces miscommunication is the use of a family contract. Most families that stick with a contract and update it as their children grow older find great success in raising children and creating a much more loving environment at home.

A successful family contract should explain the responsibilities of the parents, such as providing a safe home environment or encouraging good assessment skills. It should explain the responsibilities of the children, such as chores or learning the powerful communication tool of keeping a "truth journal." It should also include sections on grades and allowance, as well as consequences for a breach of contract.

Parents need to keep in mind that no contract or amount of communication is going to keep an adolescent from ever rebelling against some form of authority, or experimenting with things that may be harmful.

Three Communication Tips

Here are some more ideas:

- Explain to your children that no matter how much you may disagree, dislike or disallow

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a behavior, you will always love them.

- If they still need to get away from their home, ask them to consider going to a friend or relative's house for a cooling-down period.
- Make sure such a period is for a specific length of time and there is a plan to sit down and talk when cooler heads prevail.

Finding Missing Children

If an adolescent is already on the streets, it is time to get help. Locating runaways is a very specialized field of investigation. A runaway teen doesn't normally leave a "paper trail" like most adults.

These investigations are probably as close as one gets to the old "gum shoe" style of pounding the pavement, showing pictures or following those you think will be in contact with the subject.

There are of course some updated techniques like the use of "trap lines" and computer "cookies" that modern technology has given us to help locate where the subject is or where they might be heading.

Bringing Them Home Is Not Enough

In most cases, just locating and getting the teen home is not enough. If parents have their teen brought home without a plan, the teen will probably go right back out the window--if not the next night, then after the next conflict. Parents should have a plan they think will work, and if it doesn't--depending upon the issues--they should contact a professional.

Some psychiatrists, psychologists, educational consultants and family counselors specialize in working with at-risk youth. Many of them work with or can refer you to programs, hospitals, or boarding schools that specialize in assisting troubled teens.

Take Time To Be A Parent

Parents should not stop at just arranging for professional counseling.

Understand that whatever type of program your child may go through, they are still coming back home to an environment that at some level contributed to the situation. Ultimately, parents should work on their own communication skills and plan more quality time with their children.

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Cutters: A Cry For Attention

One of the more dangerous signs of at-risk teens are “cutters”.

Cutters are teens that cut themselves intentionally, often on impulse. They do it as a way to cope with overwhelming bad feelings and emotions that include frustration, deep anger and tension. As we learned from a doctor that I recently had on my radio show, some young people who have been molested or become enslaved in the human trafficking trade become cutters even after they have escaped from that world because it is the one thing that they can control.

How To Keep Your Kids Safe In Summer

Summer time is traditionally supposed to be a time of fun and relaxation, play and rejuvenation, but while the summer month's gives teens time off from school, it also means more time spent at home. While on the surface most of us cherish the idea of more family time, teenagers can see it as torture, with more rules, more chores, more criticism. From their perspective, they would rather be in school.



Unfortunately, summer is an opportune time for teens to choose running away from home as a viable option. Things that may not have bothered the teenager throughout the year can escalate quickly with more free time on their hands.

Through my company, West Shield Investigations, we have solved hundreds of runaway cases over the years and many of these runaway incidents happened during the months of Summer.

After returning some teens numerous times, my goal is to help parents prevent or at least thwart the plans of their teenagers who are at risk for running away.

Here are some tips, I have offered on my blog, Answers 4 The Family, which streams a live Internet radio talk show from www.LATalkradio.com.

During the summer months:

- 1) Teenagers should have a place to be every day. School has a built-in schedule for teenagers to follow. Most claim to hate it, but ironically they function best in a structured environment where there is some plan applied to the day. A first job or volunteer organizations are excellent and productive alternatives to "hanging out".
- 2) You must establish absolute times when you expect your teenager to check in. Summer is not the time to abandon the curfew set during the school year, especially with a teen having behavior issues. Often times a teenager who has run away gets a head start because the parents had no clear time when they were expected home.
- 3) Check your community college for inexpensive classes. Many non-credit courses are fun for teenagers at a community college summer program. Arts and crafts, team sports, computer graphics, and web design are a few examples. Many teens love the idea of being on a college campus. There is a good chance they might discover a new, life-altering talent.

Why I Do What I Do

A few years ago, I was seated at a Thanksgiving table with about 20 members of my extended family when my cell phone rang. My family is always perturbed that I don't stop business even on holidays, but I consider it part of my job because it might be an emergency.



I excused myself and left the room. It was a young man who started out saying, "You probably don't remember me. But my name is...."

"Of course I remember you," I said. I thought back: It had been 13 years since I located and transported him. Now this 26 year old was sitting at his own family's Thanksgiving table, with his own multigenerational relatives. He mentioned my name when everyone was asked what they were most grateful for. They suggested that he call and tell me.

It was incredibly touching. He told me he was very grateful for my persistence in not giving up on him. He said he understood why his parents had not abandoned him. But I, a complete stranger, had not given up on him either.

After I found him as a runaway, I got him into a program. But he had run away twice from that program and I had gone and found him each time and returned him. Now he wanted to make sure that I knew how important that had been to him.

His life had turned around completely. He was now successful, working at a regular job. He was also married, and he and his wife were expecting their first child. He told me that he now understood life better and that he was doing great. He also mentioned that if I had not showed up to help him, he would probably be either dead or in jail by now.

I went back to sit at my own family table, with tears in my eyes. I shared this story with them. My family is in construction. But from this, I think they learned more about having a job in which you make a difference in people's lives.

Together We Can End Child Slavery

In this brief e-book, I have tried to introduce you to a world that most people either know nothing about or prefer to ignore.

However, ignoring the evil that lurks in the midst of us does not make it go away.

Instead, evil festers and multiplies in the dark. It grows unchecked, because decent people are too busy, too frightened, or too indifferent to take a stand.

While I don't know you or your circumstances, I know one thing: If you have read this far, you are a person of heart, integrity, and courage.

Together we can stop this assault against human dignity.

By raising awareness in whatever way we can, we will end this abomination.

It's time to finally abolish slavery in America.



How To Contact Allen Cardoza

If you need to contact Allen because of concern about how to find a missing teen, wish to learn more about how you can help him with his mission to fight human trafficking, or need to get in touch with him for any other reason related to his life work, here is his contact information:

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