

Modern-day slavery does exist

LexisNexis sponsored a recent screening of the movie “Holly” in Dayton, Ohio to raise awareness that global slavery exists even today.

In our ongoing support of the Rule of Law, LexisNexis recently sponsored three screenings of the movie “Holly” in Dayton, Ohio, to raise awareness that modern-day global slavery exists. Writer/Producer Guy Jacobson; Elizabeth Rector, Senior Vice-President, Corporate Responsibility; LexisNexis, State Department representative Amy O’ Neill’ and Kathleen YS Davis, Director of the Contemporary Slave Programs for the National Underground Freedom Center were on hand to answer questions after each showing of the film.

"Holly" is the insightful and jarring story of child prostitution told through the complex relationship between Holly (Thuy Nguyen), a 12-year-old Vietnamese girl, and Patrick (Ron Livingston), an American dealer of stolen artifacts. Holly has been sold by her poor family and smuggled across the border to Cambodia to work as a prostitute in the infamous "K11" red light village. While Holly waits to be sold at a premium for her virginity, she meets Patrick who is losing money and friends through gambling and bar fights. Their initial strong connection is disrupted when Holly is sold to a child trafficker and disappears.

While traveling through Cambodia in 2002, Guy Jacobson was approached for sex by about fifteen five- to seven-year old girls. At a time when they should have been in kindergarten or first grade, these children were soliciting Mr. Jacobson for sex. One of the girls told him, in broken English, "I yum yum very good." (The term yum yum means oral sex.) After answering her with a no, she told him, "I no money today, Mama-san boxing me."

“I gave her some money,” Guy shares, “so she would not be beaten. That incident haunted me. I couldn’t get it out of my mind. I did some research and was horrified to find out that this was not an isolated incident limited to Cambodia – it is a global epidemic. Worldwide every year more than two million children – some younger than one year old – are sold into sexual slavery and prostitution. It exists in any major city in the U.S. and Western Europe – anywhere in the developed world. It’s everywhere.”

Guy decided to utilize his production company, Priority Films, to make a film to raise awareness that modern-day global slavery exists. Mr. Jacobson went back to the brothels of Cambodia and gathered information, talking to the workers and customers, under the guise of being a customer himself.

In 2004, Jacobson and the film crew went to Cambodia to begin shooting. Filming in Cambodia was a very risky venture. The production was challenged by the Chinese mafia, local organized crime, brothel owners, and the government, the police and the military, who wanted them to leave.

"We didn't realize at first how much danger we were in," Guy admits. "Neither the local crime syndicates nor the local authorities wanted us to expose this. Trafficking and child prostitution is a very profitable business. There were actual contacts on our lives soon after we arrived to film the movie. More than one government official warned us that we were all going to die." The production ended up being protected by over forty guards with automatic weapons during the entire shoot. The film was shot in "K11," the district notorious for its pedophilic offerings that the project took its name from. Many scenes were shot in actual brothels.

"I've been following this particular issue for about ten years now," Amy O'Neil said after one of the showings in Dayton, "And this is the best-researched film on the subject I've seen."

Critically acclaimed, Holly has been making its way through the film festival circuit, filling to capacity, often overflowing, the venues where it is shown.

What YOU can do to combat human trafficking.

- 1). Go to www.redlightchildren.org. Enter your information and tell your representative that you care.
- 2) Get involved in the Somaly Mam Foundation: www.somaly.org.
- 3) To report a case of potential human trafficking in your community, call the National Human Trafficking Resource Center at 1-888-373-7888.