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2-3-2017

5 Things I Wish I Didn't Know About the Super Bowl

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Recommended Citation

Sandbulte, J. (2017). 5 Things I Wish I Didn't Know About the Super Bowl. Retrieved from https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/faculty_work/628

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5 Things I Wish I Didn't Know About the Super Bowl

Abstract

"God calls us to sit at his feet and to seek justice for the oppressed. Focus your voice in prayer, and trust that your prayers are heard."

Posting about the problem of human trafficking from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/5-things-i-wish-i-didnt-know-about-the-super-bowl/>

Keywords

In All Things, Super Bowl, human trafficking, rescue, justice

Disciplines

Christianity

Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

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 inallthings.org/5-things-i-wish-i-didnt-know-about-the-super-bowl/

February 3,
2017

Jen Sandbulte

I remember his hands. Large gold rings on several fingers gripped the small plastic cup which held freshly poured whiskey on the rocks. I didn't dare admit that I had been eavesdropping on his cell phone conversation. I knew without asking that he wasn't going to the Super Bowl to watch the game. I asked anyway, because that's what you do when you're sitting next to someone on an airplane. His cold eyes glanced briefly at me as his deep voice growled, "I work in the adult entertainment industry." Without further pleasantries, he leaned his head back, and I knew the conversation was over.

I had never imagined I'd be on an airplane headed to the venue city of the Super Bowl to pray for trafficking victims and to work alongside ministries in the streets. And I had certainly never imagined I would end up sitting next to what I now know was a "trafficker."

Over the last five years, I've learned many things at the Super Bowl...and none of them were about the game! Many things, I wish I didn't know; truths of the kind that, once you know them, change you forever. While my list seems unending, I'm sharing my top five here, in hopes of displacing some of the misconceptions.

1. **It's not just the Super Bowl**

Human Trafficking happens in epic proportions at the Super Bowl, and every other major event where people gather. Think of local things like State Fairs, pheasant hunting in South Dakota, Sturgis Bike Rally, our military bases...

Why major events?

Traffickers are businessmen (and women), and they do business everywhere. They understand supply and demand. Large events mean large demand. Demand equals profit.

2. **Kids (boys and girls) are trafficked, too**

The average age of entry into the trafficking industry is between 12 and 14. This number is an average. Imagine the number of young females it takes to average 12-14. And remember, quantifying any of these numbers is nearly impossible, but I've seen girls this age trafficked at Super Bowl host cities before.

And as we debate things like LGBTQ rights, the demand for young males continues to increase. It isn't just women and girls who are being exploited.

3. **You don't hear most of the stories of rescue**

Each year, as the actual game begins, I return to my comfortable Midwestern home. For days after, I pay close attention to the trafficking news reports from the Super Bowl. Stories that we hear or were a part of while in the venue city rarely, if ever, make the news. Unless an arrest is made and the FBI is involved, you don't hear about the majority of rescues from the industry. What makes the news is a small percent of what happens behind the scenes. Street teams hand out phone numbers and cards, teams canvas hotels, etc., and the impact of these efforts cannot be measured in earthly quantities.

4. **Women are marketed online like a pair of shoes**

Over the last year, a prominent webpage used frequently to sell sex received a great deal of criticism. To the general public, it's hard to truly grasp what really has been happening on this page. A year ago, I sat in a church hallway

clicking on images that can't be erased from my mind. I was working with a team looking at several thousands of ads on the website; ads selling women during the Super Bowl. Yes, you read that right. Women are posed and made up and advertised for sale in a cheap makeshift way...much like a bargain pair of tennis shoes in a Sunday flyer.

As we scanned, our goal was to identify the girls who looked to be under 18. We also paid attention to phone numbers and the surroundings in the photographs. We then had an onsite team that would call the girls and ask if they were safe or if they needed help. Some cried, some shared openly, but most were scared and ended up disconnecting.

Teams study statistics on sites like these, and the statistics clearly show an increase in activity. The increase in advertisements during major activity weeks can be 300% or more. I did a small-scale version of this monitoring during the NCAA tournament this past year. Des Moines, IA, hosted a portion of the tournament for the first time. I checked the website on Friday night, a week before the games, and saw about 30 ads. I checked the weekend of the games, and that number had increased to around 300 ads.

5. Even in the United States, corruption related to the trafficking industry does happen

In each of the venue cities we have visited, I've seen a common theme. A large percent of women we talk to tell us that a portion of their primary customers wear blue (meaning they are law enforcement, or pretending to be). The very men who are supposed to protect these women are instead purchasing them. Our team has even had solid evidence of young minors being sold for sex, only to have law enforcement be "too busy" to respond.

To say that human trafficking is overwhelming is an understatement. Over the years, I have read several articles questioning the validity of the extent of trafficking at the Super Bowl. I don't pretend to know all the numbers and statistics, but I do know that members of our team *have* rescued women from the industry, women who have been offered an opportunity to freedom and take it wholeheartedly. If it were my daughter, no amount of effort or resources would be "too much." Each one matters—and there are many.

With all the things I wish I didn't know, one key anchors me and reminds me that we know the end of the story: we know who wins and brings justice. Jesus does. Isaiah 42:3-4 assures justice.

In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;
he will not falter or be discouraged
till he establishes justice on earth.

God calls us to sit at his feet and to seek justice for the oppressed. Focus your voice in prayer, and trust that your prayers are heard. As William Wilberforce once said "You may choose to look the other way, but you can never again say you did not know."