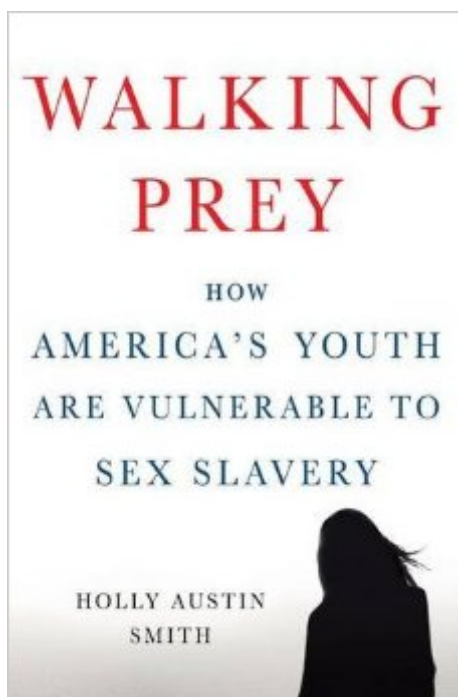


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Walking Prey: How America's Youth Are Vulnerable To Sex Slavery



Synopsis

Today, two cultural forces are converging to make America's youth easy targets for sex traffickers. Younger and younger girls are engaging in adult sexual attitudes and practices, and the pressure to conform means thousands have little self-worth and are vulnerable to exploitation. At the same time, thanks to social media, texting, and chatting services, predators are able to ferret out their victims more easily than ever before. In *Walking Prey*, advocate and former victim Holly Austin Smith shows how middle class suburban communities are fast becoming the new epicenter of sex trafficking in America. Smith speaks from experience: Without consistent positive guidance or engagement, Holly was ripe for exploitation at age fourteen. A chance encounter with an older man led her to run away from home, and she soon found herself on the streets of Atlantic City. Her experience led her, two decades later, to become one of the foremost advocates for trafficking victims. Smith argues that these young women should be treated as victims by law enforcement, but that too often the criminal justice system lacks the resources and training to prevent the vicious cycle of prostitution. This is a clarion call to take a sharp look at one of the most striking human rights abuses, and one that is going on in our own backyard.

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Customer Reviews

Holly Austin Smith's first book, *Walking Prey*, is very well researched, written, edited, annotated and indexed. This is very refreshing since so many books on the market today just sensationalize human sex trafficking in America and quote statistics that are not accurate or substantiated. Her book reads more like a text book, which anyone working in this field welcomes. I think Holly does a

masterful job of weaving her painful personal story of falling prey to commercial sexual exploitation throughout the book. I have worked in the field of anti-human trafficking for quite some time and work directly with underage American girls rescued from child sexual exploitation. Holly's articulate explanation of the harmful effects of unsupervised overexposure to media, especially MTV, and the effects of negative messages in popular culture on our children, especially girls, convicted me that "it is a powerful predisposing factor often missed in discussions on the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC)" and that I had missed it! Holly gives the reader information on the buyers and the pimps as well as listing excellent suggestions for those of us working in aftercare with the victims. In her appendix, Holly lists resources for parents and victims; law enforcement and other first responders; tips for parents on how to protect their children from predators; and tips for elementary and middle school school teachers and counselors. She even includes copies of her own psychiatric emergency screenings and her discharge summaries which proves to me that Holly has written this book as an overcomer in order to educate others. Well done Holly!!

Congratulations to Holly Austin Smith on a writing a smart, sad and extremely well informed book about all the risk factors that push children in the United States into commercial sexual exploitation. She tells her own individual story in the book: recruited into the sex trade at age 14 and sold on the streets of Atlantic City. But she uses her story, and that of other survivors, as the basis for describing the toxic cultural and social environment that ensures that there is a constant flow of young people, both boys and girls, into the commercial sex industry. She keeps returning to the question she always receives: "why didn't you just leave?" She weaves together elements of substance abuse, mental illness, violence, family instability, abuse and neglect, and the sex and violence in our media and cultural environment to show how easy it is for young people to become victimized; and how hard it is for them to get out. The appendix provides resources for schools, parents, law enforcement and others to keep children from being ensnared in the sex industry, and how to help them get out. I highly recommend this excellent resource.

This book is similar to Rachel Lloyd's *Girls Like Us*. It's not quite as good, but still well worth the read. The author tells her own life story intertwined with best practices for how to address child trafficking. Like Lloyd and other authors, she emphasizes that the hardest battle to overcome is the EMOTIONAL pull of trafficking to children who already have emotional problems that aren't being addressed in healthy ways, and she emphasizes that children are victims, not aggressors, even when they don't fit the traditional "victim" profile. One thing that I found personally touching about

this story was that Smith and I were in the same grade in school (thousands of miles apart) and I experienced almost none of the culture problems she experienced. It's amazing how two people the same age can have such different childhoods. I had problems of my own, not saying I didn't, but nothing like that. WOW. Smith is an exceedingly strong and brave person and I applaud her writing and her activism. Well done.

Good angle that Holly takes. Explaining that at such a young age- she was a "willing victim"... it just seemed like that would be the natural progression her life would take because she was fed, ate and swallowed and believed all of the lies that were fed to her via music videos, and advertisement, not to mention how men and boys are portrayed as animals with no control over their urges and no respect for women. Good angle on a very hot topic: Human Trafficking.

It's been over three weeks since I finished reading *Walking Prey: How America's Youth Are Vulnerable to Sex Slavery* by Holly Austin Smith. Not a day has gone by that I have not thought about Holly's story and experienced a deeper understanding about my own life experiences. As a survivor of sex trafficking, I, too, was so desperate to be loved and accepted that I fell for the first man who showed me attention. *Walking Prey* has helped me heal, and it can help other survivors. For one thing, it is reassuring to know that others have experienced some of the same things that I did. While reading *Walking Prey*, there were times that I thought I was reading my own story. But Holly's book has more to offer than simply shared experiences that validate my feelings. *Walking Prey* has also helped me to understand the factors in my childhood that led me up to the point that I would succumb to a predator. Through her book, I was able to recognize and clearly see patterns in my own life that I had not before realized influenced my own journey, such as the impact of media on children. I highly recommend this book for everyone—survivors, teenagers, parents, teachers, service providers—everyone. It's time for us to see what commercials and music and TV programs and movies are doing to our children and the effect the media are having on them. I do not want to go as far as to say that a young person's introduction to sex trafficking is entirely a society's fault; however, after reading Holly's powerful, well thought out book, I can see how large a role media play in creating teenagers who are lost and in a search for love. I am thankful that Holly wrote this book. It has helped me to understand my own childhood and my own healing process. Even more importantly, it helps me identify ways that I can support other families in taking action to protect all our children from predators who want to exploit them.

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