

**A Case for Trauma-Informed Education:
Testimony at the Basic Education Funding Commission Public Hearing
Thursday, March 12, 2015**

By Carol Hart Metzker



My name is Carol Metzker. I'm speaking as author of the book *Facing the Monster: How One Person Can Fight Child Slavery*.

I volunteer with Dawn's Place and New Day Women's Drop-In Center—two organizations that help survivors and victims of human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation—and serve as a member of the Chester County Anti-Human Trafficking Coalition, the international Rotarian Action Group Against Child Slavery and the (Quaker) Philadelphia Yearly Meeting End Modern Slavery Working Group.

Many of the women at these centers where I volunteer were childhood victims of abuse--sexual abuse, domestic violence, exposure to drugs and alcohol. They fell between the cracks in school and in society. Their stories speak of a gap in our educational system that has serious ramifications that can last a lifetime.

Ann Marie Jones grew up in a home where her mother was an alcoholic, her father was in prison for raping her sister, and her brother molested her. Unidentified as a victim of trauma by the school or the community, she dropped out of school. Later, as an adult, she was a victim of commercial sexual exploitation for ten years—living for some of that time in an abandoned building, being arrested 56 times for prostitution and spending time in prison. Not until that last time in prison was she ever viewed as a victim, instead of as a criminal. Ann Marie and I met at Dawn's Place, a Pennsylvania residence for victims of human trafficking and commercial

sexual exploitation, where I have volunteered for four years and where Ann Marie received help.

After much therapy, work toward a GED, and vocational training, Ann Marie is now a peer counselor for women working to recover from a life in sex trafficking as she endured. Through Project Dawn Court in Philadelphia, her record has been expunged. She is a self-sufficient, hard working, contributing member of our community.

In another case, Starr grew up in a household where her father and brother raped her. For years, she existed in a life of secrets and fear. By the time she was 18, she believed that her only value to society was her body. Beginning by stripping and drinking to numb herself, eventually she ended up in a situation where men paid someone else to have sex with her on stage; she became addicted to crack cocaine. A friend was instrumental in helping her escape that existence and to join the military. Despite many good years, she still struggles sometimes with homelessness, unemployment, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder from the trials she endured while being exploited—being thrown down stairs, set on fire, and beaten.

Ann Marie's and Starr's stories are not unique.

If these survivors had been identified as trauma victims while they were in the classroom, their lives, my work and that of many others would be different. Instead of spending countless hours in rehabilitation, recovery, the completion of their education and vocational training, survivors could already be self-sufficient, healthy, tax-paying, voting members of our society. Who could be better than a teacher or a school counselor who already cares about the education and welfare our youngest community members and spends hours a day with students, to learn to identify the signs of childhood trauma, and to change a life course for the better?