

Amber Blouin
Living in Freedom Together

My name is Amber. I am a survivor of the sex trade and an employee at Living In Freedom Together as a youth mentor and advocate. I also survived and the child regulation system, foster care, although, I would not call it foster care because I was not cared for. My needs were not met by this system of care and protection. They were met by my exploiters, typically middle class white men of means. I was exploited for a place to stay, for goods, care, housing while I was missing from care. I then knew these men would help me meet my basic needs. I had no other choice. My life did not change at 18; I hadn't learned other skills to bring into the next year, as I wouldn't say adulthood as no one turns into an adult overnight. The actual adults in my life were not my foster "parents" they were adult male sex buyers. A system of care and protection failed me in ways that impacted the rest of my life. These sex buyers damaged my sense of self, of self-worth, my connection to my body, what I like, I struggle with speaking up for myself with setting healthy boundaries. I struggle with medical screenings as every time I was missing from care. I was screened to go "home," and I was made to feel dirty and violated further by medical providers. There's been long term impact on my mental health, I've experienced SUD for 9 years into my adulthood, in and out of treatment facilities, that also failed and never addressed the exploitation I was experiencing throughout. I have anxiety and PTSD and I am still unpacking all this today. I am crying writing this. No one should be criminalized for lack of choice and just trying to survive. Although these men SHOULD be criminalized for exploiting the vulnerabilities of people who have no other choice.