



# Freedom Network USA

## **Lured into Trafficking**

1. When I was 18 years old, I started talking to a man online who told me his name was Iggy. I was one of six kids and both of my parents worked all the time, so I enjoyed the attention I got from Iggy. I told him that I felt like I was a burden to my parents and he encouraged me to come to Chicago to visit him. He promised he would take care of me. After three months of talking, Iggy bought me a bus ticket and I went. I know now that pimps operate by figuring out what vulnerable girls need and use this information to exploit them, but back then, I jumped at the chance to have someone take care of me.
2. The day after I got to Chicago, Iggy told me he was a pimp and expected me to have sex with people for money for him. I was horrified, but Iggy promised me that this was an easy way to make money and told me I could stay with him for free. I had no money and no way to get back home, and it felt like this was my only option.
3. Iggy's behavior was frightening to me throughout the three months he was prostituting me. He was a heavy drinking and he continually threatened me with the gun he had on him. He forced me to stay in the house and do the housekeeping. He dropped me off on the streets every night and told me I couldn't come home until I made \$400. I was not allowed to keep any of the money.
4. Iggy was also extremely physically abusive toward me during the time I was being prostituted by him. His outbursts were unpredictable. During the time I was with him, he broke several of my ribs and I suffered other injuries. I was never allowed to seek medical treatment. I was also required to have sex with Iggy whenever he wanted.



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5. One day, after about three months, I saw a canvasser on the street talking to someone about raising money for youth at risk. I waited until the conversation was over, and then went up to the woman who appeared to be affiliated with a youth center. She turned out to be a part-time staffer for driver for a homeless youth shelter, and she took me right then to the shelter. I had only the clothes on my back and was visibly injured. The social worker I met that night at the shelter took me to the hospital, where I stayed overnight for two days.
6. My time at the shelter was violence-free and I felt very supported while I was there, but I was required to leave after 90 days. I found myself out on the streets with no means of support and no education. Feeling desperate, I returned to prostitution. I could not break out of the cycle of trafficking.
7. For the rest of that year and the next, I was trafficked by a series of pimps. During this time, I was the victim of sexual and physical violence at the hands of these pimps and the men to whom I was sold. I would remain with each pimp until the situation became unbearable, and then I would try to escape. However, when I left, I felt that I had no place to go and no resources to help me and I would end up with another, equally violent predator.
8. After two years of this cycle, a man named Benjamin started communicating with me via Snapchat, an online social media site. I shared with him my feelings of sadness and isolation, and he told me he wanted to help take care of me and get my life back on track. It had been so long that I felt cared for by someone that I badly wanted to believe him.



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9. Benjamin came to visit me later that month. He stayed with me for five days, treating me well. I started to believe his promise of a healthy family life together. He told me he wanted us to meet his family in Milwaukee. He said he would drive us back to Chicago right after the visit.
10. When we arrived in Milwaukee, Benjamin took us to his cousin's house. He took my cell phone and my ID and told me that he was my pimp now and I had to make money for him through prostitution. I was terrified of him and how quickly he became so controlling so I did exactly what I was told.
11. Benjamin prostituted me constantly, barely letting me slow down long enough to eat or sleep. If I didn't meet my weekly quota, Benjamin wouldn't let me eat. I turned over all the money I made to Benjamin. He said he would kill me if he found out I was keeping any of the money for myself. I didn't know what to do so I just did what he said.
12. After a few months, Benjamin could see that I was going to do everything he said, so he became less strict. He would sometimes fall asleep with his computer logged in, so I started going online and searching for help. I met another pimp in Los Angeles named Woody. I told him about the terrible situation I was in with Benjamin. He told me that although he was a pimp, he would help me. He made me believe that he cared about me. He told me he was going to get rid of all the girls engaging in prostitution for him and we would travel the country together. He seemed so sincere, and I was so afraid of Benjamin, that I believed him.
13. When Benjamin dropped me off the next night for to go make money, I hitchhiked to the bus station. I stayed there for three days begging for money to buy a ticket. I was terrified



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during this time that Benjamin would come find me, but he didn't. After three days, I had enough money for a bus ticket to Los Angeles.

14. Woody picked me up from the bus station in Los Angeles. As soon as I got in his car, he told me that I would have to engage in prostitution for him and obey him as my pimp. I had no money and no place to stay. I felt that I had no choice but to be subjected to the control of yet another pimp.

15. One night while engaging in prostitution for Woody, a john came to pick me up. When I got in his car and we agreed on our terms for the "date," he told me he was an undercover police officer. He knew all about Woody and asked me whether Woody was my pimp. I had been in the life long enough to know that you never give up your pimp to the police, so I said no. The officer must have realized that I was in trouble, because he kept talking to me with respect and told me he was concerned about my safety. I ultimately told the officer that Woody was my pimp and that I had been under the control of multiple pimps for the last several years.