



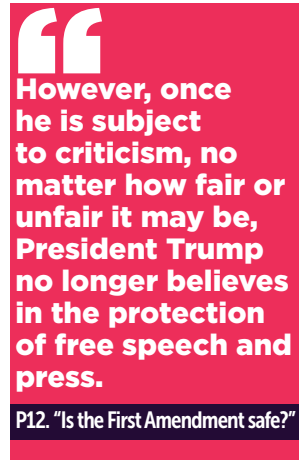
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# THE KINKAID FALCON

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Many shops, like this brothel are fronts for sex trafficking businesses, a form of human trafficking. Photo by Callie Rosenthal.

## Falcons run on girl power

### Girls basketball and swimming win SPC

BY FARAZ VIRANI

The 2016-2017 girls basketball and swimming teams, lead by dominant senior classes, won their winter SPC tournaments in early February. Adding to their banners in Melcher Gym, for two teams to come home with a championship is a special feat.

The girls basketball team defeated St. John's and Greenhill by more than twenty points, coming into the championship game on a roll, ready to face the Houston Christian Lady Mustangs to win it all.

For the girls swimming team, they went into SPC confident after a first place finish in the St. John's Invitational.

For this season's winter sports champions, the story isn't the come-from-behind, underdog, victory; these two teams have been at the top of their respective sports all season long. Girls swimming did not finish below third place, and girls basketball crushed teams from across the city and established Kinkaid as an elite program in the state. But with their victories came both pressure and expectations heading into the "make it or break it" SPC championship weekend. With tireless hours on the court or in the pool, that pressure turned into diamonds.

## Houston's human trafficking problem

### "Modern day slavery" is hidden in plain sight

BY EMMA GILLIAM, SARAH KATE PADON & ASHLEY PAKZABAN

The Houston human trafficking industry is an unsuspectingly vast, yet silent business that haunts our city behind closed doors. Nail salons, massage parlors, and cantinas are notorious business fronts for illegal human exploitation and sex trade. In

fact, Westheimer, only a block away from Kinkaid, holds some of the busiest brothels in Houston.

Human trafficking is a lucrative criminal enterprise where people are treated as commodities—forced to provide labor or perform other services, including having their bodies sold for sex—to make a profit for traffickers. It is considered by many as "modern day slavery" and a human rights violation. Not all human trafficking involves sex; however, the City of Houston's Anti-Human Trafficking Council shares that

sex trafficking is the most commonly reported form.

"Women are being moved on a circuit throughout several states, and Houston is part of that circuit. One of the reasons [human trafficking is] so prevalent in Houston is our extraordinary number of illegal sexually oriented businesses. We have more of these in Houston than we do Starbucks," says Jamey Caruthers, a staff attorney at Children at Risk.

Children at Risk, a Houston-based nonprofit, is focused on improving the quality of life for children through its

research and advocacy programs; human trafficking is one of the areas they prioritize. According to the organization, with about 600 sex trades per-night, the annual revenue generated by the human trafficking industry is an estimated nine billion dollars. These brothels are populated with girls enslaved by the human trafficking industry that are forced into exploitation and sex for little to no pay. Any money that is earned will directly profit the girls' "pimp," or boss.

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## Wells Fellow program invites noted political commentator

BY ELLA MORGAN

The first speaker in the 2017 Wells Fellow series, Mr. James Carville, spoke in a

special assembly on Monday, Feb. 27. Mr. Carville, fittingly known as the "Rajin' Cajun," is an American political commentator and media figure best known for his leading role in Bill Clinton's successful 1992 presidential campaign against George H. W. Bush. In addition to working on numerous political campaigns, Mr. Carville has also been a regular fixture on shows like CNN's Crossfire and The Situation Room; he is currently a professor of

political science at Tulane University in New Orleans, where he lives with his wife, Mary Matalin, who has famously worked for many Republican campaigns.

The assembly began with a casual conversation moderated by the Chair of the Upper School History Department, Dr. Ed Harris, before transitioning to an open-floor Q&A with the students.

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Debate Update

## Top 16

Seniors Sabrina Bajwa and Sam Richey placed in the top 16 at Emory University

## Top 8

Now qualified for TFA State Tournament, Shreya Mehta (9) placed in the top eight at Montgomery High School



### Raising Awareness

Elijah Rising and Children at Risk, Houston-based nonprofit organizations, offer "human trafficking awareness" tours in the city. Callie Rosenthal photographed these motels for her independent study on human trafficking during Interim Term. (Turn to Page 14 for Rosenthal's interview.)

# Houston's human trafficking problem

"Modern day slavery" is hidden in plain sight

BY EMMA GILLIAM, SARAH KATE PADON & ASHLEY PAKZABAN

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"What we see most often is what we call Romeo pimping, which is where an older man is going to approach a younger girl who he has identified through his practice as having these vulnerabilities. He gives her things she hasn't had before: love, acceptance, gifts, all these self-esteem building things, but that relationship quickly turns into exploitation," says Caruthers.

Typically, a child who radiates a need for "love, acceptance, gifts" will come from a background stained with sexual abuse and foster care situations. After running away from home, or aging out of the foster care system at 18, these runaways and foster children are left to fend for themselves and are consequently extremely vulnerable to coercion and deception by a human trafficker. Runaways are particularly susceptible to the sex industry; one out of every six children who run away from home become human trafficking victims.

This past November, Children at Risk gave a presentation at the eighth annual Human Trafficking Summit, which took place in Dallas. Part of their talk included notable examples of children who had been victims of human trafficking: In 2009, a 14-year-old girl was kidnapped,

assaulted, given a fake ID and forced to work in a strip club by a sex trafficker. One year earlier, a 12-year-old girl in Dallas was found after working in a strip club for two weeks. She had run away from home, and ended up living with a 22-year-old man and his girlfriend who took her to the strip club. Because they provided her with a roof over her head, the girl felt pressured to earn money to repay them.

However, teenaged girls as a demographic—irrespective of background—are also vulnerable to the industry. Social media outlets like Kik, Instagram and Facebook act as vehicles for human traffickers to target young girls posting provocative pictures or displaying evidence of low self-esteem or bad family situations. The targets morph into victims when a pimp slowly transitions a direct message on social media into a romantic relationship, garnished with gifts and praise, until eventually the girl is physically trapped in an inescapable situation. Sometimes, previously trafficked girls are even threatened into recruiting their friends for their pimps, the cheapest method of stealing girls.

The brothels, disguised as massage parlors, nail salons, and cantinas, take many measures to deter law enforcement: barring blacked out windows,

installing surveillance cameras, and having multiple entry ways. Other signs of undercover brothels include suggestive names or coded online reviews, abnormal operating hours, or extremely low costs. Many of the enslaved girls inside, if not local, come from third world countries where bribery and payoffs are common. Sometimes traffickers will post phony police signs and stickers that suggest to foreign girls that the police force is on the side of the traffickers; this is meant to promote the mindset of "you can run, but you can't hide." Usually, the mere thought of running is completely out of the question for these girls, as the threat of punishment for running away is horrific.

After California, Texas is the second most active trafficking state in the nation—with Houston as the epicenter. Houston serves as a trafficking hot-spot due to its location near the border, international ports and airports, and the I-10 corridor, regarded as an infamous sex trafficking highway. In response to the rise of human trafficking in Houston, a number of local stakeholders including lawmakers, nonprofits, charitable organizations, and even local businesses have taken a stance to combat its presence. A 2nd Cup is a cafe in the Heights is determined to make a difference. This

nonprofit coffee shop was founded in 2012 by Erica Raggett and opened its first shop in October of 2015. Its goal is to educate people about human trafficking and use their proceeds to support other organizations that help tackle this issue. The coffee shop, located on 11th Street just off Studewood, sells responsibly-sourced merchandise in addition to the usual cafe fare. The colorful wall art makes it clear to customers what their mission is, with a huge typographic "#tileveryoneisfree" print dominating one wall, and the quote "Ending human trafficking is not idealistic or naive. It is audacious. And it is the people with audacity who change the world" on

another.

Proceeds also go to supporting recovering victims by providing them with counseling, mentoring, and skills to help them get jobs. The coffee shop has partnered with other local businesses in their quest to bring an end to human trafficking. Events like their Christmas Benefit offered an opportunity to buy gifts of all kinds for recovering victims and involved organizations including Elijah Rising, Free the Captives, and Freedom Place. Their fight against human trafficking goes all the way down to their beans. The nonprofit uses Boomtown Coffee, another local coffee shop a couple streets over, as their coffee roaster.

Boomtown uses only ethically sourced beans, so each cup of coffee is ensured to be free from human trafficked labor.

The city is working to combat its reputation as a human trafficking hub by implementing strict laws and participating in initiatives against sex trade. Texas recently passed House Bill 10 to facilitate an easier process of prosecution for sex traffickers, and to create a child sex trafficking prevention unit. Furthermore, Houston attorney Vince Ryan and Children at Risk are working together to shut down the 200 or more illicit massage parlors and brothels in Houston. On top of that, the Harris County Sheriff's Office has participated in the Johns Suppression Initiative, which works to prevent sex trafficking nationwide. Finally, just in the month of January, the Harris County Sheriff's Office made over 178 arrests, beating the record amount of arrests of any police station involved in this initiative.

As of 2010, the Texas Supreme Court has implemented a policy that children under the age of 14 cannot be charged with prostitution. This protects children under who are being trafficked and want to approach the authorities, but are afraid of the repercussions. However, organizations like Children at Risk continue to fight for a policy that includes adolescents under 18 in this protection; this policy

was enacted into California law and took effect on January 1, 2017, and as a result children under 18 cannot be indicted for prostitution.

Caruthers says, "That's a difficult sell in Texas—we're a very conservative state. Even in California, a much less conservative state, you may have seen the articles 'California legalizes child prostitution.' That was not true. Very few prosecuted individuals under the age of 18 are doing so on their own volition. What California did was, they said "Okay if you're a minor, engaged in prostitution, we can't prosecute you." They did not legalize child prostitution. The push back California experienced would be very small compared to what would happen in Texas. So we would very much to see that decriminalized for children. However, that's really not the reality right now."

While technologies and laws will continue to develop, the most important measure in preventing trafficking is awareness.

"We want to live in a society where we're not treating people as slaves, and that's essentially what human trafficking is," Caruthers says. "We need a cultural change around this, and it's not going to come from my generation, it's going to come from the generations coming now."

