

2010 Frederick Douglass Award Winner

Tina Frundt | USA

Tina Frundt says that no little girl dreams of becoming a sex slave when she grows up. That's why Tina risks her life in the middle of the night to reach out to teens that are trapped. She knows their pain and fear. "The reason why I'm so compelled to do this work is because I'm a survivor of sex trafficking," Tina says, "and quite honestly, nobody did this for me."



Frederick Douglass Award

is given to an individual who has survived slavery and is using their life in freedom to help others. The award honors the tremendous resilience of the human spirit, and emphasizes that many survivors of modern-day slavery go on to help others to freedom. Named after an escaped slave who became an influential author, diplomat and abolitionist, and helped persuade President Lincoln to end American slavery with the Emancipation Proclamation.



A Street Smart Survivor

It takes Tina just ten seconds to let a sex slave know that someone cares about their plight and can help them escape. She does it on the streets of Washington, D.C. at night. Walking casually along, she hands off a simple trinket that contains a telephone hotline number. It's a covert encounter, and Tina works hard to blend in so that traffickers won't become suspicious.

"If we were handing out papers or a big sign that said trafficking hotline, they wouldn't call it because they know we didn't know how to come at them correctly," Tina says.



Tina's innovative approach works. Sex slaves do call her hotline. And once they've made that call, to a hotline staffed entirely by sex slavery survivors, they know there's a path to freedom.

Tricked and Trapped By a Trafficker

Tina bounced through more than 20 foster homes before being adopted by loving parents at age 12. She was insecure and vulnerable when a guy in his 20s approached her one day as she was heading to a neighborhood store in Chicago.

"I didn't know what trafficking was," Tina says. "I didn't know what a pimp was. I didn't know what slavery was. I had no idea."

The older guy struck up a friendly conversation. He wasn't threatening. Tina thought she had nothing to fear. The guy began to buy her gifts and drive her to school. He was building up trust, while secretly planning to snatch it away.

On her 14th birthday, Tina accepted a ride from the man, but this time he trafficked her to Cleveland, Ohio, where she was raped and trapped as a sex slave.

For more than a year, Tina was forced to serve up to 18 men a day. She was beaten and burned with cigarettes if she failed to earn enough money for the trafficker. She was warned that calling for help would be futile.



“The trafficker told me that if I ever told the police anything, that they would arrest me and no one would help me. And everything he said was true. Everything.”

Rough Road to Recovery

Tina escaped sex slavery by going to jail. The trafficker had broken her arm with a baseball bat, but when police came, they saw Tina as a criminal, not a victim.

Tina says she hit bottom at least ten times after that. But everything changed when she helped herself by helping others to freedom. She began by hiding escaped sex slaves in

her own house. She then started to speak out, telling her story to the public. “I don’t think people understand that there can be sex slaves in the United States,” Tina says.

A Beacon of Hope

Tina started her own anti-slavery organization with a small inheritance she received when her adoptive mom died in 2008. It’s called **Courtney’s House**, named for one of her daughters. The group runs the street outreach project and telephone hotline. A first-of-its kind shelter for U.S.-born teenage sex slavery survivors in the Washington metro area is scheduled to open soon. It will provide a safe and supportive environment for survivors to begin rebuilding their lives.

It’s difficult for Tina to tell her story in public, but she does so to build awareness that American children are being forced into sex slavery on American soil. She has brought her message to the United Nations and the U.S. Congress.

She passes out flyers and speaks to Washington commuters through a megaphone to alert them to what happens outside their office buildings at night. She conducts training workshops for groups in other cities to make their street outreach teams more effective.

Her personal experience makes Tina a beacon of hope for others coming out of sex slavery.

“I listen to Tina because she is not just someone with a college degree or has done some research on this,” says Shamer, a sex slavery survivor. “She’s someone who’s walked in my shoes.”

Tina thinks of Shamer and the many others she has rescued as her family. And many love her like a mom.