

Traffic Stop

Tenth Avenue North addresses human trafficking not only with words and music, but also with action 

When Dove Award-winning Tenth Avenue North launch their tour this September, the contemporary trio won't just be singing songs from another album. Instead, the Florida-based band will use their platform to spotlight a serious problem: human trafficking.

Currently playing at festivals and preparing for their fall headlining tour, Tenth Avenue North took their first step toward music-in-action earlier this year by supporting trafficking victims. The band began offering merchandise produced by factories in Cambodia and India that employ women rescued from slave traders. By fall they hope most of the clothing offered will be from these factories, though frontman Mike Donehey says the changeover is a slow process determined by supply and demand forecasts.

"When you first hear about sex trafficking and slavery in general it can feel pretty overwhelming," Donehey says. "We're taking small steps."

For a long time the lead vocalist, drummer Jason Jamison and guitarist Jeff Owen had wondered what they could do to help combat slavery. Thanks to representatives from the Not for Sale campaign, they realized changing their merchandise to help provide employment for victims offered one solution.

The band also feels called to educate fans about the situation's complex nature. Groups such as International Justice Mission, singer Natalie Grant's Home Foundation and Not for Sale's efforts to teach entrepreneurship are all part of providing answers, Donehey says. Yet the band recognizes

another aspect of resolving the crisis: Sponsoring children through Compassion International or World Vision can help them avoid slavery in the first place.

“Our desire is to be a conduit of helping everyone see how multifaceted this issue is,” the group’s lead singer says. “Whatever you’re passionate about, there’s a place in this issue where you can use your passion.”

Tenth Avenue North’s other contribution to stemming slavery will come from the debut this fall of its “It Could Be Me” campaign that will enlist the public to sign a visual petition. The initiative will encourage people to post self-portraits on a yet-to-be-named website, wearing duct tape and dehumanizing words such as *slave* or *product*. The goal is to amass 270,000 pictures—representing 1/100th of today’s 27 million slaves.

“Isaiah 58 talks about when we loose the chains of bondage and spend ourselves for the poor that our light goes forth,” Donehey says. “Our hope is that people would so understand the gospel that it would cause them to want to do the same for others that Jesus has done for them.”

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