

# Cleveland Girls Were Among 27 Million Trapped in Human Slavery

Amanda Berry, Gina DeJesus and Michelle Knight were rescued Monday after a neighbor heard Berry screaming for help. Also rescued was Berry's 6-year-old daughter. Berry, her daughter and DeJesus are safe with their families, while Knight remains at a Cleveland hospital.

The women's captor, 52-year-old Ariel Castro, was recently charged with four counts of kidnapping and three counts of rape. He could face more charges once the case goes to a grand jury.

In charging documents released Wednesday, police said Castro lured Knight into his car in 2002, took her to his home and "repeatedly sexually assaulted" her. Authorities described a similar scenario for Berry, who was lured into Castro's car in 2003 on the same road as Knight.

The following year, DeJesus was lured into Castro's vehicle and, like the other two women, repeatedly sexually assaulted in the subsequent years.

This story shows how most human-trafficking cases start. You see, trafficking doesn't require movement; slavery is at the heart of this global problem.

According to the U.S. Department of State's 2012 Trafficking In Persons (TIP) report, "People may be considered trafficking victims regardless of whether they were born into a state of servitude [or] were transported into the exploitative situation. ... At the heart of this phenomenon is the traffickers' goal of exploiting and enslaving their victims."

Cathey Anderson of Operation Mobilization (OM) says their annual Freedom Climb helps fight the problem worldwide.

"We're just all out there being this voice for these gals," Anderson states.

Each year, women climb one of the world's toughest mountains to raise awareness of the issue. The first Freedom Climb tackled Mount Kilimanjaro, while this year's group took on the foothills of Mount Everest.

"We walked into it with the anticipation that it would be very similar to our Kilimanjaro hike," Anderson recalls. "But it turned out to be dramatically different in so many different ways."

Along with a longer hike and more difficult terrain, sickness took down a majority of the group.

"Think of the worst stomach flu you've ever had, and that explains it," says Anderson.

"It was a struggle! It was just an absolute push-through—give it everything you got, and just depend on the Lord."

The climb does more than raise awareness, though; Freedom Climbers also raise support for OM projects that fight human trafficking. Anderson says their projects tackle the issue in three ways: prevention, development and rescue.

One of the best aspects about this story? You can be a part of it.

"We really need to get out there and be aware, be the voice, be the hands and the feet, and start making a difference," says Anderson.

Keep praying for the victims of modern-day slavery, and pray for justice for the women in Cleveland.

“Pray for those that are suffering—physically, mentally, emotionally—and oppressed, enslaved, whatever it is, because it doesn’t end,” says Anderson.

“It’s a big, bad stain on all of humanity.”