Reflection on “The Promise of a Pencil” by Adam Braun

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Adam Braun, author of The Promise of a Pencil, knew from his many travels in the developing world that the purpose of his life was to bring an education to children there who had never been granted access to an education before. He considered it his duty to help those less fortunate than he because his grandparents had overcome so many hardships (especially the Holocaust) so that Adam and his family might lead a better life than they had.

Like Mr. Braun, I too understand how fortunate I am to be afforded the opportunities I have been given. I was fortunate enough to grow up in a family that supported all of my decisions and interests and in a culture where gender inequality is almost nonexistent. However, much like Mr. Braun, I do not consider myself free from any responsibility to other young women who were not born into supportive families, or, indeed, supportive cultures. I strongly believe every woman deserves the same level of education as every man, and that no one — especially no woman — is worthless.

I have been interested in journalism since childhood, always keeping up on the newspapers and magazines to which my parents were subscribed. Recently, I read an article in Al Jazeera Magazine by a woman named Mimi Chakarova, an investigative journalist hailing from Bulgaria. Ms. Chakarova had filmed a documentary called “The Price of Sex” about
prostitution in developing nations, and the article expanded on her experiences. Prostitutes are often treated not just as second-class citizens, but as animals. More often than not, these women are forced into prostitution, yet they are always painted as criminals, and very rarely as victims.

Because I was born into a family that loves me and into a culture that supports me, I feel it is my duty to help these women, either by helping women already in living in prostitution, those who have escaped, or those young girls who would be at risk of becoming prostitutes.

It is laudable Mr. Braun built schools for children growing up in developing nations so they and the generations succeeding them could have better futures. I want to be able to secure the futures of abused women by teaching them that they are not animals, and that there is a life beyond the brothel.

According to the documentary, most of the young women who are trafficked into prostitution are tricked into believing they are taking jobs as waitresses or cleaning women overseas. They are then sold to pimps and their spirits are broken through gang rape and other forms of torture. I learned that many women turn to drugs and cutting as a way to escape the pain of their realities. Some attempt suicide.

Prostitution is a continuous cycle of abuse that has existed as long as society itself. It is time for that cycle to be destroyed. I believe the biggest problem prostitutes face is being lumped with sinners rather than victims. The pimps, the madams, the men who abuse these women, the people who stand by silently — they are the real transgressors.

My goal for the future is to be somewhat like Mimi Chakarova and somewhat like Mr. Braun. My goal is to increase awareness of the plight of sex workers through whatever means necessary. I also aim to help those who have escaped the trade regain a sense of self-worth, and
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to educate young girls in developing nations so that they may have more opportunities and may not fall into the trap of traders who make false promises of waitressing overseas.

Mr. Braun was right in thinking that he should utilize his good fortune to better the lives of those less fortunate than himself. I strongly believe that it is the duty of all people to help others, and I believe that it is my personal duty to help the women of the world who are not as blessed as I am with the good fortune of a loving family and a supportive society to understand that they are not worthless, that they do deserve a good life, and that being forced into prostitution was not their fault. I think that if I can change the life of just one woman, then I have changed the world.