

“Heroes Undercover”

IJM Freedom Partners Podcast v. 3

TRANSCRIPT

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Elements (in order of appearance):

Introduction: Sharon Cohn Wu, Senior Vice President of Justice Operations

Host: Amy Elizabeth Roth, Director of Media Relations

Investigators: Jim (pseudonym)

Jeff Blom, VP of Investigations

Brad (pseudonym)

Sunita (pseudonym)

Commentary: Gary Haugen, President and CEO

AUDIO/ SARA GROVES – “When the Saints”

SHARON COHN WU: Hello and welcome to this podcast for our Freedom Partners. I'm Sharon Cohn Wu, Senior Vice President of Justice Operations at International Justice Mission.

The fact that you are listening to this podcast means that you have made a personal commitment to partner with us as we seek justice for the most vulnerable around the world. Together, you are part of a global movement defending the poor and oppressed, widows and orphans -- and creating a brighter future for communities deeply affected by slave labor, illegal land seizure and the sexual exploitation of children. What I hope you are persuaded of is how much this actually matters to people in great need. In my experience, one of the great injuries caused by chronic injustice is the sense that you have been forgotten. Your remembrance of those in need and your tangible help to them not only rescues them from physical harm, but invites them into a life of hope and a future for their families.

Almost without exception, when people get a vivid picture in their mind of what IJM is actually doing in some of the most violent and brutal places of the world – they express amazement. When they finally see what it requires to pull off tactical field operations that

literally rescue children from rape and death, that bring some of the world's worst oppressors to justice, people are astonished.

For these reasons...I am so pleased to introduce this podcast dedicated to IJM's investigators -- the soldiers on the frontlines, who do that amazing and astonishing work. I want you to know the kind of leaders -- and heroes -- your support sends to the field to carry out the hand to hand struggle for justice around the world.

For the next fifteen minutes IJM's Director of Media Relations, Amy Roth, is going to take you to the frontlines of our work and into the daily lives of our investigators. She will take you into the bars and brothels our investigators infiltrate, where they obtain evidence -- audio and video -- of traffickers selling the bodies and dignity of young girls, you'll learn about the dangers IJM's investigators face in seeking justice, and the prices they pay to do this work.

The first time I went into a brothel was in 2002 in Northern Thailand. In it, I found signs of the cruel juxtaposition between childhood preserved and childhood stolen. I found a Mickey Mouse journal of one girl with her doodles on it, but also with the record of the false debt the brothel keeper told her that she owed. When the children were rescued a few days later and I heard their stories, I was again thankful for the lives of the investigators who had identified them and uncovered the brutalities they had been suffering.

I am inspired and encouraged every day by IJM's worldwide team of investigators -- and I hope that you will be, too. Because you send them, they go -- and because they go, those in great danger will no longer be alone. The truth they find -- in evidence that sheds light on so much evil -- has set so many free.

Above all, I remain encouraged by what we can do together to support our teams in the field. We're so grateful you're in this battle with us.

AUDIO/ BOLLYWOOD MUSIC -- Sonagachi brothel recording

AMY ROTH: This is Bollywood music pounding in a small room of a brothel in Kolkata's infamous red-light district Sonagachi, recorded by an IJM undercover investigator as a pimp negotiated the price of a woman in her early 20s. To simply dance, 2,000 rupees -- roughly 50 dollars -- an hour. In adjacent rooms, minors were being offered for more money and forced to undergo much greater assaults.

IJM investigators infiltrate bars and brothels like this one, working undercover, posing as customers, in order to collect evidence of the abuses of minors, and forced majors, taking place behind closed doors, in back rooms and anywhere else they can uncover it. And if they're successful, they return with local law enforcement officials to bring these trafficked victims out of such places of abuse, and into freedom.

Working in 12 countries, investigators and operatives literally spend thousands of hours on investigations every year in very difficult conditions. This casework is the foundation upon which IJM's mission is built.

AUDIO/ UNDERCOVER BUY: “You promise me...if I give you \$20 you promise me 1, 2, 3...yeah...yeah...you promise me...ok”

AMY ROTH: This is audio taken from an undercover surveillance video, shot by an IJM investigator during a sting operation to rescue three trafficked minors in a hotel room in Southeast Asia. For security reasons, I'll give him the pseudonym Jim. In 2004, Jim joined IJM as the Director of Investigations in Cambodia where he has lead efforts to rescue young victims of sex trafficking – and with the evidence he's collected, audio and video, perpetrators have been punished in courts of law. It takes skillful planning.

JIM: Things that we do on the intelligence gathering phase of any operation: where are the victims; how easy is it going to be to get them out; how many perpetrators; where are they; are there weapons; are there drugs; is there an exit strategy if everything goes bad; security of the premises once an operation is being conducted; and then the removal of victims in a safe speedy manner. They are sort of things that we look at and am I going to get a successful rescue? Two, am I going to get an arrest? Three, will I have enough evidence to get successful convictions on perpetrators?

AMY ROTH: Jim is one of more than 40 IJM investigators, most of them nationals working in their own countries, partnering on the frontlines with local law enforcement and aftercare specialists to rescue victims from violent oppression and sexual exploitation. He, like his counterparts, brings vast experience to the job.

IJM investigators have served in local, county and federal law enforcement agencies, as well as foreign military and police agencies. They have specializations in fields such as intelligence, undercover narcotics and security consulting.

AUDIO / JEFF BLOM : “I’m responsible for overseeing the quality of investigative services...in the field as well as from Headquarters Staff...”

AMY ROTH: Jeff Blom, IJM's Vice President of Investigations, leads this global team.

He alone brings 21 years of law enforcement experience to the frontlines. In his three-plus years with IJM, he has carried out roughly 200 undercover investigations into trafficking of children for sexual exploitation and conducted training for field investigators and police agencies around the globe. He knows first-hand of the danger of the work that he – and his army of investigators – carry out in bars, brothels, rice mills and brick kilns.

JEFF BLOM: You're going into a developing country with sometimes limited or very little law enforcement capacity or even rule of law...these men and women literally go into these facilities undercover using a ruse or a ploy and actually try to get the owner to talk about how they treat the victims and their laborers and if they were ever found out what was going on, these investigators would be beaten and actually have been beaten in the past because they've found out; so, they place themselves in great jeopardy.

AMY ROTH: IJM investigators face danger daily – from entering a known location of a perpetrator alone to maintaining a cover in some of the world's worst neighborhoods. But

those risks are tempered by the expertise of this global corps – and lowered by the top-of-the-line surveillance equipment they use which keeps them several steps ahead of the ever-evolving tactics of pimps and traffickers.

Brad, a pseudonym for security reasons, oversees a team of four investigators in one of the toughest cities in the world as far as child sexual exploitation goes – Mumbai. Working alongside his investigators is a team of eight undercover operatives. They are trained in areas of undercover evidence collection, surveillance, and the cultivation and management of information sources.

Brad spoke to me about how the two teams work together to gain the trust of pimps and access to the minors they barter and sell.

BRAD: Part of what we have to do in these places is be seen as the person with the money otherwise nobody is going to pay attention to us. Typically, in these environments, we want to see the young girls in the first one or two times that we go in. But as we develop a relationship with these pimps, we get together outside of these establishments and over a few days, just talking with them over the phone. We establish these relationships. They become more confident in what we do and they become more confident that we are not police. So as that happens then they begin to bring the younger girls towards us. They show us the minor girls and the forced majors as well.

AMY ROTH: IJM investigators employ the highest standards of evidence gathering techniques to expose the lies traffickers use to maintain their illegal trade in humans. It is the hard evidence they collect that actually gives IJM the power to compel local and international law enforcement authorities to act, to rescue those in great need.

The undeniable evidentiary proof that IJM has brought to light as a result of our investigative work has uncovered minors being abused inside brothels, widows and orphans being thrown off their land, and still others who have been illegally detained, abused and beaten.

Jeff Blom confirms that the hard evidence that puts rescue and sting operations in motion is the same evidence that can be used in courts of law to see that perpetrators are held accountable for their crimes.

JEFF BLOM: Evidence is what's going to prove guilt of a suspect and so whether that evidence boils down to an audio videotape of the suspect confessing what he's doing or offering young girls for sale or a mill or brick kiln owner confessing he abuses his laborers, to the point of actually getting the statements from the laborers, getting statements from the victims—all that is valuable evidence that is critical to winning a case and prosecuting the suspect.

AMY ROTH: Back in Mumbai, one of Brad's investigators is on the streets. For security reasons, we'll call her Sunita. She knows these streets better than most, as for years before joining IJM she did AIDS awareness training in the brothels that line them.

AUDIO/SUNITA IN CAR – “These all are brothels. This is the Thirteenth Lane – we did a rescue over her, for a minor girl. This is the Twelfth Lane – maybe the girls are busy with the clients.”

AMY ROTH: For Sunita, one of only three female investigators working for IJM worldwide, infiltrating brothels is not a possibility, so she’s developing the critical relationships with police commanders in the city which have opened doors and opportunities for collaboration. Her success is critical because even the most compelling evidence of abuse cannot be acted upon without collaboration with local law enforcement.

SUNITA: Actually, I tell them the need and the concerns that the society needs to work through. I always put forward, if it was their daughter who was in that position and what would they have done? So it’s very necessary that they should be prepared to rescue many girls.

AMY ROTH: And IJM’s investigators travel the globe to ensure that local law enforcement officials are prepared to rescue many girls...as well as boys, men and whole families who live in slavery.

Last year alone, IJM was able to partner with local authorities around the globe to bring freedom, rescue and relief to more than a thousand victims of slavery, sex trafficking, and other forms of violent oppression. And thousands more have benefitted from stronger communities and robust public justice systems.

IJM’s International Police Training Program (IPTP) has helped make that possible. Providing tuition-free training, IJM’s investigators share best practices with international police agencies, and train on basics such as police ethics and policy, interview techniques for victims and perpetrators, report writing, and preservation of crime scenes.

In 2008 and 9, 63 trainings were conducted in Cambodia, the Philippines, South Asia and Bolivia.

One story alone from an IJM investigator can reveal the great need for training and collaboration with local law enforcement – as well as the life-changing successes they bring. Jim’s story from Cambodia stands as testimony:

JIM: We had some intelligence that they were selling young girls. One of my operatives and I went in there and we sourced three under-age girls at that time that were 11, 11, and 13 years-old. We convinced the pimp to bring the girls to us in a predetermined location. They did that and we also had police there ready to arrest the perpetrators. So we had a successful operation of rescuing three under-aged girls that were being sexually abused on a daily basis and were also forced to take drugs. We managed to arrest two offenders and they have both been successfully convicted to eight and twelve-years; because of the age of the victims the penalties were more severe than if they were over-aged. The three girls were placed in aftercare and they are still there doing long-term vocational training and doing extremely well.

AMY ROTH: Gary Haugen, President of International Justice Mission, knows first-hand what it takes to achieve an outcome like that, to beat the enormous odds of failing on such a complicated rescue. In 1997, when he founded IJM, he and a very small team of staff traveled around the world themselves to conduct investigations and bring freedom to victims. He's seen IJM's application of technical, criminal and investigative expertise revolutionize human rights practices in the areas where our teams have been able to invest serious long-term commitment and build in-country frontline teams.

Much has changed at IJM in our thirteen years, but not Gary's commitment to go to the places where if IJM didn't show up, victims of abuse would have no one to bring them out of it. Unfortunately, the risk for doing that work hasn't changed either.

GARY HAUGEN: There's great psychological danger because you are exposed day after day to having to see the darkest, ugliest things that human beings do to each other. Everyday understand that there are children that are being raped, everyday understand there are children that are being ground into the dirt by slavery. Understand everyday that there is some innocent prisoner that is being abused again today and tortured, psychologically that brings a toll. Our investigators have to be able to process well this threat to their psychological harm but there is also emotional harm that they face. That is to say, it hurts your heart to draw close to victims of injustice and you can see that's what an investigator does.

AMY ROTH: Investigators hold a special place in the front guard of IJM staff members who work daily to carry out our four-fold purpose: to rescue victims, prosecute perpetrators, ensure long-term aftercare for former victims and finally, to ensure that these three elements lead to system-wide structural transformation in public justice systems around the globe – which is one thing that can *actually prevent* abuse of the poor before it happens.

Though the cost to our investigators for doing this work is high, the ultimate reward is priceless — freedom, justice and hope for so many once bound by the shackles of violent oppression.

AUDIO/ SARA GROVES - "When the Saints"

AMY ROTH: In my hours of conversation with my committed colleagues in IJM's investigative unit, I came to learn that the work they do on most days isn't glamorous, as many people think. In fact, on most days it is simply tedious and hard, and almost always costly to the heart. But above all, I have learned that it is truly heroic.

Because of their great skill, courage and sacrifice, slaves are walking free, children are not being raped, committed local authorities are strengthening rule of law in their countries, and police -- equipped with new skills -- are out-powering traffickers. In all this: justice is being sought and served... as last year alone, 212 accused perpetrators were arrested as a result of IJM casework.

And this is just some of the work they – and you – are making possible every day. The stories of our investigators are your stories -- because you, and your support and

prayers, have made them possible. So, I encourage you to share this podcast with your family and friends. Let them come to know IJM as you do, on the frontlines and behind the scenes; and let them know that real change is taking shape in all of the 12 countries where you can find IJM investigators on the side of freedom and justice.

All of us here at IJM, thank you, our Freedom Partners, for your faithful support.

AUDIO/ SARA GROVES – "When the Saints"

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