

March 25, 2010

Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission on Human Trafficking –  
Human Trafficking: International and National Implications

Good morning my name is Sandra Fiorini and I am an international flight attendant with American Airlines. My seniority number is 719 and I have flown with American for 39 years. I would like to thank the House and Innocents at Risk for their opportunity to comment on Human trafficking. During my career with American Airlines I have seen many instances of human trafficking. While every instance has been different, there were always red flags that indicated that something was not right. Most of us are parents and when children of any age are involved we seem to be more keenly aware when these flags are raised. A few examples I have seen can enlighten you to what is happening everyday:

1. 18 year old boy with newborn baby. No diaper bag, just one bottle and two diapers.
2. 3 adults of same nationality with 5 children of all different nationalities and same age (4-5 yrs old).
3. Prostitution tents at Redwood, CA campground. Men coming in and out.
4. Young girls 15-17yrs old coming over from Russia thinking they are going to be models and work on TV in NYC, even though they didn't speak any English.  
Moscow to Chicago direct flight.

Please remember I am just one of 90,000 flight attendants world wide. Think of all the stories the other 90,000 can tell. Before I was involved in Innocents at Risk, I would call the local police. They would respond it was my word against theirs and what did I want them to do about it. Of course I wanted them to respond and file a report, which they would not do. Innocents at Risk has created a brochure with the trafficking signs and the Hotline Number to call. This gives us a tool to report from the plane what we are seeing, which is the first step in prevention. Because of calling the hotline an ICE agent was assigned to work the Moscow to Chicago flight to prevent the daily flow of young boys and girls from Russia for the sex trade.

Flight attendants are the first line of defense against human trafficking. Innocents at Risk is pulling together with many government agency's in a coordinated effort under Blue Lightning. For two years I have been educating my crews with the Innocents at Risk Brochures and wristbands with the Hotline number. I am asking them to wear the bracelets and use the hotline number to report what they have seen and pass the brochure on to other flight attendants. During that time the hotline has reported a 30% increase in call from flight attendants. The general public is unaware of the positive results Innocents at Risk is making.

Flight attendants are an untapped work force that can combat this crime against woman and children. Innocents at Risk is raising awareness in my workplace. The small percentage of trained flight attendants are reporting what they encounter everyday. With funding we could educate the whole 90,000 person strong army of winged angels. I intend to keep working with Innocents at Risk until all 90,000 flight attendants are trained.

Thank you,  
Sandra Fiorini, Senior Flight Attendant American Airlines