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OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

Sex Trafficking Needs A Spotlight

ARGUS LEADER, Sioux Falls (June 3): The use of task forces to fight methamphetamine and child pornography in South Dakota is being expanded to a war against sex traffickers.

U.S. Attorney Brendan Johnson announced last week that state, federal and local resources will be used by the task force because the problem of using force, fraud and coercion to make money through prostitution has risen to that serious of a level in South Dakota.

It would seem like Johnson's portrayal that sex trafficking is a growing problem here would be on target. More cases have come through the court systems identifying people who have targeted underage girls and advertised them for prostitution. With more cases, the police have heard from more victims.

Locally, authorities have gone after people paying for sex, too. Johnson says victims in sex trafficking are often young and vulnerable based on a history of abuse, drug addiction, homelessness and other factors. Prostitution is offered as a way out but ends up trapping them in a lifestyle.

Certainly, prostitution isn't a new crime nor is the work of johns who put the prostitutes on the street. But it's time to stop the preying on victims, the abuse and the trapping of young females into a life of prostitution.

We have to do more than say, "Isn't that sad," or to somehow dismiss it because we think the victims did something wrong to get themselves involved in the crime.

That attitude as a society is as wrong as turning our backs completely on the victims.

It might take more than a task force to really eliminate sex trafficking and prostitution, but a task force is a great way to start. It provides specific structure and organization between agencies that shows offenders that law enforcement is serious.

We've seen its success with tracking down meth dealers and people involved in child pornography. Sex trafficking is an ugly crime against humanity that needs the spotlight that a task force provides.

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Tweaking Real Life

BY KATHLEEN PARKER

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NEW YORK — It was never quite clear what feminizing the workplace would mean when women en masse invaded corporate America a generation ago.

Most of us donned our Mao suits, bow ties and sensible shoes and did our best to blend in. The workplace didn't become more feminine; women became more masculine.

Then along came "Sex and the City." The new working girl was glam, femmed-out to the max in sheer tops, short skirts and stilettos. She was brash, tough (neurotic), and above all sexy. Where the previous generation of women had tried to camouflage their sexuality, the new generation flaunted every inch.

Much, and little, has changed over the decades.

Women are exceeding their male counterparts in education. One in four earns more than her husband. The office may not have a fern bar, but there's likely to be a private space for breast pumping. Our fight for on-site child care has given way to a tsunami of third-world nannies.

To the point: Women are reaching equality as never before. Certainly many struggle to keep food on the table. But in the salons where luckier women discuss what women really want, they are reaching the traditional benchmarks of happiness — money and power — and guess what: They're still not happy.

Before you roll your eyes and wake up poor, old tired Dr. Freud, listen up. Women aren't happy precisely because they tried to fit themselves neatly into the male template of what constitutes happiness. And, voila — please do sound the gongs — men and women are different.

Of course women want wealth and power, but not at the expense of the things that matter most — equilibrium, inner peace, wisdom, heart, and a family that isn't in constant chaos. These intangibles are largely ignored, alas, because the male-created workplace views them as froufrou "women's" concerns.

What's love got to do with the bottom line?

Everything, really. Research, which we prefer to common sense, supports that happy, well-adjusted, less-stressed-out people make more productive and efficient workers. Men also, by the way, because it turns out, men are human, too.

Those brilliant seers "They" always said that money doesn't buy happiness. And though being rich and unhappy beats poor and unhappy every time, "They"

were right. Women, who now constitute a critical mass in the workplace, have learned through exhaustion, divorce and disappointed children that trying to fit their lives into the male mold of success was like trying to squeeze into Cinderella's shoe.

Two women who know something about power, money, success, and shoes (there's no point trying to talk about women as though shoes don't matter) recognized this soul-void in women's lives and did what women do. The indefatigable Arianna Huffington and Mika Brzezinski convened a conference — "The Third Metric" — to address that missing thing in our lives.

Huffington described it as that inner place of heart, soul and wisdom where few of us spend much time. We're too busy. Creating space for quietude — unplugged rather than unhinged — requires strategic planning. This isn't space for moon-gazing, but for the fallow time that engenders calm, which often precedes the storm of innovation and creativity.

Where do your best ideas come from? The chorus was instantaneous: "The shower."

Between panel discussions, we practiced being quiet. We breathed. (I know, you had to be there.) We closed our eyes. We really did gong the gong. We opened our arms and said "wow." Really. We ate healthy food, drank juice served by delicious men (not kidding), got hand massages, and listened to a parade of accomplished women (and a smattering of men) talk about health, wellness, and "tweaking" our lives. We heard from Candice Bergen, Katie Couric, Jill Abramson, Valerie Jarrett and Sen. Claire McCaskill, as well as comedians, writers, filmmakers and dozens of others whose work is helping mold a future generation that will be healthier and happier if not wealthier.

There will be dissenters. Urging people to be go-givers instead of go-getters, easier to do when you are already a millionaire, may not appeal to the board of directors. And I confess, when John Mackey, co-founder of Whole Foods, spoke of promoting people who are emotionally evolved over the merely ambitious, I didn't know whether to assume a lotus or a fetal position.

But all things considered, a culture in which meaning is recognized as a goal equal to profit cannot make a worse world. Besides, when Mama is happy, everybody is happy.

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Kathleen PARKER

Little League: The Heat Is On

BY BILL O'REILLY

Creators Syndicate

So, last Saturday I'm back on the ball field coaching my 9-year-old boy's little league team along with three other fathers. We lose big. Why? Because it was hot. Yes, I know what you're thinking: Wasn't it hot for the other team? Stop with the logic, OK?

My team wilted in the fourth inning. In fact, three of the players cried. One missed his mother. I told him the game would be over shortly and she was looking forward to seeing him. He accepted it, but struck out anyway.

The right fielder cried when the ball hit his thumb after he booted it. The catcher shed tears when he was called out at first base. Where was Tom Hanks when I needed him?

But above all, the heat dominated the game. It was about 90 degrees, and the field was dusty. The kids were appalled. They are used to climate-control. When it's hot, they stay inside and enjoy the air conditioning. When it's cold, the house is cozily warm. So when they are forced to play six innings outside on a scorching day, there is much angst.

When I was 9 years old, I was hot all the time in the summer. My tiny Levittown house had no air conditioning, and I slept upstairs directly underneath the tar-infested roof. So one August day, I had the following dialogue with my father:

"Dad, could we get air conditioning?"

"Why? You have a fan in your room."

"But the fan just blows the hot air around."

"So don't turn it on."

End of conversation. Later, at the dinner table, my

father told my sister and me about how hot it was in Brooklyn where he grew up. At least on Long Island, there's a "sea breeze."

My sister and I looked confused. The ocean was 15 miles away.

Our dog, a German shepherd named Barney, was so hot he didn't move for hours, lying supine on the linoleum kitchen floor.

"I think Barney may be dead," I told my parents.

"Don't be a wise guy," my father retorted.

We never did get air conditioning until I moved out in 1971. Then two units arrived. I still hold a grudge.

But back to the ball field.

We lost the game 12 to 4, but the team really didn't care. They quickly left the diamond for more comfortable precincts. Most of them are really good kids, far smarter than I was at their age — but far softer, as well.

America is a place where you can succeed no matter who you are. I am proof of that. But you must work very hard and be willing to endure pain. You must set a goal and win in the marketplace, no matter the air temperature. You must pay the price for success.

These kids don't know that. But they do know two things. First, they don't want to be hot. And second, they don't have to be.

Veteran TV news anchor Bill O'Reilly is host of the Fox News show "The O'Reilly Factor" and author of the book "Pinheads and Patriots: Where You Stand in the Age of Obama."



Bill O'REILLY

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FROM THE BIBLE

When they had seen Him, they spread the word ... about this child. Luke 2:17 (NIV). Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis