

RED LIGHT DESPATCH

DELHI | KOLKATA | FORBESGANJ (BIHAR)

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my dreams

My name is Nikki and I live in Dharmapura near Delhi. I am just 13 years old but I have dreams to become very big and someone important in life.

My dream is to be a police officer. I want to help all the children and people around me as police is supposed to help the people and give punishment to all the bad people.

This will also raise the name and fame for my parents. In spite of all societal barriers which I face, as I do not come from a wealthy family and it is not easy for me to receive education also. Still, I will try to reach at my destination with all the efforts that I can put in.

The day I will be able to achieve this dream of mine, that day I will be very happy.

Whenever I see any police officers outside my house or outside my community and also in then I become extremely excited and happy thinking that maybe one day I will become just like them.

I like the police dress and I also want to wear it someday and do good for the people. I want to be a police officer because I want to give justice to the innocent people and see them happy.

I will be most happy when this dream of mine comes true and I am able to wear that police dress and go in front of both my parents and see them happy and very proud of me. That day I will be most happy.

Nikki ●

Age : 13 years, Perna Basti

Last Girl in Idaho's Last Frontier

Idaho Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence

During the Move to End Violence journey in India, Ruchira Gupta, founder and director of Apne Aap, a grassroots organization working to end sex trafficking, shared her perspective on our movement to end violence. Ruchira's focus on the "last girl" deeply informed and radically transformed our work at the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual & Domestic Violence and my own vision of leadership. I invited Ruchira to come to Idaho to share her vision of the last girl and of the movement with our staff, Idaho's tribal and community domestic and sexual violence programs, and the larger community.

On the following day, the executive directors of Idaho's tribal and community domestic and sexual violence programs came together to engage in conversation with Ruchira on reaching and standing by the last girl. From the Coeur d'Alene reservation to the agricultural community of Weiser to the conservative Mormon community in southeastern Idaho, the leaders of community and tribal programs shared their personal experiences of the last girl. Homeless teenagers in the northern forests of Idaho to a young woman raped and found in a ditch to an immigrant woman economically tied to an abusive partner, everyone could clearly envision the last woman or girl in their community.

The Idaho Coalition raised over \$5,000 for Apne Aap, but more importantly raised the consciousness of movement builders in Idaho. In recognition for Ruchira's contributions to the movement to end sex trafficking, the Idaho Coalition and the Idaho Human Rights Education Center presented Ruchira with a paver with her name and contribution to humanity that will be placed at the Anne Frank Memorial, an educational park dedicated to human rights and one of the only places in the world where the full Universal Declaration of Human Rights is on public display. When we visited the memorial, Ruchira was excited to find a quote, one that speaks directly to her work and to ours:

“Make injustice visible”

- Mahatma Gandhi.

Kelly Miller ●



Volunteer Journal

Aruna Lakshmi Ramu

“I didn’t want to go back to normal life because I started thinking I’m kind of dirty after I was used by men” said one of the sex worker of this red light area. I found this rather difficult to digest, their helplessness.

I heard this from a woman I visited in Kolkata. Did I expect some love, some joy, and some peace in the red light district...?? No... I didn’t expect any of them but I did expect to see some concern towards the women. Then I understood what I expected was a complete opposite of what they have been experiencing or what they have been expected to experience.

The time we went in there was that the business was about to start... I could see women lined up, waiting for their customers trying to show their best... I saw these women in their eyes and I saw fear, self-pity, annoyance, mistrust, helplessness, upset, depressed, sense of loss, alienated and crushed together.

The fact here is only then I realized how human these women are and the horridness behind each being dragged in to this flesh trade.

Poverty, sick children sitting with their mothers when they have to be in school, women waiting for clients outside their home, men staring the passerby gave me a feeling that fighting against violence is important. Compared to the count of people fighting against corruption, this seems like a drop in a bucket. But I wonder what my role is in all this!

I am more committed to help these women to solve the violence and harm, in a real committed and meaningful way because I’ve seen them and I don’t want anyone else to live with that impairment.

How could men derive pleasure after seeing all the pain in those women’s eyes and I literally felt like I want to cry for their freedom, peace and joy!

This is an excerpt from the article “**Our Very Presence in Public Places Angers Men**” written by Ms. Rucira Gupta for Outlook India.

The only answer is for more women to be in public places and more men in private spaces. More freedom is the answer, not less.

As long as I can remember I have always longed for equality, an addiction I owe to my Gandhian socialist father and courageous mother. My home was like a salon, with politicians, writers, journalist, poets, academics and artists, all converging, to talk about how they would create a fairer and more just India.

In my quest for equality, I decided to be a journalist and expose all that was unfair in the world. I had the privilege of working with successive progressive male newspaper editors. I was given the dangerous assignment of covering the ULFA armed struggles in the north-east. Blindfolded, I hopped onto a scooter with them to meet their leader and scooped a story on how they lived and what they wanted just before Rajeev Gandhi as Prime Minister signed an accord with them.

On the first occasion, the ULFA was hospitable and kind, simply sharing a few songs and pamphlets and sending me on my way, but on both the other occasions I was physically attacked. In the brothel a knife was pulled out on me by a customer or a pimp, who said he would not let me film and it was the women in prostitution, who surrounded me and protected me.

But none of these deterred me. I considered myself fearless, following the story and reporting on news in the “same” way that my male colleagues would. My desire to prove myself, was perhaps a reaction to all the slights I had heard in the newsroom--that women could not deal with tough assignments, would get tired or scared, were too much of a responsibility and should be sent home early, were always having babies and had to take maternity leave and so should not be given key posts etc.

In any case, homes are often the most dangerous places for females from the time they are conceived till the time they die--from foeticide, to incest, child marriage, dowry deaths, domestic violence, maternal mortality and marital rape.

The sexual violence is an outcome of misogyny and can only be stopped by uprooting the deep-seated patriarchy that it is embedded in. This can only be done if more women are in public spaces and more men in private spaces, more men who will take care of child rearing and more women who will be breadwinners. When even in the very newspapers we work in, politics is no longer defined as what happens to men and culture to women.

No amount of violence is going to force women back into the home. In fact more freedom is the answer, not less.

Outlook India

Our Very Presence in Public Places Angers Men
By Ruchira Gupta



International Women' s Day

Anuja Bhojnagarwala, Media & Advocacy Assistant

8th of March is celebrated as International Women's Day all over the world. It celebrates the social, political and economic achievements of women while focusing world attention on areas requiring further action. Inspiring Change is the 2014 theme for our internationalwomensday.com global hub and encourages advocacy for women's advancement everywhere in every way. It calls for challenging the status quo for women's equality and vigilance inspiring positive change.

We at Apne Aap Women Worldwide (AAWW), celebrated this day on 8th March, 2014, where 81 women and children from the community participated in the AAWW Khidderpore centre, as well as people from the Calcutta Classical Guitar Society.

Going with the theme of 2014, Sudipta Dasgupta from AAWW told the women and children the importance of changing our way of thinking, as what we think, we do. She also said, that small changes lead to a bigger change in life. Gargi Banerjee also told the women that accepting abuse is not the right way of living and it is very important for women to feel that they too are very important people in the world.

The girls who learn dancing in AAWW, performed a small dance on the song, 'Des Rangila', by which they were spreading the message that the world is very diverse, but the people in it are equal and hence women and men should be looked at, equally.

This was followed by a performance by Madhubanti Pal from Calcutta Classical Guitar Society, who performed by playing the flute on 'raags' (Classical Songs) like 'Madhubanti' and 'Durga'. She also performed on few famous hindi songs which the audience really loved.

At the end of the events, there was a small drawing competition arranged for 20 children. The theme WAS 'My Idol, by which the children had to draw any women, who has inspired them to bring a change in their lives.



art workshop

In the afternoon of 11th March, we run an art workshop with a group of about fifteen girls from the Apne Aap Mushinganj centre. Organised into small groups of three, the girls are asked to draw murals on large sheets of paper reflecting one of the three themes we present them with. The first is for them to draw images from their lives, their homes, families and communities; the second is to depict what they dream of becoming when they grow up; and the third is to draw images of women and men in their lives. The girls are invited to choose the theme they'd most like to draw about, and the overwhelmingly popular decision is to illustrate their dreams of what they hope to become in their futures. Their choice speaks of a hopefulness being nurtured and a strong sense of ambition amongst the group.

As monitors of the workshop, the girls. One girl depicts herself as a police officer, another shares her dream of becoming a doctor. A couple of highly creative girls dream of being artists and one girl wants to be an air hostess.

There is a rich diversity amongst each girl's dreams, but the enthusiasm paired with them is shared by the entire group. A fervent sense of hopefulness and determination emanates from the vividly coloured drawings; a powerful reminder of the importance of investing in the future of girls.

we're not really needed. The girls excitedly launch into their drawings without any prompt or encouragement. One group begins by carefully decorating the page with ornately beautiful borders, ruling the lines around the page with absolute precision. Others begin by drawing the outlines of human figures - themselves - each intently concentrated on their section of the paper. We leave the girls to their own artistic devices, and they draw for nearly two hours.

The final products are creative and powerful illustrations of the personal ambitions of each individual girl. Many show us images depicting themselves as teachers standing in front of a black board instructing a class of students. This is a hopeful and recurring ambition amongst these young girls, who have perhaps gained their inspiration from their Apne Aap teacher who joins the workshop and is excitedly presented with the drawings.



Diary of a Social Worker

Md. Kalam

I am Md. Kalam from the Nat community and I have been with Apne Aap for last ten years. I learnt a lot in these ten years. My greatest teachings came from the women I worked with. I have learnt from Jamila bua , She is very old, survivor of sex-trafficking, but could save her daughter from being trafficked.. They are very poor but she has decided and tried various means of survival and finally learning how to stitch bags in with Nomi Network. Jamila Bua is the President of our first MahilaMandal. It's really difficult to think of any other means of survival when you are trafficked into a community where inter-generational prostitution is a norm. She and her SEG members fought for access to BPL cards.

Khawaspur is a small village where I was born. Twenty five families from Nat community are residing here. Most of the families were forced into prostitution. The women decided that they will stop getting prostituted. There were strong opposition and great violence from men from upper castes. But they could do it. The women work very hard. The men do as well. Now, they are doing agriculture work and other petty business. ApneAap supported their struggle throughout. Few years back, I was the only one from the community who has completed graduation. Now girls from my community are going to college.

During my days with the Survey among de-notified tribes, I found out, where Apne Aap is working, the children are going to schools and colleges, learning computers. But where Apne Aap is not working, there is no education in RLA.

Before Apne Aap started working, the number of trafficked women in the RLAs were increasing. . Police was not conducting any raid and rescue. People living within the RLA and the people from society outside used to think trafficking as normal and legal. Now people understand this is a crime. Because of our continuous struggle to raise these issues at different levels, from community to state to national and international level, the State is now compelled to act. Though they are doing it in a wrong way, sometimes violating the human rights of other people living in the community, but the traffickers have fear now.

My learning is if you continue to work then change definitely happens. Sometime it takes longer and you feel you have wasted your time, but believe me, you will see the change.

हजारो ख्वाहिशें ऐसी

बुझती जलती लरती हु मैं ,अंधेरे से थोरी डर्ती हु मैं
कोई एक आके बोला, पैसा मिलेगा, कम मिलेगा,
घर में दिआ जलता रहेगा
बापू खुस हो गए ,माँ को नयी आशा मिली,
मेरी शिक्षा ने मुझे न बोलने कि हिम्मत दी
आओ सब मिलके आज,खाए कसम
बाल मजदूरी, पचार को रोकेंगे हम !

- रानी खातून

किशोरी मंडल

छोटी सी आशा

एक छोटी सी आशा को पाकर के चलने लगे हम,
आश्मान छुके,नाम रोशन करेंगे हम,
पढ़ाई का दीप, घर घर जलाएंगे,
खुद का आधिकार ,खुद ही पाएंगे,
आकेले नेही हैं ,होसला हैं संग
भर देंगे जीबन में, खुसिया के रंग !

- सुषमा झा

उम्र : १३ वर्ष

किशोरी मंडल

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