

2025 Conference to Combat Human Trafficking

AGENDA

July 22, 2025

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| 8:00 am | Registration | Institute for Homeland Security |
| 8:00 am | VIDEO PRESENTATION: | Edwin Rose |
| 8:30 am | WELCOME | Mike Aspland Director Institute for Homeland Security Sam Houston State University |
| 8:50 am | INTRODUCTIONS AND CONFERENCE OVERVIEW | Kevin Clement Executive Director, Strategic Partnerships Borders, Trade, and Immigration Institute KClement@uh.edu 512.626.5413 |
| 9:00 am | KEYNOTE SPEAKER | TBD |
| 9:30 am | Break | |
| 10:00 am | PURSUING JUSTICE: CIVIL REMEDIES FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING SURVIVORS | |
| | Synopsis: <i>Civil litigation has become a critical tool in holding businesses accountable for their role in human trafficking, particularly in cases where hotels and motels have knowingly facilitated or ignored trafficking activities on their premises. This panel will explore how survivors can seek justice through civil lawsuits and the broader impact of these cases on corporate accountability and victim restitution.</i> | |
| | <i>This panel will offer attendees a comprehensive perspective on how civil litigation complements criminal prosecutions, empowers survivors, and pushes businesses to implement stronger anti-trafficking measures. Participants will leave with</i> | |

a deeper understanding of the legal landscape, survivor-centered advocacy, and best practices for supporting trafficking victims in their pursuit of justice.

The discussion will feature Michael C. Kane, a seasoned attorney specializing in human trafficking litigation, alongside Samantha Summers-Rivas, a sex industry survivor and victim advocate dedicated to empowering trafficking survivors and shaping policy reforms. Together, they will provide insight into the legal strategies used under the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA), challenges in proving liability, and the vital role of survivor voices in shaping legal outcomes.

Presenters:

Michael C. Kane

Attorney at Law
THE702FIRM Injury Attorneys

www.the702firm.com

Samantha Summers-Rivas

HT Victim Advocate
THE702FIRM Injury Attorneys
Samantha@The702Firm.com | 702.410.7574

11:00 am **"LEGAL" LABOR TRAFFICKING: HOW U.S. WORK VISA PROGRAMS ARE FACILITATING TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION OF WORKERS**

Synopsis: *This presentation outlines how certain legal work visa programs have been used to entrap foreign workers into criminally exploitative employment and outright labor trafficking situations. These scenarios often involve third-party staffing companies, who recruit and control the workers. The presentation will include recommendations for policies and procedures to detect and deter such practices.*

Presenter:

Jessica M. Vaughan

Director of Policy Studies
Center for Immigration Studies
[@JessicaV_CIS](https://twitter.com/JessicaV_CIS) | 774.291.9005

11:30 am Lunch

11:45 am **INVESTIGATIVE SERIES: "HE MADE ME DO IT" (LUNCH PRESENTATION)**

Synopsis: *Investigative reporters from 12News in Pheonix, Arizona introduce an investigative docuseries called "He Made Me Do It," a story about a young woman named Helen Simmons who claims she was forced into a jewelry store robbery by a man she met on a dating app. We uncover the man's history of hurting women and how Helen's claims of*

domestic violence trafficking were ignored by investigators. Our reporting looks at the duality of being both a suspect and victim, as Helen faces prison time while also trying to seek justice for what happened to her.

Presenters:

Erica Stapleton, Investigative Reporter, 12News, Phoenix, AZ; estapleton@12news.com

Katie Wilcox, Investigative Reporter, 12News, Phoenix, AZ; kwilcox@12news.com

1:00 pm: *HUMAN TRAFFICKING: AGENCIES NEED TO ADOPT A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO MANAGE RISKS IN CONTRACTS (GAO-24-106973) (VIRTUAL PRESENTATION)*

Synopsis: *Contractors that work with the government are prohibited from engaging in human trafficking. But allegations of trafficking persist, and the U.S. has said it's more pervasive than previously thought. The GAO looked at 4 agencies—DOD, State, DHS, and USAID—that spend a lot on contracts or may be at increased risk of using contractors who engage in human trafficking. These agencies have taken some steps to manage trafficking risks in their contracts, but none use a systematic approach that identifies, responds to, and communicates about risks and needed responses. The GAO recommended doing so to help ensure the government doesn't fund human trafficking.*

Presenter:

Paul Hobart

Assistant Director | Homeland Security and Justice Issues

Government Accounting Office

HobartP@gao.gov | 214.777.6537

2:00 pm *LIGHTHOUSE: ILLUMINATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING THROUGH DATA-DRIVEN INSIGHTS*

Synopsis: *Discover Lighthouse, Allies Against Slavery's cutting-edge data platform that's transforming the fight against human trafficking. In this dynamic session, attendees will learn how Lighthouse brings together a wide range of anti-trafficking data—from victim screenings and federal prosecutions to online commercial sex ads and state policies—to uncover powerful, actionable insights. You'll get a firsthand look at the platform's capabilities, learn how it's helping professionals across the movement make more informed decisions and what the data and trends are telling us about trafficking.*

Presenters:

Tally Stocks

Tally@alliesagainstslavery.org |

Allies Against Slavery

PO Box 684284, Austin, TX 78768

Deniz Cansin Rodoplu

Deniz@alliesagainstslavery.org |

3:00 pm Break

3:30 pm

LEVERAGING BIG DATA AND MACHINE LEARNING TO COMBAT ONLINE SEX TRAFFICKING: IDENTIFICATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERVENTION

Synopsis: *This presentation outlines a novel, technology-driven approach to combating online sex trafficking. Our research addresses the limitations of current tools by developing advanced analytical methods to identify and disrupt trafficking networks operating across multiple online platforms. We leverage our vast dataset of over 200 million classified ads to build predictive models, link related ads through image and text analysis, address linking issues in large datasets, and classify networks based on unique spatiotemporal and content-based metrics. Additionally, we explore data-driven strategies for designing decoy escort ads aimed at demand reduction. This presentation will highlight the technical innovations behind our work and its practical application in supporting law enforcement operations, augmenting human trafficking task forces, and providing data for non-profit outreach organizations. This research demonstrates the critical role of technology and interdisciplinary collaboration in effectively combating human trafficking.*

Presenters:

Dr. Nick Freeman (freem028@ua.edu)

Dr. Gregory J. Bott (Greg.Bott@ua.edu)

The University of Alabama

STANDD (Sex Trafficking Analytics for Network Detection and Disruption)

4:30 pm

Closing

Day 2 – July 23, 2025

8:00 am VIDEO: **GROOMED: SOCIAL MEDIA – THE SILENT TRAFFICKER LURING OUR CHILDREN**

Synopsis: *Houston Methodist Hospital System’s Human Trafficking Taskforce presents GROOMED, an award-winning independent film by Kirk and Stephanie Clawson. After years of outreach along Houston’s Bissonnet Street, the Clawson’s created this unscripted, grassroots film to reach youth before they become victims of trafficking. Featuring real students and parents, GROOMED exposes how predators use social media to lure and manipulate teens into the sex trade. Through the gripping journey of one teenager, the film highlights the calculated steps of grooming process: Befriend, Gain Trust, Desensitize, Isolate, Alienate, Intoxicate, Control, and Capitalize. GROOMED is part of the Human Trafficking Taskforce’s goal to provide youth education and stop the cycle of grooming.*

Presenters:

Dorothy G. Franklin, MSN-ADM, RN, CCM
Sr. Utilization Review Specialist Nurse
President, Human Trafficking Task Force
Houston Methodist Hospital
dgfranklin@houstonmethodist.org | 832 289 8325

Stephanie Clawson
Business and Community Outreach Specialist
Houston Methodist Hospital
smclawson@houstonmethodist.org

8:30 am **RAPID DEPLOYMENT SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS FOR COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING...AND MORE**

Synopsis: *The Hotel Honey Badger Rapid Deployment Human Trafficking Video Surveillance System is an advanced, mobile surveillance platform designed to combat human trafficking in hotels and other high-risk locations. Utilizing AI-driven video analytics, facial recognition, and real-time data integration, the system enables law enforcement and security personnel to quickly identify and track suspicious activity. Its rapid deployment capability allows for seamless installation in various environments, ensuring covert yet effective monitoring. By leveraging cloud-based intelligence and collaboration with anti-trafficking organizations, Hotel Honey Badger enhances efforts to rescue victims, disrupt trafficking networks, and support investigative operations with actionable insights.*

Presenters:

Angel Flores and **Mark Witt**
LENS-Equipment
aflores@lens-eq.com | 281.657.5954

9:30 am Break

10:00 am **REDFLAG ACCELERATOR**

Synopsis: *Finding traces of human trafficking in financial data is hard. For over 20 years, RedCompass Labs has helped banks in over 24 countries to manage enterprise-scale transformation. In 2020, RedCompass Labs made a decision: to dedicate their efforts to finding traces of human trafficking, child sexual exploitation and fraud within financial data.*

That's why RedCompass created the RedFlag Accelerator – the world's most comprehensive source of red flags for financial crime. The RedFlag Accelerator is the world's most comprehensive source of contextual persona-based typologies. Its researchers have compiled scenarios based on hundreds of trusted intelligence sources to build the red flags for perpetrators, victims, money launderer personas, and everyone in between. Its ground-breaking approach identifies behavioral patterns found across individuals involved in specific criminal business models. Utilize the latest personas, typologies, and red flags to enhance investigators' abilities to detect and investigate financial crimes. With full visibility and practical indicators, the RedFlag Accelerator enables banks, AML vendors, and law enforcement to generate high-quality alerts, conduct investigations, and provide training.

Presenter:

Silvija Krupena

Certified Financial Investigator

Red Compass Labs

silvija.krupena@redcompass.com

11:00 am **ALGORITHMIC SEARCH TECHNOLOGY: FINDING THE RIGHT THINGS FASTER – WHEN TIME MATTERS**

Synopsis: *DejavuAI empowers analysts and investigators to search overwhelming amounts of image and video data with lightning speed and unbiased accuracy, providing critical answers faster when time matters the most. DejavuAI® stands apart from conventional Computer Vision search technologies by its unique ability to identify **specific** patterns in images or even groups of images, including variations in angles, skew, or sensor types. In contrast, all other CV solutions identify merely similar images, often irrelevant to the search, lacking support for rotation, cropping, or skewing. DejavuAI® stands as a testament to the efficacy of **purely algorithmic search** technology, ensuring a 100% reliable, explainable, deterministic, and unsupervised image comparison/matching tool. This precision translates into **unparalleled efficiency** and accuracy for trustworthy results. Comb through all the data available to you whether it comes from CCTV feed, case files or OSINT and PAI. Your team can find the right things faster, everywhere they correlate in your data.*

Presenter:

Johnny Kessler

CEO

DejavuAI

Johnny@dejavuai.com | 206.550.9539

12:00 pm **Lunch**

1:30 pm ***TRANSACTION INTERCEPT 3.0***

Synopsis: *Transaction Intercept is an initiative of Street Grace that directly interrupts transactions to illegally purchase sexually exploit, and abuse children through the use of an award-winning Artificial Intelligence chatbot, Gracie. Transaction Intercept 3.0 has been developed in partnership with volunteer teams from BBDO Worldwide Advertising and Microsoft. These partnerships have taken technology from a chatbot to a fully automated online platform. This innovative technology enables law enforcement and other organizations to disrupt human trafficking and allows its users to create ‘bots’ on demand (responding to SMS Texas messages); monitor conversations from potential suspects/buyers; gather and export data; and deliver deterrence messages.*

Bob Rodgers

Chief Executive Officer
Street Grace

Bob@streetgrace.org | 678.524.7008

2:30 pm **Break**

3:00 pm ***EMERGING TECHNOLOGY AND NEW CONCEPTS TO COUNTER HUMAN TRAFFICKING***

Synopsis: *This presentation is a fast-paced exposure to new technologies, concepts and activities which may be used in efforts to counter human trafficking. The concepts raised are accompanied by information papers with contact information allowing further discussion. The technologies presented include use of a gamification process to leverage surveillance and reporting capabilities of citizens with smart phones; the use of “Daisy”-like AI to counter social media access of predators and capture information and evidence that allows predators to be prosecuted; and more;*

Researcher:

Joel Aud

Principal and BTI Fellow
Lean Tail Labs

JoelAud@gmail.com | 512.818.9971

4:00 pm

CRIME SURVIVORS THROUGH WEB3: BLOCKCHAIN, IDENTITY, AND FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

Synopsis: *Imagine escaping a trafficking situation with no ID, proof of the situation you escaped, and no access to a bank account. This is the reality for many trafficking survivors whose traffickers use coercion, such as taking identifying and other important documents, and financial control to compel the survivor to remain in a cycle of slavery that keeps them vulnerable. Web3 technologies, such as blockchain and decentralized finance can allow people to protect, control, and access their own identity, evidence that could be used to corroborate abuse, and financial services that may not be available to survivors through traditional financial institutions. During this presentation, we will discuss the technologies mentioned above, as well as the challenges that creating a blockchain ecosystem poses, including as web3 relates to data protection and privacy laws, whether smart contracts are legally binding, issues with dispute resolution and smart contracts due to their decentralization, and accessibility of the technologies themselves considering cost of implementation and distribution as well as training for use of the technologies.*

Researcher:

Davina Ugochukwu

Staff Attorney | Lone Star Legal Aid

Justice for Crime Survivors | Crime Victims Unit

Dugochukwu@lonestarlegal.org | 713.652.0077 ext. 1163

5:00 pm

Closing

6:00 PM

Advisory Board - Center Of Research Excellence To Counter Human Trafficking (CRECHT)
at the J BAR M Texas BBQ, 2201 Leeling Street, Houston, Texas

Day 3 – July 24, 2025

8:00 am VIDEO PRESENTATION: Edwin Rose

8:30 am **WHAT ARE THE CYBER SIGNATURES OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING? (VIRTUAL PRESENTATION)**

Synopsis: *Human trafficking (HT) remains a global issue, manifesting through the exploitation and violation of human rights. Police and border force efforts encounter limitations in detecting and disrupting HT due to its complex and covert nature. In particular, the internet supports HT by offering anonymity and a broad reach to traffickers. However, digital traces or cyber signatures are left that can be used by law enforcement and border forces for detection and disruption, although this necessitates an adaptation in and modernization of police and border patrol methodologies to uncover and counteract HT operations.*

Using thematic analysis of peer reviewed literature, this systematic review explored the cyber signatures associated with HT. The inclusion criteria were studies that discuss digital markers, cyber patterns, or online behaviors linked to HT and detection/prevention strategies. Analyses are ongoing, with early results highlighting abrupt changes in online account details/IP addresses; distinctive financial transaction patterns; the use of encrypted/dark web platforms for trafficking logistics; and gaps in policing knowledge related to digital behaviors. These results will be discussed in context of guiding researchers, law enforcement and border patrols in developing more effective strategies to use digital technologies against traffickers.

Presenter:

Dr. Sarah Hambidge

Bournemouth University, U.K

SHambidge2@bournemouth.ac.uk

Associate Researchers

Paul Wells, National Police Chiefs' Council, UK; **Zoe Callon**, Bournemouth University, UK;

Arianna Barbin, University of Suffolk, UK; **Dr Kari Davies**, Bournemouth University, UK

9:30 am Break

10:00 am **EMERGING ISSUE: ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION OF AFRICANS FROM AFRICA THRU LATIN AMERICA TO THE USA**

Synopsis: *The surge in African illegal immigration to US via Latin America poses significant humanitarian and security concerns. Driven by desperation and exploitation, migrants sell their life savings to finance perilous journeys, falling prey to organized crime, human trafficking and violence. Women and children are disproportionately affected, comprising 70 %*

of global human trafficking victims. A comprehensive response is necessary , leveraging technology(biometric identification, AI-powered analytics), international cooperation(intelligence sharing, capacity-building) and strategic partnerships (Public-private collaborations, humanitarian assistance) to disrupt smuggling networks , protect vulnerable migrants and ensure border security.

Presenter:

Colonel Jean Baptiste Hatungimana

Advisor to the Minister of Public Safety and Community Development

Republic of Burundi

hatungimana2015@gmail.com |

11:00 am ***USE OF PREDICTIVE ALGORITHMS TO IMPROVE THE IDENTIFICATION OF VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING (VIRTUAL PRESENTATION)***

Synopsis: *This online presentation will discuss the existing barriers in the detection of victims of human trafficking and will analyze how technology could be used to overcome these barriers and to improve the identification of victims. To this end, she will explore using a system that is similar to VioGén (implemented in Spain for cases of gender violence) which uses a preventive algorithm that allows the automatization of the risk of a person being a victim of human trafficking. She will also refer to the risks that using technology entail.*

Presenter:

Ms. Maria Barraco

Lawyer

Mery.Barrac@gmail.com

12:00 pm **Lunch**

1:30 pm ***THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN ADDRESSING FAMILY-BASED CHILD HUMAN TRAFFICKING***

Synopsis: *Child human trafficking within families is still realized as a crucial social issue that has the most severe outcome for the affected children and their communities. This paper examines the extent of technology in combating family-based child human trafficking USING a descriptive survey research design and a quantitative analysis method. The data was gathered through a survey having a pretested structured questionnaire from the key stakeholders; the law enforcers, the social workers, the teachers and other leaders in the communities. The concerns in the study are focused on evaluating the efficiency of advanced technologies like artificial intelligence, mobile application, and blockchain to identify the trafficking activities, and victims and to avoid future similar incidences. From the synthesis, the following conclusions were made Technology has improved real-time tracking, secure reporting, and awareness campaigns, but there are issues like; poor technological support and low technology acceptance. Some of the suggestions advanced are,*

making technology a readily accessible resource, offering awareness creation to stakeholders on the use of technology and enhancing inter-agency cooperation in the fight against human trafficking. The findings of this study are significant in promoting the use of technology in the fight against family-based child human trafficking and generates knowledge for policy formulation and practice.

Presenter:

Dorothy Nkem Ezenwanne, Ph.D

Department of Home Economics,
Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe, Anambra State,
Nigeria University

chrisok222@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8910-7944>

2:30 pm **Break**

3:00 pm ***COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING: FUTURE RESEARCH NEEDS***

Synopsis: *The closing session is an open discussion between law enforcement operators, NGO representatives, and prospective researchers on technology and research needs that would assist operators in combating human trafficking.*

Facilitator:

Hady Salloum

Director of Research
Borders, Trade, and Immigration Institute

HSalloum@central.uh.edu | 201.859.5289

4:00 pm **Closing**
