

# LABOR TRAFFICKING BY FORCED CRIMINALITY OF YOUTH

Authored By: Anabel Martinez, JD | Policy Associate with the Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Policy Initiative at Loyola Law School



## The Issue

Labor trafficking by forced criminality (LTFC) of youth encompasses a range of illegal activities, including cultivation, transport, and sales of drugs as well as theft, and other criminal gang related activities orchestrated by traffickers who exploit children and adolescents for their labor. These young victims often remain unseen within the broader discourse on human trafficking, overshadowed by more recognized forms of trafficking, such as the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC). In Los Angeles the current lack of awareness, training, and appropriate services for youth victims of LTFC significantly hampers the identification, protection, and service provision of these vulnerable children.

## The Need for Action in Los Angeles

Los Angeles stands at a critical juncture in addressing the hidden epidemic of child LTFC. While commendable efforts have focused on combating CSEC, a glaring oversight exists in the support for victims of labor trafficking, especially young victims of LTFC.

## Legislative Gaps

Legislative gaps underscore the complex interplay between socio-economic vulnerabilities and exploitation mechanisms that traffickers prey upon. This report highlights the challenges in identifying and supporting victims due to the criminal nature of their coerced activities, and outlines a comprehensive strategy to fill this gap, reflecting Los Angeles's commitment to the safety and well-being of all youth. Addressing this issue in a comprehensive and holistic manner is vital for breaking the cycle of exploitation and strengthening our community's fabric.

## IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM SO WE CAN FIND THE SOLUTION

Existing laws and policies, both at the local and state levels, fail to fully recognize or address the unique circumstances surrounding youth who experience LTFC. These gaps include:

- Inadequate identification protocols
- Lack of specialized support services
- Criminalization of victims for actions committed while they are being trafficked.

“

“As a survivor of both child sex trafficking and child labor trafficking, the artificial hierarchy of trauma created by gaps in service and legislation is incredibly harmful. I was labor trafficked in the Sacramento region as a child, separately from when I was sex trafficked. One form of trafficking should not be considered more severe or in need of services than another. The current status of legislation that ignores the equally urgent needs of child labor trafficking survivors endorses cruelty and child abuse, and wholly disregards the egregious torture of children.”

- Sabra Boyd | consultant, survivor leader



### About

The Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Policy Initiative (Sunita Jain Initiative) at...

lls.edu



**About**

The Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Policy Initiative (Sunita Jain Initiative) at...  
lls.edu



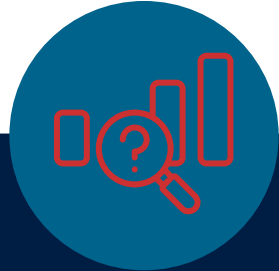
# LABOR TRAFFICKING BY FORCED CRIMINALITY OF YOUTH

Authored By: Anabel Martinez, JD | Policy Associate with the Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Policy Initiative at Loyola Law School



## GAPS

Critical legislative and systemic gaps hinder effective responses to this issue. Existing laws and policies fail to fully recognize or address the needs of youth who experience LTFC.



## INVISIBILITY

These young victims often remain unseen within the broader discourse on human trafficking, overshadowed by more recognized forms of trafficking.



## BARRIERS

The current lack of awareness, training, and appropriate services for youth victims of LTFC significantly hampers the identification, protection, and services for these vulnerable children.



**ADDRESS  
LEGISLATIVE AND  
SYSTEMIC GAPS**



**ENHANCE SUPPORT  
SERVICES**



**FOSTER  
COLLABORATION  
AMONG ALL  
STAKEHOLDERS**



**Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Initiative**  
Community informed solutions to historical and systemic racial inequity is fully realized as anti-...  
lls.edu



# ROADMAPPING A PLAN OF ACTION

The battle against human trafficking and LTFC in Los Angeles requires a unified and robust response from all sectors of society. By addressing the legislative and systemic gaps, enhancing support services, and fostering collaboration among all stakeholders, it is possible to better identify, protect, and support victims of LTFC, ensuring a safer and more just environment for all youth. This effort not only aligns with Los Angeles's values of justice and compassion, but also reinforces its standing as a leader in the fight against human trafficking. Together, we can create a future where every child is free from exploitation and has the opportunity to thrive.

## Key recommendations include:

1

### Enhancing Policies and Legal Frameworks

Amend existing policies, laws, and legislation to explicitly include protections for LTFC victims, ensuring these individuals are treated as victims rather than perpetrators.

2

### Taking a Public Health Approach

A public health and community organizing approach is needed to address the issue of identifying and serving youth experiencing LTFC instead of a carceral approach that often does not work for particularly vulnerable communities who are trafficked.

3

### Increasing Awareness and Training

Provide targeted training for law enforcement, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and service providers to recognize signs of LTFC and respond appropriately.

4

### Improving Identification

Develop and implement standardized protocols for identifying victims and referring them to specialized support services. Instead of arresting children who are victims of LTFC.

5

### Providing Access to Services

Ensure LTFC victims have similar access to specialized CSEC services including mental health support, legal assistance, and housing opportunities.

6

### Fostering Collaboration

Encourage collaboration between governmental agencies, law enforcement, defense attorneys, prosecutors, non-profits, and community organizations to share resources, information, and best practices.

7

### Collecting Data

Require government agencies, including law enforcement, to collect and report data on youth who are LTFC in order to help policy makers and service providers better understand the prevalence and needs of LTFC victims.



#### About

The Sunita Jain Anti-Trafficking Policy Initiative (Sunita Jain Initiative) at...

lls.edu