

Labor Trafficking Stories

Natalia | Domestic Servitude

Thirteen year old Natalia was told by her parents she was moving to the U.S. with family friends who would allow her to receive an education and learn English.

Born and raised in a small village in Ghana, Natalia's family was struggling to pay the school fees for their children's education and welcomed the opportunity for Natalia to receive an education in the United States.

Shortly after she arrived in the US, the father she was living with began to physically and sexually abuse the young girl, creating a constant environment of fear for Natalia. For the next six years she was forced to clean the house, wash clothes, cook, and care for their three children, often working 18 hours a day while receiving no form of payment. She was never allowed to enroll in school as the family had promised, go outside, or even use the phone. One day, after she was severely beaten, Natalia saw an opportunity to run away from the home and a neighbor called the police. She was then taken to a local hospital for medical care. The nurse assisting Natalia was aware of the National Human Trafficking Resource Center and referred her to Polaris New Jersey.

The Polaris New Jersey team met Natalia at the local hospital and immediately coordinated emergency services including clothing, a safe shelter, counseling, emotional support and case management. Within a month, Natalia was enrolled in school as she had always dreamed, living in transitional housing and beginning to feel like herself again. Now, nearly a year later, she is volunteering at a local animal rescue shelter, participating in a weekly poetry workshop and is pursuing her education to become a nurse. Natalia is one of the many examples of the reliance and courage of survivors who have redefined their future and are working towards achieving their long-term goals.

Sabine | Domestic Servitude

Upon coming to the United States with a wealthy family, Sabine was imprisoned in their home; unable to leave, she was made to work around the clock.

Sabine was the only member of her family to survive the genocide in Rwanda, so she agreed when a wealthy family offered her a chance to move to America with them. Shortly after arrival, however, she was imprisoned in their home; forced to work around the clock and made to sleep on the kitchen floor. Finally after six months of servitude, Sabine was allowed to go to church for an hour each Sunday. On one visit, she was approached by a kind Rwandan man who learned of her situation and helped her escape. He took Sabine to one of our partner agencies and who immediately referred her to Polaris.

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Before participating in the Transitional Housing program, Sabine was afraid of everything. She did not want to leave the apartment after 4:00 p.m.--because it was too dark--and was afraid to walk to the Polaris office by herself. She had never been independent in the U.S., so even going to the grocery store or using a gift card terrified her. Her Polaris Case Manager not only accompanied her when shopping, but also conducted case management sessions in her transitional housing home, where she felt safe and secure. Because of her attentive Case Manager, after only three months, she was able to visit the office on her own. She also began shopping on her own and familiarizing herself with the neighborhood. When she came to Polaris she spoke no English, but after taking English lessons she is now conversational. She became the most enthusiastic and eager student in our Job Training program, and continued to visit the center to practice the computer skills.

Polaris. (2015). Natalia | Domestic Servitude Labor Trafficking. Retrieved from <http://www.polarisproject.org/what-we-do/client-services/survivor-stories/618-natalia-domestic-servitude-labor-trafficking>

Polaris. (2015). Sabine | Domestic Servitude. Retrieved from <http://www.polarisproject.org/what-we-do/client-services/survivor-stories/351-sabine-domestic-servitude>

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