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HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE NEWS

Houston rapper gets life in prison for sex trafficking teens, U.S. attorney says

HOUSTON — A Houston rapper has been sentenced to life in prison for sex trafficking three minors and an adult, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office. Some of 29-year-old Jacorey Nathaniel Anderson's, also known as Slando Kareem, victims were only 15 years old. Anderson reportedly lured some of his victims to the Austin area from Houston through social media and texts before forcing them into prostitution. [Click here](#) to read more.

Two accused of trafficking girls missing from foster home in Palm Beach Co.

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (CBS12) — Two girls who went missing from a Palm Beach County foster home earlier this month were the victims of a human trafficking operation in the area, the sheriff's office reported. Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office (PBSO) deputies rescued the girls Wednesday after a law enforcement officer reported seeing one of them walking out of a home with a suspected human trafficker. [Click here](#) to read more.

Dundee waterpark under investigation for alleged labor trafficking

DUNDEE, Mich. — Dundee police and multiple other agencies, including federal law enforcement, are investigating allegations of labor trafficking at Dundee waterpark Splash Universe in early September. [Click here](#) to read more.

Travel plaza employee named 2024 Harriet Tubman Award winner

Charles Bernsen, general manager of the Petro in Florence, South Carolina, has been named the winner of the 2024 TAT Harriet Tubman Award presented by Progressive Commercial.

Bernsen received the award, which includes a trophy and check for \$5,000, from TAT Executive Director



Esther Goetsch and TA CEO Debi Boffa at TA Florence, South Carolina on Oct. 2, the location where he worked as general manager when the incident occurred for which he was recognized. As an added surprise, the trafficking survivor Bernsen aided, Nikki, also attended the awards presentation. This marked the first meeting between the two since the incident that brought them together originally.

Harriet Tubman Award winner Charles Bernsen receives a hug at the award ceremony from Nikki, the survivor he helped leave her trafficking situation. TAT Executive Director Esther Goetsch looks on.

Bernsen, one of 18,000 TA employees who receive TAT's human trafficking training annually, noticed a distressed young woman hanging around the store. She would disappear for periods of time into the restroom but then reappear in the lobby area. After a couple days of seeing her repeatedly, Bernsen approached her and asked if she needed help. She burst into tears, telling him she had escaped a man who had been holding her captive in a hotel across the street from the TA where he'd been selling her for sex. Bernsen offered her food, clothing, a blanket and information about TAT. He had her call the National Human Trafficking Hotline and speak to them, and then purchased a bus ticket for her to get home and provided money for expenses along the way. The young woman, Nikki, later made a [video](#) with TAT about her experience and said Bernsen's soft-spoken demeanor and compassion enabled her to trust him.

Bernsen said the TAT training definitely better prepared him for this situation. "Once you've been exposed to all this evil," he shared, "it's always in the back of your mind that this could be happening, and it could happen in the blink of an eye. The education, the videos and conferences we've gone to have been a huge help."

"Charles's vigilance, empathy, and acute actions for Nikki exemplify TAT's mission," Goetsch stated. "He knew exactly what to do when he found himself in the right place at the right time, a crucial moment that changed everything for her. Instead of turning a blind eye, he acted with compassion and courage. We are proud and grateful to present Charles with our 2024 Harriet Tubman Award."

TAT created the annual award to honor a member of the trucking, bus or energy industry, whose direct actions help save or improve the lives of those exploited or prevent human trafficking from taking place. The award was named in honor of famed abolitionist Harriet Tubman, whose courageous personal actions resulted in the transportation of 300 slaves to freedom through the Underground Railroad and whose overall role in the freedom movement was instrumental in the freeing of thousands more.

"We are extremely proud of the actions Charles took when encountering Nikki and are so grateful for the positive outcome in this situation," said Boffa. "Charles is a true role model for all our team members, and I know his actions and this award will inspire others when they see something. Here at TA, we remain committed to educating all of our team members on human trafficking awareness and empowering them to take action; they are the eyes and ears of our nation's highways, and, as Charles has shown, we can make a difference."

Jeffrey Silvey, senior manager at Progressive Commercial, said, "We are grateful to be a part of the Harriet Tubman Award. We applaud Charles for taking action and offering kindness when it was needed most. This is a fantastic example of the TAT effort in action and why we support this life-saving work."

Walmart named TAT Champion Award winner in the Organization Category

TAT Executive Director Esther Goetsch named Walmart the winner of the 2024 TAT Champion Award in the Organization Category, stating, "Walmart exemplifies what it means to be a TAT Champion and a force multiplier in spreading awareness about the issue and doing what it takes to ensure their drivers are making a positive impact on this crime."

Goetsch presented the award at the American Trucking Associations Management Conference and Exhibition in Nashville, Tennessee, Oct. 13, with Doug Estrada, Transportation group director for Walmart Stores, and Antoine Sadler, Walmart driver and ATA Road Team member, receiving the award on Walmart's behalf. Sadler has served on TAT's Board of Directors since 2021, and Estrada serves as the chair of TAT's Advisory Committee.



Antoine Sadler (center) and Doug Estrada (left) accepted the TAT Champion Award from Esther Goetsch (right) on behalf of Walmart.

Walmart began partnering with TAT in 2015 and has now trained over 55,378 drivers with TAT's training and donated hauls of TAT's Freedom Driver Project (FDP) 55 times, including to a Walmart FDP tour in 2022 that went to nine Walmart sites and engaged hundreds of drivers, families and volunteers. Between volunteer hours and t-shirt sales and donations, Walmart employees raised an additional \$10,000 of support to TAT during that tour. Walmart displays the TAT window decal on all Walmart private fleet tractors, and their drivers have volunteered at industry events and worked alongside TAT at countless industry events. Additionally, Walmart is a TAT Freedom Drivers-level corporate sponsor.

Goetsch reminded the audience present, "The fight against the injustice of human trafficking is the work of thousands of dedicated and committed people in countries around the globe. It succeeds, in part, by elevating it in circles like these and having a serious commitment to doing our part in whatever sphere of influence or role in which we find ourselves."

The TAT Champion Awards in three categories are presented annually to recognize and honor the outstanding creative, innovative, generous and dedicated efforts of specific TAT partners whose actions have significantly furthered TAT's work.

TAT Coalition Builds create public-private partnerships

One of TAT's key initiatives is building public-private partnerships with the potential of closing loopholes human traffickers exploit and affecting maximum and lasting impact in the fight against human trafficking. One of TAT's most effective tools to achieve this are Coalition Builds (CBs). These half-day events establish effective and sustainable working relationships between industry leaders and law enforcement on a federal, state/provincial and local level to combat human trafficking.

So far this year, TAT has hosted 11 CBs in 10 states and one Canadian province, including San Joaquin, California (Youth on Transportation or YOT); Midland, Texas (energy); Denver, Colorado (YOT); Green

Bay, Wisconsin; Tucson, Arizona; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Monroe, Louisiana; Nova Scotia, Canada; Cleveland, Ohio (YOT); Joliet, Illinois; and Dickinson, North Dakota (energy). A total of 663 attendees represented various sectors, including trucking/truck stops (12%), bus/transit companies/associations (6%), law enforcement (29%), government/state agencies (17%), NGOs/nonprofits (19%) and other sectors (9%). Two additional CBs are planned in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania on Nov. 13 and New Orleans, Louisiana on Dec. 5.



Attendees packed the room at the Midland, Texas Energy Coalition Build.

"Our Coalition Builds don't end when the event does; they create a mobile army of committed partners who are equipped to take immediate action," shared Sara Segfried, TAT director of Strategic Partnerships. "Each of these industry leaders, law enforcement officers and community advocates leaves ready to collaborate and drive real change in their sectors."

Examples of impact actions that occur following a CB are:

- Inspired by the Denver Youth on Transportation Coalition Build, Denver Regional Transport District (RTD) started including anti-trafficking messaging from TAT and the Colorado Human Trafficking Council on their public-facing electronic monitors and distributed materials to all 3,000 employees.
- After the Green Bay Coalition Build, Rubber Inc. registered 142 drivers as TAT-Trained and adopted an anti-trafficking-in-persons policy.
- Committed to taking action, the Pennsylvania Bus Association will be participating in TAT's inaugural YOT Safety Month in May 2025.
- The Fourth Judicial District Attorney in Louisiana ordered TAT materials and will place TAT window decals on all vehicles in their fleet.
- The Coalition to End Human Trafficking in Northwest Louisiana displays TAT materials, including TAT's victim-centered posters, at their family resource center in Shreveport.



Charlie Van Hoose from the Fountain-Fort Carson School District 8 in Colorado, echoed the enthusiasm of the majority of other CB participants with his comments about the CB he attended when he said, "I appreciated the professional input from so many different roles in the community! It gave me a greater understanding of how all of this is happening right in front of our noses, and we have no idea about it."

At the Cleveland, Ohio YOT CB Linda Majeska Powers, legal director of the Ohio Human Trafficking Initiative, Office of Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost (center) chatted with Sgt. David Garber of the Ohio State Highway Patrol (left) and Lt. Todd Belcher of the Ohio State Highway Patrol.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Nov. 3 – Feet for Justice 5K Fundraiser, hosted by the Laboratory to Combat Human Trafficking, Denver, CO

Nov. 6 – TAT Task Force Lunch ‘N Learn, virtual

Nov. 6 – HP’s Human Rights Risks in the Logistics Industry webinar, virtual

Nov. 10-13 – WIT Accelerate Conference, Dallas, TX

Nov. 13-15 – Midwest Traffic Safety Conference, Itasca, IL

Nov. 13-14 – Northeast CMV Safety Summit: Innovative Best Practices to Prevent Crashes, Springfield, MA

Nov. 13 – Pittsburgh Coalition Build, Pittsburgh, PA

Nov. 14 – Central Oregon Transportation Briefing, Bend, OR

Nov. 18 – National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services Annual Conference, Arlington, VA

Nov. 19 – USDOJ SMART Office webinar, virtual

Nov. 20 – San Joaquin County trafficking and transportation follow-up discussion, virtual

Nov. 21 – Women’s Energy Network of Ohio Membership Appreciation Event, Columbus, OH



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