

SEX TRAFFICKING CONSPIRACY THEORIES

IS THIS FOR REAL, PLUMB
CRAZY, OR SOMETHING ELSE?

Allan Bakke

SW MN Safe Harbor
Regional Navigator

507.360.0053

Allan@mnsbcc.org

Anne LaFrinier-Ritchie

West Central MN Safe Harbor
Regional Navigator

320.979.9481

Anne.lr@someplacesafe.info

CONSPIRACY THEORIES:

what drives some people to them

About the Presenters



Safe Harbor Regional Navigators Allan Bakke and Anne LaFrinier-Ritchie serve Southwest MN and West Central MN respectively. They serve as points of contact for professionals and sexually exploited/trafficked youth in accessing appropriate services as well as building community capacity and facilitating a process for improving the community response.

CONSPIRACY THEORIES:

what drives some people to them

Today's Objective

- Understanding Conspiracy Theories and Their Appeal
- Examining 4 of the Popular Sex Trafficking Conspiracy Theories Currently in Circulation
- Discussing How Conspiracy Theories Impact Work Being Done by Anti-Trafficking Agencies

CONSPIRACY THEORIES:

what drives some people to them

According to University of Chicago study by professor Eric Oliver and Thomas Wood, in any given year roughly half of all Americans believe in at least one conspiracy theory.

- 19% believed U.S. government planned the 9/11 attacks on World Trade Center.
- 24% believed former President Barack Obama was not born in U.S.
- 25% believed Wall Street bankers conspired to cause the 2008 financial crisis.
- 61% do not believe that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in assassinating President John F. Kennedy.

CONSPIRACY THEORIES:

what drives some people to them

To some extent, the human brain is wired to find conspiracy theories appealing. Psychologists believe that 3 different cognitive biases are at play.

- **Confirmation bias:** People's willingness to accept explanations that fit what they already believe.
- **Proportionality bias:** The inclination to believe that big events must have big causes.
- **Illusory pattern perception:** The tendency to see casual relationships where there may not be any.

CONSPIRACY THEORIES:

what drives some people to them

To some extent, the human brain is wired to find conspiracy theories appealing. Psychologists believe that 3 different cognitive biases are at play.

- Confirmation bias: People's willingness to accept explanations that fit what they already believe.
- **Proportionality bias: The inclination to believe that big events must have big causes.**
- Illusory pattern perception: The tendency to see casual relationships where there may not be any.

CONSPIRACY THEORIES:

what drives some people to them

To some extent, the human brain is wired to find conspiracy theories appealing. Psychologists believe that 3 different cognitive biases are at play.

- Confirmation bias: People's willingness to accept explanations that fit what they already believe.
- Proportionality bias: The inclination to believe that big events must have big causes.
- **Illusory pattern perception: The tendency to see casual relationships where there may not be any.**

CONSPIRACY THEORIES:

what drives some people to them

Conspiracy theories serve an important psychological function for people trying to cope with large, stressful events like a terrorist attack.

- People need to blame the anxiety they feel on someone or something.
- People don't like when things are random. Randomness is more threatening than having an enemy.
- Conspiracy theories also appeal to people's need to feel special and unique.

CONSPIRACY THEORIES:

what drives
some people
to them

Sometimes conspiracy theories turn out to be real.

- President Nixon did try to cover up the Watergate break in.
- The Reagan administration did sell arms to Iran to illegally fund the Contra rebels in Nicaragua.
- The CIA really did test LSD on unwitting U.S. citizens.

SEX
TRAFFICKING
CONSPIRACY
THEORIES
CIRCULATING
NOW

QAnon

Far-right conspiracy theory detailing a supposed secret plot by an alleged deep state against President Trump and his supporters for investigating an occult-like group of prominent Democratic politicians, high-ranking officials, and Hollywood actors who are members of an international child sex trafficking ring.

SEX
TRAFFICKING
CONSPIRACY
THEORIES
CIRCULATING
NOW

#SavetheChildren

The post started circulating the last week of July claiming that Bill Gates and the Clinton Foundation are involved in sex trafficking. Theory gains traction because there is an actual organization based in London called Save The Children connected to both foundations

SEX
TRAFFICKING
CONSPIRACY
THEORIES
CIRCULATING
NOW

Pizzagate

Conspiracy theory that falsely claimed that hacked emails from John Podesta, Hillary Clinton's campaign manager, contained coded messages connecting Democratic Party officials and U.S. restaurants with an alleged human trafficking and child sex ring.

SEX TRAFFICKING CONSPIRACY THEORIES CIRCULATING NOW

Wayfair

- Believers of this conspiracy theory allege that names of certain Wayfair products being sold on the site match those of children who have gone missing in the United States. Some also believe that the dimensions and weights of the products are actually descriptions of children, not of the products pictured. When someone buys a product listed for thousands of dollars, these theorists believe that somehow indicates a desire to purchase a child whose name is also the product name.
- The Wayfair conspiracy Theory is a great example of how conspiracy theories can gain traction as it started out by a question on Reddit's forum for conspiracy theories on July 9th. It moved into the mainstream after it was shared by paid social media influencers who posted it on Facebook followed by a 40 minute livestream video. Other influencers saw the following and began promoting it with screenshots of Wayfair products on over 20 social media sites.

HOW THE SPREAD OF MISINFORMATION THREATENS EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS THAT ADDRESS SEX TRAFFICKING

- If public is misinformed about what sex trafficking looks like in our communities, they may not be able to recognize it as they come across people who are being trafficked.
- The false image of what sex trafficking victims look like has been embedded in our society that many times, victims can't identify themselves as trafficked.
- False narratives about trafficking invalidate the voices of survivors.
- False narratives tie up valuable resources for victims and law enforcement.
- False narratives create a partisan environment around the issue.

CALLING OUT THE SPREAD OF MISINFORMATION THAT THREATENS EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS ADDRESSING SEX TRAFFICKING

Polars Human Trafficking Our Work How to Help DONATE

HUMAN TRAFFICKING RUMORS

Your social media feed fills up with terrifying stories of children being snatched off the streets by traffickers, packaged in shipping crates or auctioned off online and sold to the highest bidder. Sometimes these stories are spread by well-meaning people who are truly concerned. Other times, they are being put forward by organizations and individuals with other agendas.

Need help? Polars operates the U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline. Call 1 (888) 373-7888 *Text "BeFree" 233733 Live Chat QUICK EXIT

Rumor Versus Reality

Over the past almost 19 years, we have heard from thousands of victims and survivors and we have also heard countless rumors about human trafficking. Here are some of the most common ones and what we know about them. Check back here as we will continue to update as rumors spread. We'll tell you what we know, what we don't know, and, in some cases, what to do about what you see.

- White Passenger Vans
- High-Priced Online Items
- Cabal of Politicians and a Pizza Restaurant
- Hot Dogs and Pizza are Code for Traffickers

Need help? Polars operates the U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline. Call 1 (888) 373-7888 *Text "BeFree" 233733 Live Chat QUICK EXIT

QUESTIONS?

Allan Bakke

SW MN Safe Harbor
Regional Navigator

507.360.0053

Allan@mnsbcc.org

Anne LaFrinier-Ritchie

West Central MN Safe Harbor
Regional Navigator

320.979.9481

Anne.lr@someplacesafe.info