
Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

The Often Forgotten Explores Trafficking and Activists in Thailand

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Independent filmmaker and co-founder of blindfoldmag.com, Jacqueline Romano and Anti-Trafficking Expert and Activist Alezandra Russell are turning to the internet to raise funds for their first feature film project, *The Often Forgotten*, a documentary that tells the stories of at-risk boys who are exploited, abused and trafficked within the sex tourism industry of Thailand, and the stories of the activists who are fighting to give these boys the support, aid and justice they desperately need.

We support them and this important project, and hope you will too. You can make a contribution here: <https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/the-often-forgotten-film-trafficking-of-boys/#/>

One of the filmmakers' biggest obstacles has been finding grants and production companies who will back a film as controversial as this, but their passion for giving these boys who are constantly overlooked an outlet to be seen has kept them optimistic in getting the funding they need to complete this film.

This female filmmaking duo are telling the story of a global issue affecting hundreds of thousands of boys that goes under reported, under represented and under funded. Child sex tourism can be found in any country, but is more likely to occur in poverty-stricken areas where a traveler's wealth can be used for exploitation and where government systems lack implemented policies and policing. A feature-length documentary, *The Often Forgotten* takes us to Thailand, where sex tourism vacations are available through the internet and airline industries promote cheap vacations full of "adult" entertainment. Often, children living in poverty are forced to move to big cities to find work and end up falling prey to sex trafficking and exploitation. The stories of these young men can no longer be neglected. This documentary film will give access to many varying perspectives of those involved in Thailand's sex industry. According to the International Labor Organization there are 25 million victims of trafficking worldwide generating billions of dollars in illicit money. With the release of this film we are removing the world's blindfold and giving these boys the spotlight as they make up 30% of trafficking victims worldwide, yet are often forgotten within the International dialogue and anti-trafficking efforts.

This film will combine the aesthetics of well-lit, cinematic interviews using 4K footage from their Canon C200 and Sony A7sii cameras with in the trenches style footage while following these boys and activists. Undercover footage inside the locations where the boys are being sold will also be incorporated.

A large portion of the film has been shot as the two filmmakers have interviewed boys who are currently working in Thailand's sex industry to gain insight on how they have ended up in the trade and what is preventing them from leaving, and activists and researchers who are working to create change for them. In most cases, boys will enter the trade in hopes of obtaining paperwork for citizenship and a better life for themselves and their families. These boys are sent to urban areas such as Bangkok to earn wages that are, more often than not, sent back home to support their families, leaving them with very little income to support themselves. Eventually, the boys are forced to face the reality that sex work is the only way to provide enough money for their survival.

As you are taken down the streets of the Red Light Districts of Thailand, their supporting footage shows flashing neon signs with slogans such as "Fresh Boys," "Hot Males," and "Love Teen Massage." Interviews with men who own establishments from which boys are sold will give us a look into the buyer's perspective. This film offers the contrast to this with interviews with advocates who are on the ground doing outreach work providing safe sex options, as many of these boys have contracted a form of HIV and/or STIs, emergency services and harm reduction.

If the film is successfully funded, Producer and Director Jacqueline Romano and Co-Producer Alezandra Russell expect to deliver the final cut before Spring 2020.

Jacqueline Romano, a Parsons School of Design alumnus, is a documentary filmmaker based in New York City and is co-founder of blindfoldmag.com, a socially conscious online storytelling platform. While Jacqueline has worked on many award-winning short-form documentary films, this will be her first feature-length documentary film.

Alezandra Russell is an anti-trafficking expert, activist, and founder of Urban-light.org. Urban Light is an organization, which provides various services and emergency support to boys who are victims of exploitation and commercial sexual exploitation in Thailand. She is hopeful that pushing the distribution of this documentary to a global audience will take her fight to improve the lives of the boys she works with and promote the abolishment of sex tourism in Thailand to a higher level.

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