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THE INNOCENCE INITIATIVE

DISRUPTING ADULTIFICATION BIAS

Adultification bias is the phenomenon of Black girls and women being perceived as more mature and sexualized than their white counterparts. This perception puts Black girls at a greater risk for violence, as they are seen as more dangerous and less in need of protection. Black girls have long been subjected to laws and policies that treat them as adults, even when they are children. Today the media, law enforcement, and the general public regularly objectify and sexualize Black girls, contributing to further perpetuating adultification bias.



**BLACK GIRLS
SEEN AS LESS
INNOCENT
AS EARLY AS**

AGE
5

SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE

Black female students are 15 times more likely than white female students to be subjected to a school-related arrest ²

15x

10x

Black girls are 10 times more likely than their white counterparts to be expelled under zero-tolerance policies ³

As early as age 5, Black girls are viewed by adults as more knowledgeable about sex and adult topics, less in need of nurture and support and significantly older than white girls of the same age ⁴



OUR IMPACT SO FAR

Since it's inception The Innocence Initiative has:

- Trained over 1,000 attorneys, advocates, and community members in adultification bias and how to protect Black girls.
- Published and distributed 15,000 copies of our "Hey Sis, Just Be You," a comic book to raise awareness of adultification bias.
- Established a mentorship program in partnership with Hearts 2 Heal, which directly supports Black girls ages 13-17 through resources for mental health, education, and basic needs.

As the initiative continues to grow it is essential that we continue to dream of an anti-racist future where Black girls flourish.



OUR GIRLS NEED US

The Innocence Initiative elevates the data, listens to the real-life stories of Black girls, and addresses disparities that perpetuate adultification through advocacy. Flip this card to learn more about the Protecting our Daughters public awareness campaign.

PROTECTING OUR DAUGHTERS

DISRUPTING THE JEZEBEL STEREOTYPE

WHAT IS THE JEZEBEL STEREOTYPE?

The Jezebel stereotype is a racist and sexist construction of Black girls' sexuality where it's used to justify violence against Black girls and to police their bodies and sexual behaviors. It's used to justify discrimination and violence, and it serves to uphold systems of oppression. The Jezebel stereotype is harmful and destructive and must be understood and challenged so that Black girls are seen as victims, not willing participants in the crime of human trafficking.⁵



WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND THE IMPACT ON BLACK GIRLS ?

In the State of Texas, human trafficking is defined as an act of modern-day slavery that involves the exploitation of individuals for commercial sex or forced labor by a profiting third party. Texas law recognizes four types of human trafficking offenses.⁶

- **Adult sex trafficking**
- **Adult labor trafficking**
- **Child sex trafficking**
- **Child labor trafficking**

40%

40% of sex trafficking victims were identified as Black ⁷

51%

Black youth comprised 51% of prostitution arrests for individuals under age 18 ⁸

Per the Jezebel stereotype, Black girls are often hyper-sexualized within the dominating white, cis-hetero-patriarchal culture. In addition, the intersecting gender and racial oppression experienced by Black girls fuel myths about them being inherently sexual and “grown-up” enough to consensually participate in the commercial sex industry.⁹



RISK FACTORS FOR VICTIMIZATION

According to the National Human Trafficking Statistics Report, the top five risk factors for human trafficking in the U.S. are

- Recent migration/relocation
- Substance use
- Being a runaway or homeless youth
- Involvement with the children welfare system
-



Texas cities, ranked among the 100 Most Populous in the U.S. ¹¹

#1

Houston, TX

#9

Dallas, TX

#14

Austin, TX

#41

Fort Worth, TX

#56

Lubbock, TX

#61

El Paso, TX



#PROTECTINGOURDAUGHTERS

The Protecting Our Daughters public awareness campaign will bring recognition of adultification bias through our training and interactive toolkit. The free toolkit will focus on the intersection of trafficking and the protection of Black girls and serve as a prevention tool to increase the visibility of Black girls at-risk for victimization.



**SCAN TO VIEW
TOOLKIT**

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5. Nanda, S. (2019). Re-Framing Hottentot: Liberating Black Female Sexuality from the Mammy/Hottentot Bind. Humanities, 8(161), doi:10.3390/h8040161

6. Tex. Pen. Code § 20A.02 (2005). <https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/PE/htm/PE.20A.htm>

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8. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Crime in the United States. (2019). Table 43B. Retrieved December 21, 2022, from <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/tables/table-43>

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10. Human Trafficking. National Human Trafficking Hotline, humantraffickinghotline.org/en/human-trafficking#:~:text=Human%20trafficking%20can%20happen%20to,a%20runaway%20or%20homeless%20youth. Accessed 9 Aug. 2021.

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