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## **ArtWorks for Freedom: Celebrating 5 Years of Raising Human Trafficking Awareness**

Courtney,

For the month of March, ArtWorks for Freedom is recognizing the importance of youth voices in bringing about change. This is one of my favorite topics. I have been a teacher in some capacity or another most of my life. I love the magic of a classroom in full volume discussion where diverging perspectives are being challenged, affirmed, disproved or sharpened. For me, the beginning of the school year is a time of great anticipation and excitement with new challenges and endless possibilities; invariably, I leave my classroom the wiser and better for the time spent with my students.

I have also experienced the importance of students' voices as an anti-trafficking activist. ArtWorks for Freedom believes in the power that young people bring to the fight against human trafficking, and we will continue to make a place for them – as interns, volunteers, artists and participants – because they help make our programs better and exemplify the importance of finding new language to tell old stories. Most of all, they remind us of why we do the work we do – to make the world safer, kinder and a little bit more beautiful for the generations after us.

In this month's newsletter, we're including ways to bring art together with youth activism to raise awareness of human trafficking. We're also happy to share some of the upcoming events we have with partners that focus on youth education and action against human trafficking. Also, be sure to visit our blog for more stories on courageous youth whom we've had the pleasure to work with and are using their voices to stand up against modern-day slavery.

Thanks for staying connected to ArtWorks for Freedom all month long!

Michele Clark, Executive Director

## **ARTWORKS FEATURE: Three Ways Art Empowers Youth to Stand Against Human Trafficking**

*Youth survivor empowerment organization Kranti participates in the ArtWorks for Freedom awareness campaign at the Kala Ghoda Arts Festival in Mumbai in 2016.*

“This world demands the qualities of youth: not a time of life but a state of mind, a temper of the will, a quality of imagination, a predominance of courage over timidity, of the appetite for adventure over the love of ease.” ~Robert Kennedy

As the words by Robert Kennedy remind us, youth have a "quality of imagination" to see the world as it should be. They also embody the courage needed to push for changes that correct existing injustices. We've often seen in our own work how combining art, education and activism helps young people take their rightful place in the fight against human trafficking.

Here are just a few ways that art can help facilitate youth leadership in the anti-trafficking community.

**1. Art provides an accessible way to educate students about human trafficking.**

Human trafficking is an emotional and complex subject. It's important to arm youth with the correct information to keep them safe, while also making information on human trafficking appropriate for varying age ranges. ArtWorks for Freedom's contributing artist [Thomas Estler](#) created the comic book "[Abolitionista!](#)" to do just that. Estler uses comics to explore the complicated themes that come up while discussing human trafficking and empower young people with the tools to protect themselves.

**2. Art allows young people to express their emotions about the subject.** Once educated about human trafficking, art provides a platform for youth to express their own emotions and become ambassadors to their communities. Our own collaboration with [Groundswell Community Mural Project](#) in 2014 resulted in the 12-panel mobile mural, "[What You See Is Not Who I Am](#)," which travels throughout the United States as part of our national awareness campaigns. Moved by the plight of trafficking victims, the dedicated and talented teen artists created imaginative artwork that is both beautiful and thought-provoking and that will continue to educate the public about human trafficking for years to come.

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