



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF TULARE

Tim Ward, *District Attorney*

PRESS RELEASE

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TULARE HUMAN TRAFFICKER SENTENCED TO STATE PRISON

On Monday, June 17, 2019, in Department 5 of the Tulare County Superior Court, Visalia Division, Judge Juliet Boccone sentenced Myron Johnson, age 21, to 30 years and 8 months in prison for human trafficking. On May 30, 2019, Johnson pleaded no contest to four felony counts of human trafficking of a minor. Johnson possesses a 2016 strike for assault with great bodily injury.

On January 20, 2017, Visalia Police Department officers were contacted by a minor female who said she had just escaped a home in Visalia after being held there by Johnson, who had been selling her for sex. The minor stated that Johnson had threatened to kill her and use other physical violence if she did not perform the sex acts. That same day, officers located Johnson at a Visalia motel and took him into custody.

Through investigation, law enforcement officers from the Tulare Police Department, the Visalia Police Department, and the District Attorney's Bureau of Investigations began to link Johnson to other victims of sex trafficking in the area.

Earlier that January, law enforcement were investigating a missing Tulare girl when the girl's mother contacted Tulare Police Department officers with the belief that her daughter was being sold for sex. Using information provided by the mother, officers discovered the girl on Backpage.com, a now defunct escort website frequented by human traffickers that advertised sexual encounters. On January 12, the victim was located during a traffic stop along with another victim in Tulare. The victims eventually confided that Johnson would coordinate with "customers" and sell them for sex via text message from Backpage advertisements. Johnson would keep all money made from these arrangements.

In all, law enforcement located four total victims, with each being under the age of 18. Some of the victims were trafficked as far away as San Bernardino. Family Services of Tulare County provided services to the victims.

“Human trafficking is real, and it happens here. I commend the work of law enforcement and prosecutors for never letting up in connecting the dots of this complex case and bringing these victims justice,” said Tulare County District Attorney Tim Ward. “Human trafficking is a crime that hides in plain sight. If you suspect trafficking, call local law enforcement or the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1 (888) 373-7888.”

In addition to his sentence, Johnson must register as a sex offender for life.

The Tulare County District Attorney’s Office is a member of the Tulare County Human Trafficking Task Force. The Task Force was established in 2014 to bring law enforcement and community stakeholders together to identify victims of all forms of trafficking, deliver services to those victims, and lead to the successful investigation and prosecution of traffickers. In 2016, the Task Force began receiving funding from the United States Department of Justice to continue its mission of investigation, prosecution, victim service, and awareness. Learn more at www.stoptraffickingtc.wordpress.com.

The case was prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Stacy Plantier and was investigated by Detective German Barrios of the Tulare Police Department, Officer Sean Schibelhut of the Visalia Police Department, and Criminal Investigator Martha Rodriguez of the District Attorney’s Bureau of Investigations.

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