

NBC 7 San Diego Presents "STOLEN"

A seven-part documentary series on the sex trafficking of children.



SAN DIEGO, C.A., August 13, 2020 - On August 20, 2020, NBC San Diego debuts "STOLEN," an expansive documentary series about the sex trafficking and exploitation of children in San Diego County.

Told from the perspective of survivors, advocates -- even pimps, and sex buyers, "STOLEN" also celebrates the strength of survivors and their families, as they struggle to break the bonds of sex trafficking. The seven-episode documentary is the product of a year-long investigation by NBC San Diego Anchor/Reporter Monica Dean and Executive Investigative Producer Tom Jones.

"STOLEN" details how Dean and Jones uncovered previously sealed jailhouse recordings of a trafficker manipulating two teen girls into selling themselves online. The recordings led to an investigation of how a wealthy San Diego businessman received immunity from San Diego County prosecutors, despite his admission that he had paid teenage girls for sex.

The case highlights gaps in the state justice system. Among the problems: the reality that sex buyers are rarely arrested and charged for their crimes, and when they are, they typically receive only a misdemeanor citation that can be disposed of by paying a small fine.

"The way the law works in California, a person can buy sex with a minor, say they didn't realize they were under the age of 18, and walk away with little punishment," Jones said.

In addition, Dean and Jones report for the first time evidence of child sex trafficking occurring at nearly every school district in San Diego County, and how thousands of teenagers are vulnerable to exploiters through their social media profiles. "STOLEN" explains why the illicit child sex market thrives in San Diego County, and across the United States, despite the heroic efforts of survivors, their families, and advocates to break that destructive cycle and reclaim their stolen lives.

"I'm a journalist but I'm also a mother," said NBC San Diego Anchor Monica Dean. "It was our mission to help people understand these young victims could be your child, sister, neighbor, or

friend. The desire for love, validation, and acceptance is often what makes someone vulnerable to exploitation. But there is hope and there are solutions.”

“STOLEN” includes exclusive interviews with young women and men who were sexually exploited in San Diego County. Throughout the ground-breaking documentary, survivors share their personal stories and reveal the risk factors and warning signs every parent should know.

“In the #MeToo era, there’s an opportunity for a real conversation about the dangers of these kinds of exploitative relationships that often draw teen girls and boys into sex trafficking,” Dean said.

“STOLEN” will be released on August 20, 2020, at www.nbc7.com/STOLEN

The documentary is accompanied by a multimedia platform of content and a companion podcast series that showcases the findings of the year-long investigation.

“It is a difficult and uncomfortable topic but a must-see for parents, educators, youth groups, and community leaders,” said Dean. “Experts say young people’s lives are at stake. In this digital age, they are more vulnerable than ever.”

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