

Cast

COALITION TO ABOLISH
SLAVERY & TRAFFICKING

Laura's Journal

Cast Graduate

**2020 - 2021
IMPACT REPORT**

Dear friends,

We're reporting our impact a bit differently this year to reflect the pivotal changes we made over the last 18 months to keep our community safe. As an essential business, we have never stopped - not for a day. The last year, although challenging, brought opportunities to strengthen these new ways of working: scaling up our housing program and pushing for additional protections for human trafficking survivors to keep them safe and well. Instead of the pandemic pushing survivors even further into the shadows and making it harder to access safety and services, we amped up our outreach and partnerships. **Calls to our hotline went up by 88% and we served 1,924 survivors and their family members with safe housing, health services, legal advocacy and comprehensive care - more than ever before.** Over the last year, our program expenses - especially emergency assistance for survivors - went up by 450%. Together with your support, we stepped up for survivors and demonstrated the power of community.

Our mission has never before been so relevant to the growing community of survivors in Los Angeles and for the movement forging new solutions to end human trafficking. There is still more to do.

We want this impact report to invite you into our mission, through one survivor's story. So we're turning it over to Laura, whose diary illuminates how human trafficking preys on our society's most vulnerable, and how the work you make possible is transforming survivors' lives against all odds, especially now. I hope Laura's story makes a lasting impact on you, as it has on me. For every survivor we have served, there is a transformative journey of overcoming unimaginable struggles. These journeys wouldn't be possible without your commitment to our mission and for that I'm forever grateful.

Kay Buck
Onward,

Kay Buck
CEO



Number of human trafficking survivors and family members served:

1,924

Hotline calls:

2,138

(88% increase on last year)

Cast graduates with safe housing:

90%

Successful T-visa applications:

99%

you matter

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Some days, I just can't believe it. I look back at my life and I wonder how everything changed.

I am proud of where I am today, of the work I have done on my growth and freedom. I feel pride in the courses I've completed and the skills I've developed, and in my new job as a counselor, supporting people who struggle with drug addiction. I walk proudly as a man, having finally been able to transition and to live as I am.

That pride sustains me but it will never erase the trauma I have experienced.

I will always live with the scars of being abused by my family members, growing up in Tijuana, Mexico. The memories of falling in love with people who betrayed me, lied to me, manipulated and abused me, forced me to take drugs, and trafficked me for sex, will always sting. I will always remember the people who tried to shame me for my anguish.



Christina and Rebecca from the shelter, and me

But today, after so much hard work and so much support from Cast, the trauma no longer controls me. The shelter staff were patient with me, understood me, supported me, fought for me, and made sure I had the opportunities I needed to become the person I always knew I could be. They remind me of other people I look up to, like Oprah and Will Smith, who use their fame to make the world better.



At Cast I have been blessed to finally find good and kind people

*- a place where I belong. My good life -
the life I was meant to live.*

I found people who cared about me.

→ That bar in Bakersfield will always haunt me.

It is a truly evil place.



I had a bad feeling about it from the very first day when a woman I fell in love with from college brought me to the States for a job as a cashier. She said it was easy money, that I would help run the business. There were other women who worked in the back who were being sold and abused. Of course, once I realized what was happening, I was stuck. I couldn't leave the business - the cartel would kill me if they found out I was the reason they got caught.

It was barely two weeks before I was moved from being a cashier in the front of the bar to being trafficked and abused in the back. Those were the worst days of my life. So many different men. The drugs they would force on us. The sick games they would play with our minds. The twisted rituals they would use to manipulate our faith and keep us frightened.

I can't even imagine what I looked like when I finally escaped. If only the police had believed my story, I might have made it to Cast sooner.

My good life, the life
I was meant to live,
is just beginning.





EMERGENCY RESPONSE

When Cast receives a call through our 24-hour hotline about a survivor who is attempting to escape trafficking, it is urgent and critical. They may have a very short window while their trafficker's guard is down or they may have been on the run for weeks and be out of options. So we move fast.

Within 30 minutes of a call, Cast's Emergency Response staff meet survivors in person, help them make a plan for safety and shelter, and provide them with the essentials they are missing, like food and clothing. In the past year alone, the hotline took **2,138** calls about potential cases and our team **responded in-person (and virtually) to 213 callers who were victims in need of emergency assistance.**



2,138
HOTLINE CALLS

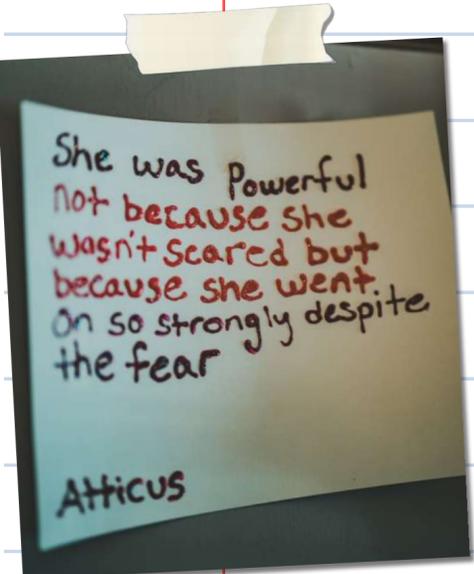


Su Mo Tu We Th Fr Sa

The day I tried to escape the bar in Bakersfield where I was trafficked often haunts me.

When the cartel realized I wanted to leave, they locked me in a garage, stripped my clothing, forced drugs on me, and tried to use dark magic rituals to frighten me. At the same time, they still wanted to make money off of me, so they continued to force me to work. I started talking to one of the men who used to come to the bar. I thought I could trust him. He said he was putting aside a little extra money for me, talked to me about getting a Green Card, and helped me believe I could escape.

One day, I finally escaped the garage, grabbed my bag and ran. A neighbor found me, wearing nothing but the underwear that the bar made me work in, and called the police. But the police thought I was crazy and my English wasn't as good as it is today. If they had known more about human trafficking, if they hadn't discounted my story, that could have been the moment that my life changed.

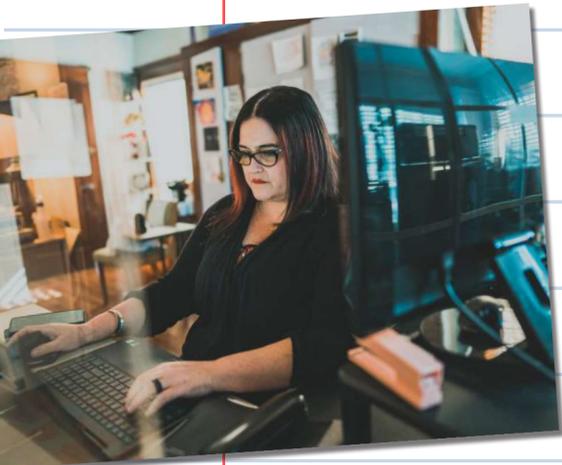


Before I went to Cast, the police had referred me to another kind of shelter in Los Angeles. It was such a difficult place. The few services they offered weren't right for me and no one listened when I tried to advocate for my needs. I never felt safe - people would try to steal my things and touch me.



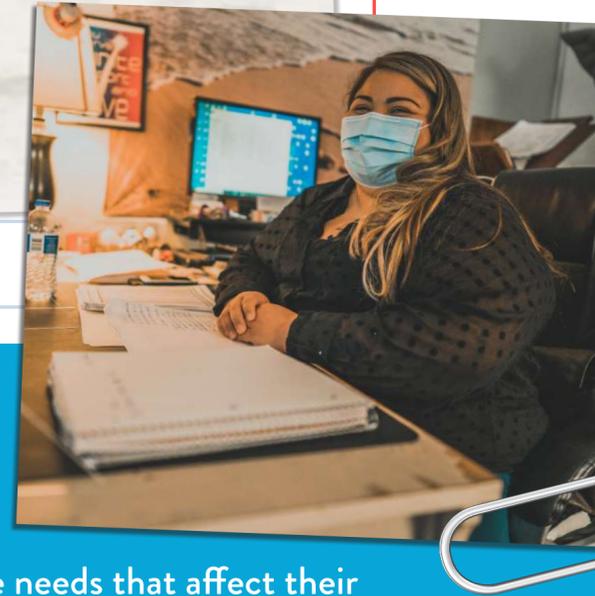
At least when I was homeless after I escaped, I got to choose my community and we looked out for each other. It didn't take much time for me to realize that life on the street among friends was better than life in a harmful shelter.

Because of this, they put me in touch with Cast.



I still worry about some of the people I met in those shelters. I hope they found places to help them the way Cast helped me, with counseling, medical and mental health care, community, education, and more. *Everyone deserves the kind of life-changing opportunity I have had.*

"Sometimes, I don't even believe my own mind. I've seen so much, been through so much, been betrayed by so many people who I thought I could trust. I've given up hope and found hope again more times than I can count. Cast has connected me to the tools I need to manage my PTSD and trauma, so I can move past it."



CASE MANAGEMENT

Every survivor has complex and unique needs that affect their journey to freedom. At Cast, we curate this journey with kindness and understanding in order to create a safe space for survivors to be vulnerable and to champion their long-term recovery.

Through case management, Cast connects survivors to a personalized set of services so that they can process what they've experienced, build resilience and a personal support network, and put themselves on the path to financial independence. This past year, Cast case managers made more than **2,000 referrals** to social and legal service providers across Los Angeles County who can meet clients' specialized needs, wherever they are in life. This last year, **100%** of Cast graduates had a person in their life who was committed to supporting them in their healing, and **86%** had a job or were in school.



➔ **HOUSING**

Homelessness and trafficking are inextricably linked and survivors cannot begin their journey to freedom without a safe place to stay. As the homelessness crisis continues in Los Angeles, over 94% of survivors were homeless when they came to Cast this year.

Cast's shelters offer more than a roof over heads. They are designed specifically for human trafficking survivors, with a full suite of trauma-informed, supportive services and staff who understand their unique experience and the trauma that follows. By the time they graduated from Cast, 90% of our clients this past year had stable and safe housing.

94%

OF SURVIVORS WERE
HOMELESS WHEN
THEY CAME TO CAST.

90%

Had Safe
Housing



It took me some time to adjust to Cast's shelter, Mariposa Haven.

It was beautiful - I'd never seen a home so big. At first, all I could think of was the mansion from The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air. But it was also scary to be living with strangers, to learn English, and to let my guard down.

I spent most of my first week there sleeping, letting my mind and body recover. I had to learn to trust the staff and the other survivors. I was so conflicted: my mind told me this was a safe place, but the fear and trauma that had accumulated over the years wouldn't let me believe it.

When I finally felt safe, it was unlike any place I'd ever lived before. It's a true home, with shared meals, holidays and traditions, listening ears, and shoulders to cry on when the world becomes too much.

I finally felt like I belonged. Everyone was rooting for me, and my successes were their successes.

*Now that I finally felt at home,
I could see a much brighter future for myself.*



I won't give up on bringing my traffickers to justice. It could take one, ten, or twenty years, but I believe in my heart that they will pay for what they did to me and so many others.

I told the police everything and the FBI too. They told me they'd try their best to catch them but that it can be very hard to. Maybe that's true, but I still believe it will happen.

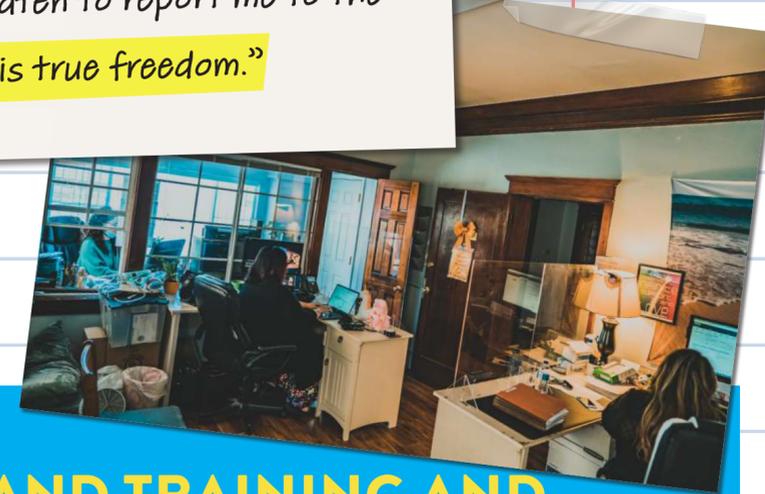
Cast's attorneys were so kind to me. They listened and they understood. They told me they would do everything they could to bring my traffickers to justice. In the meantime, they helped me get legal status in the US so that, no matter what, I could stay in LA and would no longer be vulnerable to exploitation. They fought to get me my T Visa (for trafficking victims) and I'll have my Green Card soon.

MORE
selflove



*"To know that I can't be exploited because of my legal status makes all the difference. I will never worry again that someone can threaten to report me to the authorities, and that **feeling is true freedom.**"*

99%
OF T VISAS
SECURED



LEGAL SERVICES AND TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Cast's legal team fights for survivors' rights and needs - helping them secure justice, compensation and, if they do not yet have it, legal status. Our staff attorneys are experts at working with survivors and the legal issues associated with sex and labor trafficking, **securing 99% of T Visas and Green Cards applied for over the past year.** Cast also trains and assists organizations across the US to navigate the legal system for their clients who have been trafficked. To date, Cast has provided support to over 3,800 trafficking legal cases, mainly in helping to get T visas for survivors.

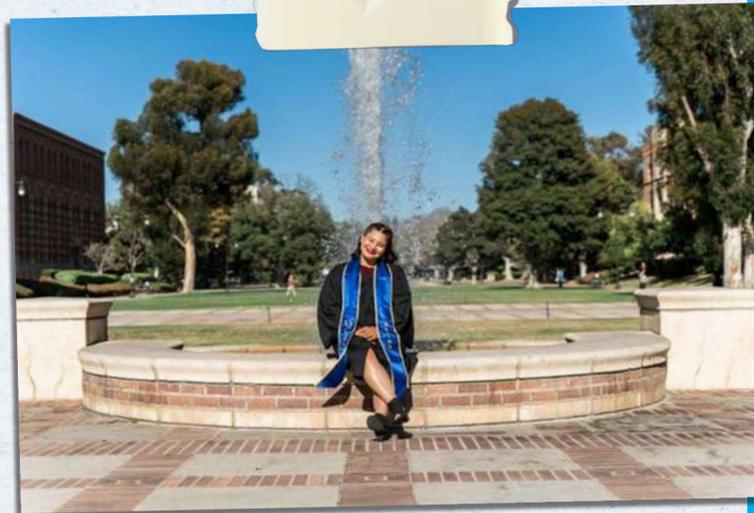
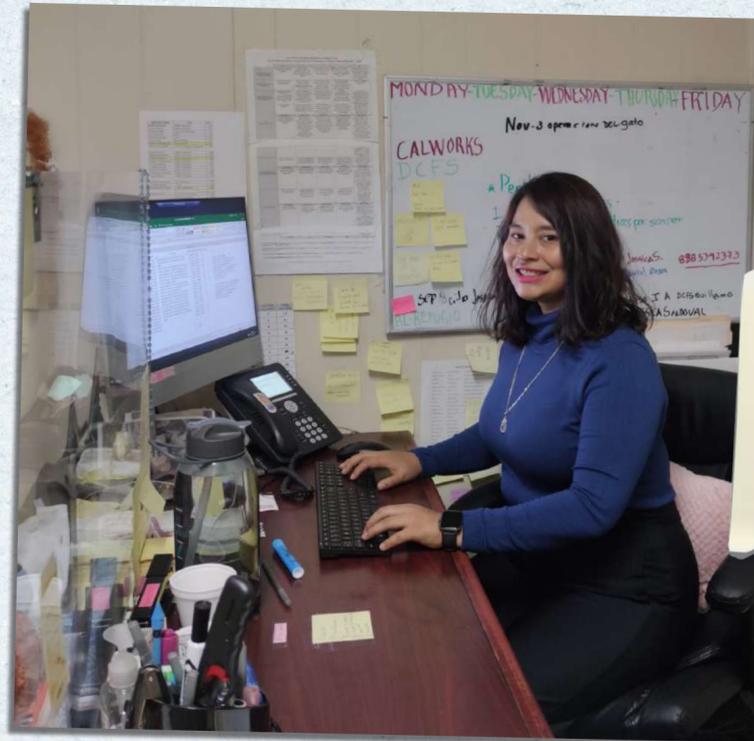
We learn by serving survivors, which allows us to fight for systemic change and evidence-driven public policy. A shining example of this is our work on lost income benefits for trafficking survivors. When our attorneys realized that trafficking survivors weren't eligible for victim compensation, our policy team advocated to get the law changed. We succeeded and since 2020, Cast has helped trafficking survivors win over \$250,000 in compensation. Our direct work with survivors helps us to fight for economic justice and systemic change for all survivors.

"I've taken nearly every class I can through Cast. I know how to do counseling for domestic violence, for parenting, and for people addicted to drugs, and I know other skills too. I'm taking political science classes at UCLA Extension now through a scholarship I won through Cast, and Cast staff even went to my orientation with me so I'd feel comfortable. Next, I'm going to get my master's. I've got big plans!"

When I got my job as a drug counselor, I began to appreciate myself and all that I have to offer to the world.

Each person I see has a story just as unique as mine, all searching for a sense of belonging. Just like me, the people I work with need someone who has their back. They need the kind of support I needed at so many points in my life - someone who believes in them and won't give up on them - even if they slip up.

Just like my story has so many twists and turns, their stories are never simple. Healing is never easy, and it's never done. But when I do see the light return to their eyes, it gives me hope for myself and them.



SURVIVOR LEADERSHIP

For many survivors of human trafficking, there is tremendous power in being able to make sure that others do not endure the same horrific experience. It is also critical that policymakers and the public understand what human trafficking really is, so that public policy reflects the real needs of survivors - as identified by them. Cast's Survivor Leadership Program brings together a community of survivors of human trafficking for survivor-led policy advocacy, peer-to-peer mentorship, and empowerment. By connecting survivors across the country - including Cast graduates like Laura - Cast supports them to realize their own leadership and insight as lived-experience experts, with a view to building a survivor-led, national anti-trafficking movement. Over the past year, unemployment, housing and financial instability affected survivor leaders' ability to focus on policy change, so Cast shifted its priority to connect them to paid opportunities as experts, and financial aid.

State Budget:
\$30M
more secured from
state of California

➔ **POLICY**

Cast has been driving public policy at the city, state, and national levels for more than a decade. Because of our work and our coalition partners', millions more in state and federal dollars have been dedicated to address trafficking - helping survivors recover and building stronger pathways to seek justice. The American public also now has greater access to information on how to identify and report trafficking.

Thanks to many years of successful policy advocacy by Cast and our partners, there is now increased public funding for anti-human trafficking work in the US. This year, Cast helped to secure an extra **\$30 million in the state budget** to ensure that trafficking survivors across California have access to services and resources in the face of the ongoing pandemic and the housing crisis, both of which have made them far more vulnerable. And thanks to our advocacy, Cast is now training stakeholders in the Los Angeles child welfare system on human trafficking - including tackling child labor.

*advocating for
policy change and
more funds to
support survivors* ➔



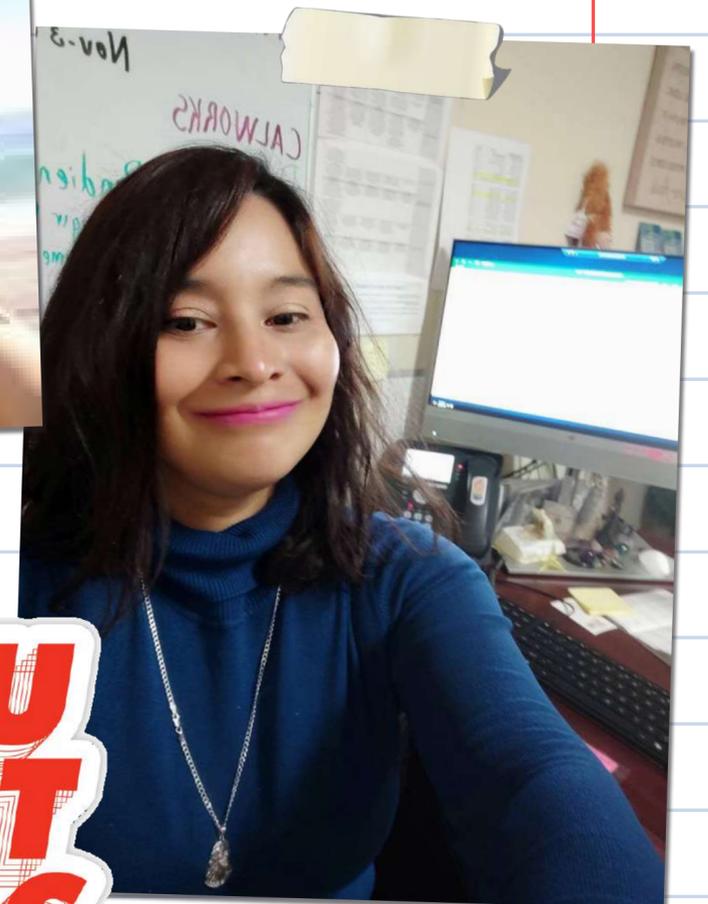
Today, I understand my destiny for the first time. I have made pacts with so many people along the way, about what I would do for them and for myself. I hold those promises tightly and I mean to keep them. But first I need to run for office, so I have the platform to change the world and to end trafficking for good.

I know some people may think it's a crazy dream that I could become governor, but they don't know me. They don't know that I am strong, resilient, courageous and determined. They don't know that every fight I've been through has made me stronger. They don't know about the thousands of people like me, all across California, who want to take on traffickers just like I do. They don't know about the friends I have on my side, the people who are going to be with me every step of the way.

We are more powerful than people can possibly imagine.



my fiancé ↗



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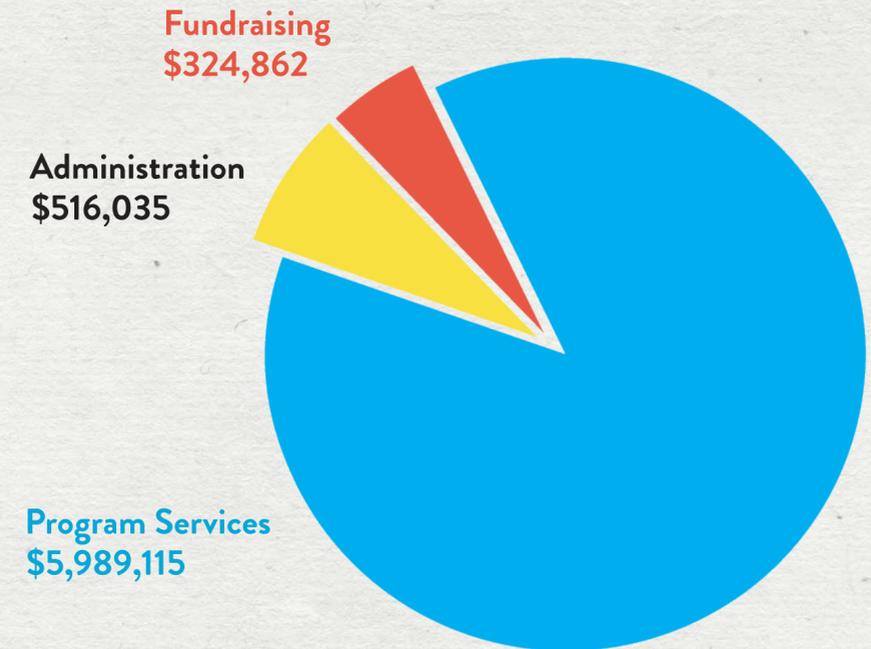
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TOTAL EXPENSES

\$6,830,012 - FY2020-2021



Fiscal Year	Total Revenue	Total Expenses
FY2018-2019	6,794,862	6,372,349
FY2019-2020	7,599,832	6,829,122
FY2020-2021	7,515,128	6,830,012

*Numbers subject to change based on final audit.

“Some people want to help, but they just don’t understand that if you’ve been through what I’ve been through, it changes your mind and makes it easy for people to prey on you. Cast understood. They knew what I needed.”

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