



Written by [Annalisa Pesek](#) on July 11, 2023

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Ending the Silence

In Calexico, California, in a dimly lit room, a thin, pale-faced man sips coffee and hunches over his computer keyboard. Thick bands of cigarette smoke waft above his head. On the screen flash photographs and videos of children as young as five and six years old. Some pose seductively for the camera, their shirts unbuttoned to expose their youthful skin, their innocent mouths smeared with cherry-red lipstick.

“Here it is gentlemen — my spring sampler,” types the pedophile, uploading dozens of pornographic photos that he sends to paying customers around the world.



The scene is so shocking and so painful that viewers will want to look away. And that is certainly the point of filmmakers Rod Barr (*Is That You?*) and Alejandro Monteverde’s (*Bella, Little Boy*) gripping new drama, *Sound of Freedom*. For too long, we have looked away in silence. Child sex trafficking is too ugly to face.

Yet just as sunlight streams through the chaos of the room during the raid of the pedophile’s home, *Sound of Freedom* casts a bright light on the shadows of this dark underworld, and on those trying to stop it.

Here are but a few facts the film uses to grab our attention. In a single year, more than 22 million new images of child pornography were posted to the web — an increase of 5,000 percent over the past five years. Moreover, the child slave trade not only has passed the illegal-arms trade, but will soon pass the drug trade. Consider that a bag of cocaine can be sold one time, but a child can be sold five to 10 times a day, the film informs.

To plot the efforts of real-life former U.S. Agent Tim Ballard (portrayed by Jim Caviezel), who for 12 years pursued pedophiles for the U.S. government, the filmmakers focus on but one of his many thousands of child rescues.

We learn that, despite the successes of his commissions by Homeland Security, Ballard’s real mission is saving the children. When the agency refuses to allow him to focus on these rescues rather than simply busting pedophiles, he resigns, with the support of his wife, Katherine (Mira Sorvino), and launches his own private operation.

The film opens powerfully, depicting the deceptive and savage abduction of young Honduran siblings Rocío and Miguel Aguilar, ages 11 and seven. Convinced by a former beauty queen that they are auditioning for a local talent agency, their single father takes them to a nondescript hotel room, where they are photographed, kidnapped, and then shipped across Central America to perform sex acts for customers in various countries. A border-crossing meeting with the abductor of Miguel provides Ballard with the opportunity to rescue the young boy, and to find his sister as well.



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Piteous archival footage of children being stolen in the streets plays as Rocío and Miguel and a dozen other children are carted away like cattle in a cargo box toward a foreign country, where they will be sold in both seedy and high-end sex dens.

Upbeat sounds of Latin music, combined with the haunting melodies of children singing, convey the beauty of the Hispanic culture contrasted with the hideousness of the crime that lies just beneath the surface.



(Angel Studios)

That the traumatic scenes of the horrors these children face are difficult to watch is an understatement at best. They lead the audience to believe such abominations are common practice in the hellish realm of child sex trafficking.

The chilling experiences of the enslaved children immediately anchor us in an intensely emotional and gut-wrenching journey. Fortunately, during that journey moviegoers do not see the actual abuse itself, enabling the film to get a PG-13 rating. But we do know what is happening. Ultimately, we are left hopeful at the incredible resilience of these children to overcome the unspeakable traumas they endure, and by the efforts of Ballard to rescue them.

Caviezel's performance as Ballard does not disappoint; his innate passion to fight evil is as convincing as in his other famous roles, as Jesus in *The Passion of the Christ* and as Edmond Dantès in *The Count of Monte Cristo*. The standout character Vampiro (Bill Camp), who is a hero in his own right, provides knowledge of the sex trade in the beach town of Cartagena, Colombia, that is essential to Ballard's quest to find Rocío.

A cigar-smoking, whiskey-drinking former cartel operator, Vampiro turns to "buying" countless numbers of children for the sole purpose of freeing them. He, too, is haunted and convicted in his willingness to enter this dangerous world of ghastly evil: "All of a sudden I'm hit by this tidal wave," he tells Ballard. "This tsunami of darkness. And I know — I'm the sadness in her eyes. Me. I'm the darkness. And I know — the darkness has to die."

At the end of the film, a postscript notes that America is a top destination for human trafficking and among the largest consumers of child sex. While Ballard's first successful operation in Colombia, as illustrated in the film, drew the attention of lawmakers in Washington, little has been done since by the U.S. government to combat this 21st-century form of slavery.



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The truth is the child sex industry is booming in the United States, with films of exploited children selling for copious amounts of money. Not only are the children raped physically, but they are filmed, and those wretched movies are sold across the internet, netting traffickers billions of dollars in revenue.

To bring awareness to the cries of children entrapped in this global sex trade, *Sound of Freedom* is a must-see for every American. The film decries the silence of free-world leaders and elites unwilling to halt this exploding business and even to stop participating in it. Everyday people also refuse to hear it. It's too ugly for polite conversation. The film successfully sounds the alarm to mount an assault on child trafficking. If every person who sees this film develops even a fraction of Ballard's courage and determination to stand against this atrocity, a war would be waged, and this evil institution would be abolished.

Readers are encouraged to learn more about Ballard's nonprofit organizations, Operation Underground Railroad, which fights against child sex slavery, and The Nazarene Fund.



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