



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

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## Rescuing God's Children

This Independence Day, as Americans were fortunate enough to celebrate their God-given freedoms with family, friends, and fireworks, the debut of the new film *Sound of Freedom* gave them a unique insight into the innocent victims of child sex slavery, whose prospects of liberation appear bleak if not for the efforts of few good men.

Netting more than \$10 million in pre-sale tickets and a Rotten Tomatoes score of 92 percent, the gripping theatrical drama seems poised to galvanize a movement to end the silence on child sex trafficking. Yet this monumental film was almost not to be, taking nearly eight years to find its way to the big screen through the indie film company Angel Studios, which has launched such successful projects as *The Chosen* and *Dry Bar Comedy*.

The powerful backstory of the action-packed thriller is arguably as compelling as the film itself, depicting the true account of former U.S. government agent Tim Ballard, whose dogged determination to save the lives of the children entrapped in the \$154-billion child sex industry will hopefully begin a revolution against the horrific institution of modern-day slavery.

"[Tim Ballard] has that [King] David quality. There is something about that that just moved me," said renowned actor Jim Caviezel (*The Passion of the Christ*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*), who portrayed Ballard in the film, in a recent interview on *War Room*.

"This [film] hits your heart," continued Caviezel. "And it makes you want to do incredible things. And we as a country — our Republic — to save it, we have got to pull it together and save our children."

## Go Big or Go Home

Ballard set out to do just that — to save our children. Resigning from his post at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) after 12 years of pursuing and apprehending pedophiles, Ballard refocused his efforts on rescuing the innocent victims entrapped in the child sex trade by starting his own private mission.

Currently the CEO of the nonprofits Operation Underground Railroad and The Nazarene Fund, Ballard has led more than 4,000 child rescues, all of which are filmed, according to Ballard, to ensure the heinous crimes inflicted on children do not remain hidden from the world.

Ballard's tenure with DHS began in 2002. Early on, he was assigned to a child sex crimes unit dubbed the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force, a group fighting against child pornography and



Tim Ballard



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dedicated to the capture of its creators and end consumers. The copious amounts of child pornography produced and disseminated in the United States is staggering. However, Ballard discovered that many of the children exploited in the sex films and images were foreign. With his eyes opened to the atrocities, he resolved to find what many officials consider to be collateral damage.

In an interview with alternative news outlet Redacted, Ballard recounted traveling overseas and experiencing the harrowing sale of children first-hand on the beaches of Colombia and the Caribbean. “I now believe the stats — that there are two million children [doing] criminal sex acts, and I believe it’s [a] low number,” he told Redacted. Ballard described his deeper quest into the underworld of the child sex trade and how the U.S. government’s policies kept him from accomplishing what he felt needed to be done to rescue the young victims.

“The disparities of the tools between the U.S. government and other governments, and to me there are no borders or boundaries when it comes to this stuff, it’s transnational, the disparities in these countries, they [government leaders] knew nothing,” explained Ballard. “The kids are hopeless in certain countries, because no one knows they are there and they don’t know how to find them.”

The basis for *Sound of Freedom* stems from Ballard’s work in Colombia as a DHS consultant, and his subsequent resignation from the agency to start his own child rescue operation. “It wasn’t that the U.S. government wasn’t building the tools — they were and they still are,” said Ballard. “But it’s how do you get [the tools] everywhere?”

Told by DHS to return home and abandon the operation in Colombia, Ballard strengthened his resolve. “When they said come home and leave this country where they don’t have any tools, that’s when I said, I’m done coming home,” he said. “And if that means I gotta stay and I quit, I’ll quit, and we did. My wife and I, we made the decision to quit and we launched the rescue operation.”

That rescue, depicted in the film, ended up being the largest in recorded history, informed Ballard, at least in terms of how many children were rescued in such a small window of time.

This 21st-century form of slavery, explained Ballard, consists of slave labor, organ harvesting, and sex trafficking. He noted that some 30 million men, women, and children are currently enslaved worldwide. More people are held in bondage today than any other time in world history, even when slavery was legal.

## Wake Up, America!

America is among the world’s top consumers of child sex. Thousands of accompanied and unaccompanied children cross the southern border each day. What happens to these children? Where do they go? Does anybody know? Ballard has probed deeply these haunting questions.

“Thousands of these kids are five years old or younger, showing up alone,” said Ballard. “I’ve been on the border. I see what happens. If you are a child ... there’s a policy that you have to release that child within 72 hours, which, it seems compassionate, but it’s the opposite. Enforcing [a secure] border is the only compassionate thing.”

In the film, after being abducted by a pedophile, seven-year-old Honduran Miguel Aguilar arrives at the U.S.-Mexico border, where he is discovered in the back of the perp’s vehicle and rescued by Ballard. Astonishingly, a child can be pimped for as much as \$5,000 per night, explained Ballard. Moreover, sex



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traffickers are not relegated to hung-over, rich, horny Americans. Ballard has arrested clergymen, law-enforcement officers, and educators, to name a mere few of the professionals involved.

Indeed, the child sex industry is booming in the United States, with films of exploited children being raped on camera selling for copious amounts of money.

“It’s everywhere!” Ballard exclaimed. Though it is hard to catch the powerful guys at the top — the Jeffrey Epsteins of the world who are “self-protected” and not held accountable — *Sound of Freedom* aims to shine a light on those who abuse the most vulnerable.

Notably, Ballard has collaborated with celebrated actors Mel Gibson and Jim Caviezel to uncover the child sex trade in countries such as Ukraine, Ecuador, the Netherlands, and Mexico, and has crisscrossed the globe to bring both high-profile corrupt leaders and low-level perpetrators to justice.

A new documentary set to be released sometime this year, titled *Hidden War*, will trace the intense rescue operations in these countries and expose the dangerous operators at the heart of the international child sex trade. Reflecting on the work of his teams as illustrated in the documentary, Ballard stated, “We rescued thousands of kids [prior to their imminent capture] who will never know they were rescued because they were never hurt.”

Readers can also anticipate the forthcoming documentary *Triple Take*, which is set to follow the release of *Sound of Freedom* and track the rescue in Cartagena, Colombia, which serves as the catalyst for *Freedom’s* dramatization.

Approached by Angel Studios eight years ago with a request to tell his story, Ballard had doubted the film would ever make it to the big screen. Yet in 2017, the script was written and the studio asked Ballard whom he would like to see portray him in the movie. His swift response: “Jim Caviezel.” At first, the studio hesitated at casting Caviezel, arguing that Ballard’s looks do not quite match the *Count of Monte Cristo* star; however, it was meant to be, and as Ballard stated, “Caviezel killed it in the movie.”

“Hollywood is one of the reasons I even have to work,” said Ballard. “The smut they are putting out is in fact creating the demand.” Ballard would learn that Caviezel had a personal connection with the child sex trade, as Caviezel’s own three adopted children from China were rescued from the slave trade.

Appearing on Steve Bannon’s *War Room*, Caviezel recalled in the interview Matthew 13:45. “The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.’ This recalls exactly the bold actions of Tim Ballard, who gave up everything to save the children,” commented Caviezel.



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**Bringing it to the silver screen:** Tim Ballard poses for a photo with Jim Caviezel (left) and actress Mira Sorvino (who played Ballard's wife, Katherine). ([facebook.com/JPCaviezel](https://www.facebook.com/JPCaviezel))

## The Key to Success Is Persistence

Big things have small beginnings. For the producers at Angel Studios, *Sound of Freedom* was a film destined to take the world by storm. The project had to be done, yet its beginnings proved to be a bumpy ride. Originally, Fox owned the rights to *Sound of Freedom*; then Disney acquired it but decided not to distribute it, Angel Studios co-founder Jordan Harmon told Bannon on *War Room*.

An old saying states that the key to success is persistence — never giving up. And Harmon saw a massive need for a film depicting one of the worst atrocities ever committed by mankind. With support from the Angel Studios Guild — a group of company investors — Angel Studios committed every resource possible to produce *Sound of Freedom*, which was fittingly released on Independence Day.

"It's not so much the storytellers determining the success of films, but the investors, the gatekeepers greenlighting the film's production," explained Harmon. The guild's mission aims to produce films that amplify light. For Harmon, "light" is defined as anything that is noble, just, and beautiful. Director and writer Alejandro Monteverde (*Bella, Little Boy*) strove to make every frame of *Sound of Freedom* contain a stream of light, despite the disturbing content. "It is meant to be hopeful," remarked Harmon. "Child sex trafficking is the scourge that has to be stopped."

To reach the widest possible audience, consensus among the producers was to release the film on July 4, as the summer months are the biggest of the year for blockbuster films. For example, summer 2023 has seen the release of mega films *Mission Impossible 7: Dead Reckoning, Part One* and *Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny*. Angel Studios has seen previous success during huge blockbuster months, including the release of *His Only Son*, a retelling of the biblical account of Abraham and Isaac, over Easter, another weekend considered profitable at the box office.

## Eight Long Years to Release

"Eight years ago it [child sex trafficking] was unheard of," said writer Rod Barr in an interview at the *Sound of Freedom* red-carpet premiere. "Right now, there's a little more awareness of the issue, so I think it's perfect timing for the movie because people can sort of absorb it.... When I first learned of it,



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it didn't seem real. It didn't seem possible."

Though a deal for *Sound of Freedom* was reached within five short days between actor Jim Caviezel, former U.S. agent Tim Ballard, and Angel Studio executives, the journey leading up to this point was fraught with obstacles.

Rewind to early 2013, when Angel Studios was founded by the Harmon siblings — six boys and three girls — who conceived of an app that would allow people to view content that was family-friendly and to mute or skip unwanted content, such as profanity or sexual content that was not reflective of what families wanted their children to see.

Finding their productions were struggling because of this new technology, Disney, Warner Bros, and Lucasfilm all sued the Harmons in 2016, derailing the family's mission. Yet audiences who already were tapped into the Harmons' program rose up and supported the Harmons. Within five days, their company VidAngel, now Angel Studios, raised more than \$10 million to start the successful franchises *Dry Bar Comedy* and *The Chosen*, the cultural phenomenon and acclaimed series based on the life of Jesus Christ. Equity crowdfunding started the success of *The Chosen* and solidified the studio's mission to tell stories that are family-friendly and faith based.

In the midst of the ongoing lawsuits filed by the big-box studios, Angel Studios filed for bankruptcy. Within a year, a trustee running the company investigated all the parties involved in the lawsuits and decided that, specifically, Disney was the bad actor and that the lawsuit needed to be dropped.

"This was about crushing the competition," remarked Harmon. And the lawyers knew it. Ever innovating, the company's next move was to launch a program where viewers would pay it forward, essentially sending the company's content for free to those who might not otherwise see it. Viewers of *Sound of Freedom* will encounter the pay-it-forward program detailed at the end of the film in an inspiring message from Jim Caviezel.

The pay-it-forward program ultimately produced the \$1.2 million needed to keep the company afloat. The judge in the case ruled that the company would pay back the money owed Disney but not be liquidated. Angel Studios raked in a staggering \$47 million the following year. The success of the projects of *Dry Bar Comedy* and *The Chosen* kept the company in the black, and the future triumph of crowdfunding for the company was reflected in the raising of more than \$5 million in less than 14 days for *Sound of Freedom*.

Meaningful storytelling is depicted in their productions in incredible ways, proven in the overwhelming success of *The Chosen* and *Sound of Freedom*. "This film is more than a movie; it is a movement," said Harmon. "If a story moves you, you will want to make a difference. Your voice and your values can be heard."

People often ask, "What can I do?" Americans can find no better way to get involved in the fight against the horrendous institution of selling and abusing children than buying tickets and going to see the film today and talking to friends and family about this practice. "*Sound of Freedom* took DC by storm. Hope you're inspired. Send a message to Hollywood. Buy a ticket! In 20-30 years, child sex trafficking cannot be part of our culture. It has to die," declared Harmon. God's children are not for sale!



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