

Advocate Spotlight Award

Daphne Phung, M.B.A.



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About Daphne Phung

Daphne Phung is the Founder and Executive Director of California Against Slavery (CAS), President of CAS Research and Education, and was a co-proponent of California Proposition 35 to stop human trafficking.

Daphne's work to end human trafficking began in the Fall of 2009 when she started California Against Slavery with the vision that stopping this human rights abuse is the duty of every person.

Daphne loves children and is angered by injustice. To her, nothing robs a child's innocence and future as violently as the crime of human trafficking. After watching a documentary, Daphne was devastated to learn that trafficked victims suffer further injustice through our legal system. She believes that our laws must reflect the atrocity of human trafficking and that it's time for the American public to recognize that slavery still exists in our great

nation. Her faith inspired her to start an initiative to organize citizens like herself to action.

Daphne became the co-proponent of the CASE Act, or Proposition 35, a historic California ballot initiative to stop human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Passed in November 2012 with over 81.3% approval, Prop 35 is the most successful ballot initiative since Californians began the process in 1914. Prop 35 is also the first initiative to pass with over 80% of the voters. With more than 10 million votes, it also represents the most votes cast for an initiative in California's history.

Prop 35 has already been used by law enforcement throughout California to apprehend traffickers and rescue victims.

To pay her bills, Daphne works in finance & accounting. She took a break from her finance career to volunteer full time during the Prop 35 campaign. She has a B.A. from Reed College and an M.B.A. from Mills College.

Q&A

California Prop 35 raised California's penalties for crimes of human trafficking to match federal standards such that selling children would be penalized just as much as selling drugs. What did it feel like to know that CA Prop 35 was the most popular proposition ever voted for - 81% Yes - in the history of the state of California?

It was satisfying to know that so many of my fellow citizens supported Prop 35.

You quit your day job to start California Against Slavery, the organization that championed CA Prop 35. Some would have said you were crazy for doing that; others would have been inspired. What were the most difficult or discouraging times during your crusade to change California's laws regarding the punishment of pimps?

Definitely. When we failed to get the signatures to qualify the initiative in 2010, I felt like a complete failure and just wanted to hide in my house. I told the volunteers that we could get this done, and they made sacrifices to try to get it done. I underestimated how difficult signature gathering could be. I questioned if God was setting me up for failure and felt like I had misled my volunteers and let them down. It was one of those "crisis of faith" moments.

What message do you have for your readers?

Change will not happen unless you get involved.