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## Anne Pollack and Crossing Point Arts

□ October 1, 2019 & The Flute View

*Anne Pollack started her first business as a Flute Technician and Dealer when she was 18, and for decades was repairing and performing - leading her own ensembles and freelancing - but at a certain point, the question of "what am I really bringing to the world" became a constant question in her being.*

*A child of the Civil Rights Era, the message of those times were already deep in her DNA, and Anne sought out volunteer work to devote her energies in tangible ways to others. From working in soup kitchens to volunteering as a Teaching Artist with marginalized kids (donating music and art classes), her effort to be of service was a constant.*

*As Manager of The Powell Flutes Repair Dept. and later, as owner of [Your Flute Works](#) (Anne's small business), working with gold flutes became commonplace. As a person ever in search of knowledge, she began a personal research project on the process and was shocked to learn the ramifications of gold mining and its damaging effects on land and water pollution, deforestation, slave labor and the sex-trafficking rings surrounding the gold mining industry.*

*The questions she posed to various flute makers, their gold suppliers, and executives within the gold industry came to an abrupt halt. Anne had hit the wall by asking very directly about the origins of the gold, and the industry's efforts to protect land rights, communities, cultures and workers. This disheartening lack of response, however, became Anne's proverbial 'blessing in disguise.' Through her questioning process she came to understand just how much human trafficking is taking place, with the majority of those being bought and sold: girls, young women and boys, all victims of sex traffickers. Well-informed on the history of slavery throughout the world, this moment of awakening came through the unlikely doorway of Anne's lifelong work with flutes. And the crushing fact: that the problem of enslavement was worse than ever...and the attention it was receiving, minimal, at best.*

## STATISTICS

Right now there are an estimated 45 million trafficked people in the world.

80% are girls and young women who are sex-trafficked.

13% are boys who are sex-trafficked.

75% are people of color, and a huge number are underage.

Other forms of human trafficking:

Labor trafficking, forced drug trafficking, domestic servitude, organ-trafficking and forced child marriage.

\$150 billion global industry and considered the second most lucrative crime in the world.

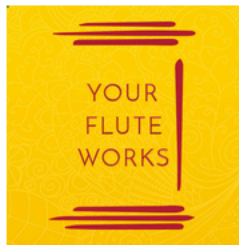
Having had a decades-long history of running a successful small business and leading her own ensembles, at around age 50 Anne questioned what she could do to help respond to the issue of trafficking. One morning she woke up with the understanding that she could reach others with the very thing that brought her the greatest peace, healing and growth: she heard the call to bring the arts to survivors of trafficking. She answered the call, and the rest is history.

A specific turning point happened one day in 2012 as Anne was in her shop, working on a flute. CNN was on in the background, yet she heard Bradley Miles, head of Polaris Project (one of the long-established anti-trafficking organizations in the US). He announced a training on anti-human trafficking offered in NJ, and without hesitation Anne put down her screwdriver and picked up her phone. A month later, at the wrap-up of the training, she heard two spoken word artists, both sex-trafficking survivors, whose poems were about their experiences, and their emergence and healing from enslavement. Anne witnessed the power of their message, and took in just how striking it was that they could find creative energy in the process of reclaiming themselves from the PTSD left by their exploiters and the countless men they had been forced to service.

About six months later the idea for Anne's non-profit organization was born - [Crossing Point Arts: Bringing the Arts to Survivors of Human Trafficking](#). She wrote a proposal to Polaris Project to provide arts workshops, and they welcomed the idea. She raised initial funds through an online crowdsourcing campaign, and asked two friends to join her: her dance teacher, Maria Rivera (who is also a dance therapist) and a singing teacher, Stephanie Rooker, who Anne met when she joined NYC's Riverside Church gospel choir.

The trio started doing workshops together in Newark, NJ which were met with instant success. Workshop participants - survivors from India, the Caribbean, the Bronx, and S. Africa - all responded with their hearts and souls. And their therapists and support staff embraced the project!

Even with the early success, Anne had doubts, as the process of dealing with this level of trauma could be unsettlingly difficult and she questioned whether there could be something more effective that could be offered to survivors. Just at that critical moment of questioning, a mentor arrived in Anne's life, an elder who was a life-long artist (and a psychoanalyst working at Riker's Island). She reassured Anne that she had chosen a valid path, and emphasized the crucial importance of touching survivors' lives through the power of the arts.



Having engaged with something so much bigger than herself was precisely the thing that pushed Anne to expand, and to become exactly who knows she is meant to be. It has been crucial to her development and her sense of balance in the world. And it has changed her perspective on everything. Crossing Point Arts is now in their 7th year, and they have worked with nearly 4000 victims of trafficking. In 2015, Crossing Point Arts became a non-profit and now has a 6 member Board of Directors...(with the ongoing efforts to build the Board to nine members).

I was curious how someone even starts such an important and impactful project.

Since she was a child, Anne had always been outraged by the injustice in society. Her upbringing in the Civil Rights and Women's Movements, and her activist education helped her to formulate questions, dig deep in certain conversations and to take action. She knew she couldn't stand still with human trafficking on the increase, and made the strong decision to use what she knew to do something about it.

The question of what can engage artists - beyond their work of developing their own creative endeavors - has been a striking point for Anne. Over the years, she has trained over 30 Teaching Artists to work with Crossing Point Arts. She currently has 12 people on her roster, and they work 5 days a week throughout NYC in 5 locations, in Harlem, the Bronx, 2 locations in Queens, and lower Manhattan. All disciplines of the arts are covered and language, culture and survivors' ages are all taken into consideration. Even with the huge cultural, linguistic and age-range (12-60 years old) in workshops, the response is consistent: the arts provide deep healing, growth and true empowerment.

Somehow, running Your Flute Works and Crossing Point Arts at the same time is possible, if not a huge undertaking! As Executive Director, Anne's days involve scheduling artists to visit anti-trafficking centers, finding funding, forming and strengthening relationships with anti-trafficking partners, training Teaching Artists, and making sure all the feedback comes in. Anne is also a Teaching Artist, teaching visual arts and music workshops, and runs the Social Enterprise Workshops, called "Freedom Made It" (training survivors to make things to sell, while learning business skills). It is a big job, but it is so important, and Anne is constantly encouraged by the fact that she sees positive growth in every workshop. The most rewarding aspect for Anne is helping the survivors, seconded by the possibility of seeing artists reimagine themselves, and locating their capacity to be of service.

Anne on giving back: "A lot of people carry that sense but don't necessarily know how to express it. Many people have the vision, but not many act on it. Even if someone just devotes one day a month to something, they will be substantially changed by the experience." Anne echoed my thoughts that clicking on a button to donate is great, but it is not the same as showing up and seeing peoples' faces, and witnessing their transformation. If one wishes to see change in the world, one of the first steps is coming to deeply understand that people are living very different lives than oneself. And the level of privilege some of us are afforded is offered the greatest reward when used in service. As Anne says: "You can take the energy or your life and put it into someone else's, and in the process, change their destiny."

Quotes from survivors on Crossing Point Arts:

<https://www.crossingpointarts.org/survivor-s-words>

Quotes from Crossing Point Arts partners:

<https://www.crossingpointarts.org/our-teaching-artists>

For further info:

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Links:

[www.YourFluteWorks.com](http://www.YourFluteWorks.com)

[www.AnnePollackProductions.com](http://www.AnnePollackProductions.com)

[www.PolarisProject.org](http://www.PolarisProject.org)

Upcoming events:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/crossing-point-arts-fall-fundraiser-party-tickets-73225781283>