

I Introduction

Human trafficking is an open wound on the body of contemporary society, a scourge upon the body of Christ. It is a crime against humanity. The very fact of our being here to combine our efforts means that we want our strategies and areas of expertise to be accompanied and reinforced by the mercy of the Gospel, by closeness to the men and women who are victims of this crime.¹

—Pope Francis, Address at a Conference
on Human Trafficking, 2014

On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. While it did not entirely end the practice of slavery in the United States, it stands as a symbol to many as the end to the atrocious idea that one human being can own another. Lincoln declared that the American government would recognize and maintain the freedom of all people in the seceded states and that the government would uphold “no act

¹ Pope Francis, “Pope Francis: Human Trafficking Is a Crime Against Humanity,” *News.va*, April 10, 2014, <http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-francis-human-trafficking-an-open-wound-on-so>.

or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.”²

In the minds and hearts of many, both in the United States and elsewhere, this was the end of slavery. If only that were the case. Slavery, now more commonly known as human trafficking, has not ended. In fact, this human scandal is more extensive than ever.

While human trafficking is not limited to sexual exploitation, the prostitution of human beings is the most lucrative form of trafficking. The canard of prostitution as being the “world’s oldest profession” is rejected by journalist Victor Malarek; he calls it the “world’s oldest oppression.”³ According to the website of the organization *Free the Slaves*, human slavery was first recorded in 6800 BC in Mesopotamia. The city required slave labor to build and expand. At the height of its so-called glory, the city of Athens was thought to be home to over thirty thousand slaves, and, by 1000 AD, slavery was a normal practice in most of the world. In 1641, Massachusetts became the first British colony to legalize slavery.⁴

Today, human trafficking impacts entire industries and job sectors—both legitimate and illegitimate. Monetarily, it is the second largest criminal activity in the world. Only the illegal drug trade is more profitable—and trafficking and drug smuggling are often linked. The profits generated from human trafficking play an enormous role in national and global economies.

² Lincoln, Abraham, *The Emancipation Proclamation*, National Archives and Records Administration: Featured Documents, October 15, 2014, http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/emancipation_proclamation/transcript.html.

³ Malarek, Victor, *The Johns: Sex for Sale and the Men Who Buy It* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2010), xiv.

⁴ Free the Slaves, “About Slavery: Slavery in History,” accessed October 17, 2014, <https://www.freetheslaves.net/SlaveryinHistory>.

There is also the untold human cost. It is, as Pope Francis said, an open wound on humanity.

Human trafficking is broader in scope than most people realize. To begin, let us define *human trafficking*. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, human trafficking is:

the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.⁵

The numbers of people trafficked are almost unfathomable. According to the International Labour Organization, twenty-one million people are trafficked annually;⁶ bear in mind that these numbers are estimates. Females and children are most at risk: Over eleven million women are known to be trafficked every year along with five and a half million children (ages eighteen and under). According to Alexis A. Aronowitz, “Women and children are most often the victims of sexual exploitation, followed by sexual exploitation and forced labor combined.

⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, “Human Trafficking,” accessed October 14, 2014, <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/what-is-human-trafficking.html>.

⁶ International Labour Organization (ILO): Geneva, “Profits and Poverty: The Economics of Forced Labour,” May 20, 2014, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_243391.pdf.

Men ... are more frequently the victims of sexual exploitation and forced labor combined, followed by forced labor and then sexual exploitation.”⁷

Sex trafficking gets enormous attention in the academic world and popular culture. Movies such as *Taken* and television dramas such as *Law & Order: SVU* have dealt with this crime. Human trafficking, however, takes many forms. People are trafficked for domestic servitude such as nannying and bonded labor. They are also trafficked for factory work and the mining, agricultural, and fishing industries. Illegal immigration and drug mules also fall under the umbrella of human trafficking. Children are routinely trafficked and forced to beg in the streets or to sell candy and trinkets. Girls are sold as child brides and boys are rounded up to fight as soldiers. Finally, there is cultural slavery, such as in Mauritania, where slavery has existed for centuries, and slave families are routinely handed down to generation after generation of “owners.”⁸

In addition, there are the men and women who make their living buying and selling human beings. Some of them, as mentioned, are involved in the highly lucrative drug trade. “Trafficking and smuggling [of drugs and human beings], while different, are in fact intricately intertwined.”⁹ This type of trafficking is typically part of organized crime. Some traffickers are gang members; others are individuals or loosely affiliated groups of people working together for mutual financial gain. Factory owners, farmers, fishermen: anyone who knowingly utilizes a trafficked person is a trafficker. It must also be acknowledged that corrupt officials (for example, border guards, police, and

⁷ Alexis A. Aronowitz, *Human Trafficking, Human Misery* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2009), 37.

⁸ Alexis Okeowo, “Freedom Fighter,” *The New Yorker*, September 8, 2014.

⁹ Aronowitz, 4.

those responsible for licensing bars and restaurants) are an integral part of the chain that holds people in bondage. Sadly, traffickers can also be parents or family members.

Trafficking knows no boundaries. There is no one country that is immune, no demographic that is untouched. Human trafficking is wherever the reader is.

Jerome Elam appears to be an unlikely victim. He is a journalist and a former Marine. Yet his story illustrates that human trafficking is not a crime limited to Southeast Asia or to drug-addicted prostitutes on street corners.

Following my mother's divorce from my biological father, her life began a downward spiral that left me abandoned and alone, vulnerable to those who prey upon the innocent. My mother's world existed at the bottom of a bottle and when she met a man who began to molest me, alcohol facilitated her complete escape from the reality of what was happening to me. My mother eventually married the man and before long he shared me with the pedophile ring he belonged to. Soon I was being trafficked sexually, trapped by threats of violence against my mother and forced to take cocaine and alcohol.

For seven long years I was trapped in a hell no one deserves. I was nothing more than a shell of a human being enduring suffering and torture at the hands of psychopaths and sociopaths as the world looked on. I attended school, and from the outside appeared to be a "normal child" but I was being trafficked in plain sight. I was often pulled out of school to "service" clients and after school, holidays and weekends were all just a never-ending nightmare for me.¹⁰

¹⁰ Jerome Elam, "The Story of One. Vandalized Innocence: The Story of Trafficked Boys Hidden in Plain Sight," Communities Digital News (CDN), September 20, 2014, <http://www.commdiginews.com/life/trafficked-boys-vandalized-innocence-hidden-in-plain-sight-26356/#AbLL85mMbRRrMcy.99>.

It was 1970 in the southern United States; Elam was just five years old when his abuse began.

Why does human trafficking continue to thrive? It thrives because of two of humanity's deadliest sins: greed and lust. It is estimated that human trafficking generates over \$150 billion in annual profits, with two-thirds of that from sexual exploitation.¹¹

As we walked in the sand under the blazing sun, MB told me that he operated four brothels in Mumbai, each with approximately four hundred women. He told me his agents bought prostitutes from various places... Nepal, Bangladesh and other regions of India... "There is a premium on young girls," MB tells me, "Under fourteen years of age. These girls become very expensive. Sometimes sixty thousand rupees [\$1,350 U.S.]" ... MB complained about police payoffs. "This is my biggest expense," he said. MB told me that he rarely visited his brothels, as he spent the majority of his time in the Middle East pursuing business ventures. He claimed he also enjoyed investing in Bollywood films. MB wore several gold chains and had at least four gold teeth. A strict Hindu, he did not eat meat. He did not allow his brothel girls to eat meat either, though copious amounts of alcohol and hashish were allowed.¹²

Experts believe that in the next ten years human trafficking (if left unchecked) will become more profitable to criminals than drugs and arms trafficking and will continue to grow in both developed and developing countries. The purpose of this monograph is to outline both the economic dimension and the moral fallout of modern slavery and to suggest ways that the business of trading in human beings can be severely curtailed.

¹¹ ILO, "Profits and Poverty," 7.

¹² Siddarth Kara, *Sex Trafficking: Inside the Business of Modern Slavery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), Kindle edition.