

Slavery and Human Trafficking

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Human trafficking is a global issue because it affects every single person. We all may not be trafficked or a part of slavery, but due to the vast array in the types of trafficking, we indirectly purchase products involved in it. This is a global issue that we don't think affects us because we aren't a human slave to someone else or held against our will or forced to work off debts in order to live; but this happens all over the world regardless. I can't speak on behalf of those who are in this horrible position, but I can spread this information to those who should know. All of us in the western hemisphere fail to understand our impact on those around the world economically. Our countries were built on the backs of slaves and we now have a month dedicated to educating ourselves on it, but how much do we really know?

The first slave was brought over in 1619, when the Dutch introduced the first captured Africans to America ("Slavery in America", n.d). This started the long line of slavery that would cause America to grow economically, but not ethically. Then came the long line of slavery that would bring us to the 60's civil rights movement. Human trafficking has its roots within discrimination and prejudice. Discrimination is still prevalent to this day, with hate crimes and certain ethnicities becoming the punchline to "jokes". I remember my father telling me stories about when he was a child and the only coloured kid in his school, and the controversy around my parents getting married and even about the racism that still

exists to this day. I could never personally relate to him because I had not experienced racism towards myself. Due to not having first-hand experience, I immersed myself into history books and articles, trying to understand what it was like, but some forms of human trafficking are too horrible to process.

Another form of human trafficking is the sex tourism industry. This is a multi-billion dollar industry that dominates many countries around the world (Derakhshani, 2014). Sex tourism is an industry in which men, usually from first world countries, will pay for trips to impoverished countries in order to be able to have sexual relations with someone who is underage. Children and women are exploited in this industry, but many countries will not create laws against it for fears it will diminish the amount of tourists to their country. Women and children are lured in by con-men promising jobs and a chance at a better life. These men will abuse them and take the majority of their profits, which in turn keeps them from risking their life to leave. Men are attracted to this because they believe they have a lower chance of catching an STD from children than from a prostitute in their own country. This mindset is what drives the sex tourism industry. These people are held against their will and are subjected to abuse: physical, emotional, and sexual. Due to their lack of freedom and ability to be an independent person, this is why I would consider sex tourism another form of modern day slavery.

Human trafficking can also include forced labour, in industries such as farm labourers, domestic servants, or sex slaves (Derakhshani, 2014). According to the United Nations' International Labor Organization, this form of slavery generates \$150 Billion in profits every year (Derakhshani, 2014). The people involved in these tedious labor tasks can range in age from school-age children to even older adults. These industries rely on companies from the western hemisphere to outsource production to their countries, where clothing and products can be made cheaply and by workers who are extremely underpaid and in unsafe conditions. Joe Fresh recently came under fire when a factory in Bangladesh collapsed on its workers, a factory that produces clothing that is sold by Joe Fresh. More than eighty people died in the collapse. But this isn't the only factory that has been affected: a fire in another Bangladeshi factory killed more than 100 people in November of 2012 (Nurwisah, 2013). The factory was producing clothing for Sears, Wal-Mart and Disney.

Understanding how human trafficking affects us all is a hard task to do. We don't necessarily live "sheltered" lives but we do not understand the same circumstances that others in the world do. Relating this back to myself was something I struggled with when originally writing this paper. I couldn't understand how this could possibly affect me, until I realized that you need to take a step back and realize that on a global level we are all connected to one another.

The food in your supermarket is produced all over the world, restaurants offer us a meal from another culture, and movies provide us with comic relief and even the struggles of those in the past. We may not be able to slap on a quick fix and be done with it, but learning about it and becoming more aware is something that can provide some amount of help. Maybe we need to help each other out on a local level to be able to reach everyone globally, and I don't mean hold the door for the person behind you, although that wouldn't hurt either. Understanding how we can affect the world is a small thing to do, but it opens us up to a world of information and stories of those who have lived it. We can't blame our leaders or expect somebody else to do the work for us, because we are responsible for ourselves. As Mahatma Gandhi said, "Be the change you wish to see in the world."

References

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