

Lost Women: International Sex Trafficking

Shoshana Sakolsky

Throughout history, women have suffered and continue to suffer enslavement, degradation, and torment for the profit of greedy individuals. In her lecture, “Name the Price: Tyranny and Freedom of Sex Trafficking,” Dr. Sabita Manian discussed crimes against women in the form of sex trafficking. Sex trafficking is defined by the United States Department of State as “the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act.” The women forced into prostitution are treated no better than slaves are, and little is done to correct the issue. Any violation of women’s rights is a violation of human rights and must be addressed politically, socially, and economically.

“Nature, however, has distinguished between the female and the slave....But among barbarians no distinction is made between women and slaves” (Aristotle 71). Even today in some countries that distinction does not exist. Women are forced into prostitution in order to provide money for their families. Although the term “prostitution” is generally used to refer to the voluntary act of providing sexual favors for money, and sex trafficking is specifically involuntary, the women being trafficked often become prostitutes for those that buy and trade them like property. Crime rings capture women and sell them and their children into prostitution or force them to work as sex laborers for rich foreigners. It is a violation of human rights to sell a woman against her will, as one would sell a possession. It violates human rights to allow children to go without mothers because the mothers are forced to work in foreign countries as prostitutes. “Force is a physical power, and I fail to see what moral effect it can have. To yield to force is an act of necessity, not will” (Rousseau 153). Using force to achieve a goal is only

acceptable when no other option is provided. In the case of sex trafficking, it is a means of enforcing one's will on another unjustly.

Dr. Manian addressed the issue of political action against human trafficking in her lecture. According to her, no connection is made between the issue of sex trafficking and other socioeconomic issues and cannot therefore be fully resolved (Manian). The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) holds U.S. citizens accountable for their involvement in human trafficking overseas; however, a large percentage of Americans who have contact with the victims of human trafficking are in the armed forces (Manian 2006). One soldier claimed that going to the brothels was a rite of passage for those in the military, and though not all hold this view, it prevents the TVPA from being fully successful (Manian 2006). Politics is linked to social and economic factors as well, all of which must be addressed.

Economically, human trafficking is extraordinarily profitable. Dr. Manian explained that human trafficking brings in thirty-one billion dollars or more a year, with about seventy-five percent of traffickers being private agents seeking profit. Over half of the world's trafficking occurs in industrialized nations. During natural calamities, more opportunities for crime rings arise because poverty rises, and people are desperate to make money (Manian). According to the US State Department, the best way to combat the profitable nature of human trafficking is to reduce the demand for trafficking victims. If the demand for victims drops, the market will eventually dry up.

Socially, sex trafficking is problematic for many reasons. Prostitution increases during international events, such as the Olympics (Manian). At these times, standards of acceptable social behavior relax, and crime rings take advantage of that mentality. They promote prostitution for their own benefit. Unfortunately, most of the women involved in prostitution are

illiterate and poor (Manian). Sex trafficking also spreads HIV/AIDS and contributes to disease mutations (Manian). It also creates an apathetic attitude towards human suffering. According to Nicholas Kristof in his March, 2006, article in the *New York Times*, “A Woman Without Importance,” no one cares for the girls from the brothels: “She’s simply an impoverished girl from the countryside, and if her brothel’s owner decided to go ahead and kill her, almost no one will care” (Kristof 13).

Until the social and economic issues are addressed, human trafficking cannot be resolved politically. Legislation can only declare human trafficking illegal and punish transgressors, but it cannot prevent it. Prevention comes through education and addressing the socioeconomic factors in areas of high trafficking. Giving financial aid and providing citizens with a good education can prevent the desperation that arises from being impoverished and unable to find work. That is the way in which human trafficking must be addressed. Only then can the lost women of the world enter into the human race again.

Works Cited

- Aristotle. 350 BCE. “Politics.” Excerpted in *Freedom, Authority, and Resistance*. Lynchburg College Symposium Readings. Vol. II. Ed. Joseph F. Freeman. 3rd ed. USA: Xlibris, 2005. 69-92.
- Kristof, Nicholas. “A Woman Without Importance.” *New York Times*. 26 March, 2006, late ed., sec. 4: 13.
- Manian, Sabita. “Name the Price: Tyranny and Freedom of Sex Trafficking.” Senior Symposium Lecture, Lynchburg College. 23 October, 2006.

Rousseau, Jean-Jaques. 1762. "The Social Contract." Excerpted in *Freedom, Authority, and Resistance*. Lynchburg College Symposium Readings. Vol. II. Ed. Joseph F. Freeman.

3rd ed. USA: Xlibris, 2005. 149-168.

United States. Department of State. *Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons*.

2007. US Department of State. 20 Feb. 2007. www.state.gov