

## Hidden in Plain Sight

### *Human trafficking: A Threat to Humanity and Vulnerable Populations Worldwide*

It may seem unfathomable that millions of people are living in bondage in our modern society. Nevertheless, the reality is that many victims of modern slavery are often hidden in plain sight under the guise of being domestic workers, consensual sex workers, or legitimate employees. Human trafficking is the use of coercion, force, or fraud to obtain some form of a commercial sex act, profit, or labor from the exploitation of another individual.<sup>1</sup> Human trafficking may also include actions such as organ trafficking, forced marriage, and debt bondage. It's important to note that individuals, businesses, and even governments can be involved in human trafficking activity. Corruption, poverty, human rights inequalities, war and illiteracy heavily influence the presence of human trafficking worldwide.

This essay will examine the history, influences, and stories about slavery, and how it persists in various forms in modern society. While anyone can become a victim of modern-day enslavement, many victims ensnared in this international criminal enterprise are the most vulnerable populations in our society. I will also analyze the impact governments, policies, and societal beliefs have on human trafficking. I have dedicated my life to bringing awareness to this phenomenon, as the general population typically underestimates the extent of this issue. As Edward Everett said, "I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And I will not let what I cannot do interfere with what I can do." My life experiences and work supporting victims and survivors of human trafficking have helped me understand the

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<sup>1</sup> 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report - United States Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

dynamics of this humanitarian crisis. Restoration for victims and prevention are possible; however, confronting this illicit industry will require a sustained and collaborative societal effort.

I was born in the heart of Baltimore, Maryland, a state that lies on the East Coast of North America and rests on the balcony of the Atlantic Ocean. The Chesapeake Bay caresses Baltimore's horizon, and the city's skyscrapers reach toward the clouds. Maryland is known for its delectable seafood, renowned sports teams, and rich history. It is also home to the Battle of Fort Mchenry, which marked a turning point in the War of 1812.<sup>2</sup> I have always been proud to be born in a place with such a profound role in American history.

While the culture and richness of my hometown are noteworthy, the wounds it bears are equally necessary to assess. Baltimore was one of the most prominent slave ports during the transatlantic slave trade.<sup>3</sup> The port of Baltimore faces directly onto the vast protected harbor of the Chesapeake Bay, which made it an ideal location for receiving enslaved people shipped across the Atlantic Ocean from Africa. When the "Act Prohibiting the Importation of Slaves" took effect in 1808, Baltimore became an epicenter for the domestic transportation of enslaved people into the antebellum South after the transatlantic trade was outlawed. On January 1, 1863, the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery and granted four million African-Americans their right to freedom. Abraham Lincoln declared that "all persons held as enslaved people are, and henceforward shall be free."<sup>4</sup> As a legal matter, slavery officially ended across the United States on December 6, 1865, following the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> "Battle of Baltimore." National Parks Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, <https://www.nps.gov/fomc/learn/historyculture/battle-of-baltimore.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Clayton, Ralph. "A Bitter Inner Harbor Legacy: The Slave Trade." *Baltimore Sun*, October 1, 2021

<sup>4</sup> "The Emancipation Proclamation." National Archives and Records Administration, National Archives and Records Administration,

<sup>5</sup> "The Slave Trade." National Archives and Records Administration, National Archives and Records Administration, <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/slave-trade.html>.

The conspicuous slave auctions accompanied by public bidding and shackled humans have dissipated into the shadows of America's history. Today, restaurants, pubs, and boutiques decorate nearly every corner of America's once-bustling slave ports. However, although these outward signs of a publicly acceptable trade in human beings have vanished, the same cannot be said about the practice of slavery itself. Nearly 160 years after Lincoln's proclamation, the number of people living in bondage has since skyrocketed in modern society. During the 400 years of the transatlantic slave trade, 12.5 million Africans were shipped to the New World.<sup>6</sup> Globally, the estimated number of enslaved people worldwide in 1860 was 27 million. The U.N.'s International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that 50 million men, women, and children currently live in conditions of servitude worldwide.<sup>7</sup> Human trafficking is the fastest-growing and third most lucrative criminal activity globally, with an estimated annual revenue of \$150 billion.<sup>8</sup> Though the dynamics of slavery have shifted since its prohibition hundreds of years ago, the goal to profit from the exploitation of other human beings remains. The masters who once governed enslaved people have been replaced by pimps and traffickers who pose as trusting companions, spouses, and employers to lure in their victims.

Historically, slavery was not simply a domestic issue. Similarly, today every country, regardless of its governmental system or its policies, experiences some form of modern-day slavery.<sup>9</sup> However, it is essential to note that varying factors in each country and governmental system influence the risk of who and how many of these individuals fall victim to human

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<sup>6</sup> "How Many Slaves Landed in the U.S.?" PBS, Public Broadcasting Service, September 19, 201

<sup>7</sup> "50 Million People Worldwide in Modern Slavery." International Labour Organization, September 12, 2022,

<sup>8</sup> "50 Million People Worldwide in Modern Slavery." International Labour Organization, September 12, 2022,

<sup>9</sup> 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report - United States Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

trafficking. For instance, in the United States, children who run away often face higher occurrences of human trafficking victimization.

As an endangered runaway, I understand firsthand how children are among those most at risk of becoming victims of human trafficking. I still remember the pain from the ringing lashes on my flesh the night I ran away. As both women were striking me in unison with thick cable cords, the fury in their eyes blazed. I witnessed myself disappear beneath the shadow of their rage and violence. My pleas for mercy and my apologies never reached them. My screams only exacerbated their anger, and the more I tried to escape their blows, the harder they hit me. "Stop moving!" one said. "Just take the beating!" said the other. The welts on my skin raised from my body like rows of crops bearing pain. I counted the bruises covering me like a blanket to distract myself from crying further, "One, two, three, ten, eleven, twelve." A voice within me screamed for help, but I stayed silent. I was a child; therefore, my options were limited, but soon I would experience the freedom and happiness I deserved. That night I decided to run away.

Child abuse is not a rare occurrence. The CDC estimates that 1 in 6 children experience abuse or neglect.<sup>10</sup> The National Runaway Safeline estimated that 47% of children who run away experience some form of conflict or abuse at home.<sup>11</sup> Females reported missing from care had significantly higher proportions of victimization in child human trafficking. Children who run away often lack the financial and social resources to thrive or protect themselves. Specifically, the foster care system in the United States has become a fertile ground for traffickers looking to ensnare vulnerable children. Some systems that were intended to protect children have

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<sup>10</sup> "Fast Facts: Preventing Child Abuse & Neglect | Violence Prevention|injury Center|CDC." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, April 6, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/fastfact.html>.

<sup>11</sup> "Creating Safe & Healthy Homes through Positive Parenting." National Runaway Safeline, April 11, 2022, \

unsuspectingly increased their vulnerability and risk for exploitation. Traffickers target young people in foster care by offering shelter, money, drugs, or alcohol. A New York and Connecticut study revealed that 50% of human trafficking victims were placed in the American child welfare or juvenile justice system. Additionally, 80% of girls who were victims of human trafficking had been in the child welfare system at some point in their lives.<sup>12</sup>

By the time I was 12 years old, I had been abused copiously by the people I loved the most. Eventually, I equated my worth to a well bearing no water, empty and useless. However, this beating I experienced amplified fears that I often revisited. I told myself, "If I stay with my family, nothing will change." After I packed my few belongings in a flimsy suitcase, I made my way to the back door of my aunt's apartment. The bolt lock felt heavy in my hand as I tried to unfasten the lock meticulously. I became intoxicated with fear and dizzy with apprehension. A lump grew in my throat as I perched my foot outside the door onto the fire escape. The heavy door creaked as it closed behind me. My fear soon sank below the adrenalin flowing through me, and each step down the fire escape felt lighter. When my feet and the wheels of my suitcase reached the pavement, I knew I had escaped without notice. Unknowingly, I was venturing into one of Baltimore's most dangerous neighborhoods.

I trailed over soggy cigarettes and gutters overwhelmed with debris. I was startled by rats nearby rustling in trash cans overflowing with garbage and strange sounds in the distance. I'd seen numerous movies of orphans taken in by adults who longed to care for unloved children, so I hoped to share that same fate. I continued through the night with my suitcase trailing behind me over uneven sidewalks overgrown by weeds. A middle-aged man soon approached me. I wasn't

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<sup>12</sup> "Creating Safe & Healthy Homes through Positive Parenting." National Runaway Safeline, April 11, 2022,

startled because he didn't appear to be the type of grownup my family told me to avoid. He looks normal, I thought. His jeans hung loosely from his waist like most boys in the neighborhood. His eyes seemed sincere, and he spoke with a harmonious tone. "Where are you going?" he asked. "Are you okay? I can help you if you want." As the man tried to coerce me to enter his house, he attempted to comfort me with the idea that he could be a source of refuge. He never stopped smiling at me. Still, I felt uneasy about coming into a man's house alone, so I rejected his offer and ventured to my friend's house nearby. After she did not answer the door, I continued my search. As the night dwindled, so did my hope. I realized I had nowhere to go, and eventually, I began searching for the man I had met a few hours earlier. I wandered up and down the city streets looking for his house, hoping that the kind gentleman with the gold teeth would find me again. Fortunately, he never did. Ten years after I ran away, I began volunteering for an anti-human trafficking organization in my area. After months of assessing human trafficking cases, I had a revelation. The seemingly kind man who approached me that evening I ran away explicitly fit the description of a trafficker. He used tactics traffickers often use to lure their victims by building trust. This process is called grooming.

I heard the term human trafficking in 2020 after I joined a COVID-19 task force. When the COVID-19 pandemic blindsided the world in 2020, I was devastated after reading news reports about the climbing death around the world. I diligently searched for opportunities to help combat this virus. I was ecstatic when I was invited to join an organization that shared my vision. Our team would care for 3,000 patients daily, many of whom were Hispanic. I noticed the overwhelmed front-line workers struggling to manage the plethora of Spanish-speaking patients seeking care. After years of passively teaching myself Spanish, I decided to put my experience to

use. My Spanish improved substantially as I worked alongside my team. I encountered hundreds of immigrants who fled their country for a better life amid a global catastrophe. I also connected numerous patients with free external educational resources to help them learn English, because language barriers can also increase the chances of exploitation. After months of working with these vulnerable populations, I gained a firsthand understanding about the link between human trafficking and migration; migrants who cross borders to flee their country in pursuit of a better life are more likely to be victims of sex or labor trafficking.

Nearly 700 miles of fencing covered in barbed wire line the U.S.-Mexico border. In 2021, the U.S. Border Patrol reported a record high of 1.6 million encounters with migrants on the border.<sup>13</sup> Tighter immigration policies and restrictions, along with the impacts of COVID-19, have influenced an uptick in deportations. Many migrants who resort to being smuggled across borders are fleeing economic disaster, political turmoil, or violence and are seeking better opportunities in distant lands. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, migrants could claim asylum in the United States for extraneous circumstances. Post-pandemic, 61% of interactions between law enforcement and migrants have resulted in deportations instead. Despite increased border controls and deportations, human trafficking has not lessened.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, border personnel have focused on pursuing more prosecutions of first-time entrants who have illegally crossed the border. These methods have seemed to defer attention away from the human trafficking issue along the border.

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<sup>13</sup> Elbagir, Nima, et al. "People for Sale: Where Lives Are Auctioned for \$400." CNN, Cable News Network, 15 Nov. 2017,

<sup>14</sup>Vore, Carol, et al. "U.S. Immigration Policy and Human Trafficking: Two Sides of the Same Coin." Human Trafficking Institute,

In 2017, a video depicting a human being sold gained international attention. An auctioneer on the recording is heard saying, "Sold for 1,200 Libyan dinars."<sup>15</sup> He referred to two young men sold as "big strong boys for farm work." After traveling to Libya to investigate the footage, CNN verified that human trafficking was taking place in the video.<sup>16</sup> Subsequently, CNN presented the evidence to the Libyan governmental authorities that year. The Libyan government then vowed to launch a formal investigation into the matter. However, Libya remains on the special case list after years of failing to meet U.N. standards to combat human trafficking.<sup>17</sup>

The smuggling of migrants is a global concern, with many countries affected by it as origin, transit, or destination points. The U.N. refugee agency estimated that 89.3 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide by the end of 2021.<sup>18</sup> This vast number mainly comprises men, women, and children who fled their home country to escape violence, persecution, political conflict, war, and economic crises. COVID-19 restrictions and crackdowns on immigration limited the coastguards and border control patrolling at sea.<sup>19</sup> Without this governmental surveillance, smugglers had a broader territory to ensnare their unsuspecting victims.

Labarot was sold three times after being forced to work as a laborer in 2016. Labarot's trafficker used a fire-scorched knife to brand Labarot's face as his property. Like many other migrants, Labarot planned a 2,000-mile journey to Europe to escape conflict in Africa.<sup>20</sup>

According to the IOM, of the 16,000 women who migrated from Libya to Italy between 2016 to

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<sup>15</sup> Elbagir, Nima, et al. "People for Sale: Where Lives Are Auctioned for \$400." CNN, Cable News Network, 15 Nov. 2017,

<sup>16</sup> Elbagir, Nima, et al. "People for Sale: Where Lives Are Auctioned for \$400." CNN, Cable News Network, 15 Nov. 2017,

<sup>17</sup> Baker, Aryn. "Inside the Modern Slave Trade Trapping African Migrants." Time, Time, March 14, 2019,

<sup>18</sup> "Refugee Statistics." USA for UNHCR, <https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/statistics/>.

<sup>19</sup> "Covid-19 Brief: Impact on Conflict & Refugees." USGLC, April 13, 2022,

<sup>20</sup> Baker, Aryn. "Inside the Modern Slave Trade Trapping African Migrants." Time, Time, March 14, 2019,



2017, 80% became victims of sex trafficking.<sup>21</sup> A Nigerian immigrant named Gladys attempted to make a trip to Turin, Italy, after being offered a job in a hair salon by a family friend. She, like Labarot, never made it to her destination. Gladys was locked in a Libyan brothel, where she was denied food and water. To survive, she was forced to sell her virginity for a jug of water.<sup>22</sup>

Asylum is protection permissible to foreign nationals arriving at borders that fit a refugee's criteria. The United Nations 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol define refugees as an individual incapable or reluctant to return to their home country due to fear of prosecution or safety, along with the absence of governmental protection. Other reasons include prosecution "because of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion."<sup>23</sup> Since asylum is a discretionary status, many individuals who meet the definition of a refugee can still be denied asylum.<sup>24</sup> Safety is a human right; unfortunately, governments heavily influence who is granted this liberty. As Mother Teresa said, "Human rights are not a privilege conferred by the government. They are every human being's entitlement by virtue of his humanity."

Prevention of trafficking in relation to immigration is influenced by the political temperature of the countries where migrants seek asylum. Rhetoric from leaders who publicly denounce certain groups of people seeking asylum while supporting others from favorable backgrounds, highlights the deep-seated prejudices that threaten vulnerable populations at risk of being trafficked. In many instances, true feelings are revealed in the face of crisis. During the early days of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in late February of 2022, countries that had shut their

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<sup>21</sup> "60,000 Young Refugees and Migrants Who Arrived in Italy Alone Need Ongoing Support as They Transition to Adulthood – U.N. Agencies." UNICEF, y.

<sup>22</sup> Baker, Aryn. "Inside the Modern Slave Trade Trapping African Migrants." Time, Time, March 14, 2019,

<sup>23</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and Its 1967 Protocol." UNHCR, UNHCR, The U.N. Refugee Agency,

<sup>24</sup> Jonathan Blazer, Katie Hoepfner. "Five Things to Know about the Right to Seek Asylum." American Civil Liberties Union, September 30, 2022,

borders to other refugees in the past, willingly offered asylum to displaced Ukrainians.<sup>25</sup> In 2019, Italian ex-deputy minister Matteo Salvini went to trial after being accused of preventing a migrant boat from docking in Italy in August 2019.<sup>26</sup> Salvini seemed to underplay the role of human traffickers in migration by shifting the blame to refugees in his response to Italy's immigration crisis which began in 2014. Salvini stated, "If there were no migrants desperate to be exploited, it would be more difficult for them [traffickers] to do business."

During the Russian invasion of Ukraine, videos began to surface of Africans and Indians being denied entry to trains and borders while others were permitted access. While covering the conflict in Ukraine, NBC correspondent Kelly Cobiellastated, "Just to put it bluntly; these are not refugees from Syria; they are refugees from neighboring Ukraine." She continued, "That, quite frankly, is part of it. These are Christians; they are white."<sup>27</sup> The Bulgarian Prime Minister Kiril Petkov stated, "These are not the refugees we are used to... these people are Europeans... [they] are intelligent; they are educated, people... In other words, there is not a single European country now which, for example, saw his fellow Easterners in a different light from previous waves of migration."<sup>28</sup> Perhaps the most explicit statement of this bias came from the previous Ukrainian Deputy Chief Prosecutor, David Sakvarelidze, who appeared for an interview on BBC. Sakvarelidze stated, "It is very emotional for me because I see European people with blue eyes and blond hair being killed every day."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Cénat, Jude Mary, et al. "War in Ukraine and Racism: The Physical and Mental Health of Refugees of Color Matters." *International Journal of Public Health*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, April 27, 2022,

<sup>26</sup> Cervi, Laura, et al. "When Populists Govern the Country: Strategies of Legitimization of Anti-Immigration Policies in Salvini's Italy." MDPI, *Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute*, December 7, 2020

<sup>27</sup> "Gravitas: Western Media's Racist Reportage on Ukrainian Refugees." YouTube, YouTube, 28 Feb. 2022,

<sup>28</sup> "Gravitas: Western Media's Racist Reportage on Ukrainian Refugees." YouTube, YouTube, 28 Feb. 2022,

<sup>29</sup> "Gravitas: Western Media's Racist Reportage on Ukrainian Refugees." YouTube, YouTube, 28 Feb. 2022,

The kindness, aid and humanitarian efforts extended to the Ukrainians who experienced unprovoked attacks from Russia are well deserved. However, prejudices and racial biases interject into society and often determine how vulnerable populations are treated. Governments should not determine whether victims in a crisis are treated as human beings seeking asylum or as criminals breaking the law because of a population's demographics. As Trish Regan once said, "Human suffering is not, nor should it ever be, a political issue."

It is crucial to acknowledge links between certain types of disadvantages and types of modern slavery. For instance, there is a strong linkage between illiteracy and forced marriage. India has the highest illiteracy rate in the world, and a U.N. study estimated that 22 million people in the country were living in forced marriages.<sup>30</sup> Societal gender norms also influence how victims are treated. Unfortunately, many governmental records fail to include information about the impact of human trafficking on LGBTQI+ individuals. However, increased analysis and studies on this subject reveal that LGBTQI+ individuals are at a higher risk of becoming victims of human trafficking.<sup>31</sup> Having an LGBTQI+ identity can increase the likelihood of marginalization in societies that reject non-heterosexual orientations. LGBTQI+ victims may face a higher level of homelessness, rejection, and persecution, which is an appealing combination to traffickers seeking vulnerable victims.

Additionally, there is a higher prevalence of human trafficking in societies where governments strictly enforce gender inequality. Boys are not immune to becoming victims of modern-day slavery, as they are more likely than girls to be forcibly recruited by armed groups

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<sup>30</sup> NPR, Sept 19, 2022 "*Modern-Slavery-Global Estimate-increase.*"

<sup>31</sup> "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex (LGBTQI+)." SAMHSA.

and forces. The rate of boys and men who become victims of human trafficking is usually underrepresented due to gender biases accompanied by a lack of reporting. Furthermore, prosecutions involving male victims are less likely to be pursued than cases of human trafficking involving females.

Bacha Bazi is a term that can be translated as "boy play." Bacha Bazi is a well-known secret throughout Afghanistan that involves pre-pubescent boys dancing in women's clothing before a crowd of men. Award-winning journalist Najibullah Quraishi investigated the prevalence of this tradition in a film called *The Dancing Boys*.<sup>32</sup> The investigation revealed that Bacha Bazi is an organized sex trade of young Afghan boys that has been practiced for centuries. Human rights lawyer Radhika Coomaraswamy was the first international figure to publicly condemn this practice. The victims are usually boys who come from low-income and illiterate families. Some boys are even abducted from the street to become enslaved sex workers for influential militants, governmental officials, and businessmen. The dancing usually takes place at weddings and other large celebratory ceremonies as an act of entertainment. Women are not permitted to congregate with men at these gatherings due to strict gender segregation customs and laws in Afghanistan. After the dancing, the boys are forced to engage in sex with their captors. If a victim of Bacha Bazi tries to escape, he faces the threat of violence or death.<sup>33</sup> There have been cases of boys in Afghanistan being killed after escaping the enslavement of their captors. Strong public and religious denouncement of homosexuality in Afghanistan has made the practice of Bacha Bazi a taboo discussion. Engaging in Bacha Bazi is illegal by law in Afghanistan. However, the widespread practice of this pedophilic tradition remains challenging

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<sup>32</sup> "The Dancing Boys of Afghanistan." PBS, Public Broadcasting Service, August 17, 2022, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/dancingboys/>.

<sup>33</sup> Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe | OSCE. [https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/7/4/486700\\_1.pdf](https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/7/4/486700_1.pdf).

to enforce. Many law enforcement personnel responsible for implementing the criminalization of Bacha Bazi often attend events as patrons to engage in this illicit practice. The film, *The Dancing Boys* perfectly depicts how corruption, poverty, and inequality can create a fertile environment for human trafficking to thrive.

Twelve years after I ran away from home, I found myself getting lost again. Yet, this time, I was getting lost under the skies of Spain in the flamenco filled-streets of Barcelona after winning a scholarship to study abroad. Nevertheless, it saddened me to know that human trafficking still thrives, even in a beautiful country such as Spain. No providence is immune to modern-day slavery. Human trafficking is a global threat to humanity, and vulnerable populations are at an exceptionally high risk of becoming victims of this global illicit industry. It disturbs me to witness the atrocities committed by other human beings. As activist Rachel Corrie once said, "I feel like I am witnessing the systematic destruction of a people's ability to survive. It is horrifying."

Modern-day slavery must be recognized as an international affliction in all societies rather than an isolated issue. If action is not taken on a societal level by citizens and political officials, human trafficking will continue to expand where it can be prevented. By collectively advocating and lobbying for better policies, laws, and programs protecting victims and vulnerable populations, our world can begin dismantling modern-day slavery. As former U.S. President Barack Obama said, "Change will not come if we wait for someone or another time. We are the ones we have been waiting for; we are the change we seek." While the magnitude of modern-day slavery may appear overwhelming, there is hope for the future.

Newly developed technologies, regulatory procedures, and policies are being implemented to limit the occurrence of human trafficking in our society. Many software programs have been developed to surveil chat rooms and websites to detect potential traffickers who attempt to lure or exploit victims. There have also been special task forces aimed at rescuing victims of human trafficking. In 2022, an FBI operation entitled "Operation Cross Country" located 37 missing children and 84 minors who were victims of child sex trafficking.<sup>34</sup> The youngest victim retrieved from this operation was 11 years old. The FBI has special divisions collaborating with state and local partners to track victims nationwide.

Fortunately, many organizations have been established throughout the world to combat human trafficking. These organizations often have programs to identify, rescue, and restore victims of human trafficking, while also aiming to hold traffickers accountable. For example, Agape International Missions was established by two California natives after they learned about the human trafficking crisis in Cambodia. Since 2005, AIM Agape International Missions have rescued 40,000 victims of human trafficking.<sup>35</sup>

Imagine if everyone is educated about the signs and symptoms of human trafficking; this knowledge alone could save numerous lives. The National Human Trafficking Hotline provides twenty-four-hour assistance to victims and bystanders who suspect human trafficking in the United States. In the United States, defendants in child-isolated incidents of trafficking received an average sentence of 16 years in prison, while defendants involved in adult-victims trafficking

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<sup>34</sup> "Department of Justice: Homepage: United States Department of Justice." Department of Justice | Homepage | United States Department of Justice, December 15, 2022, <https://www.justice.gov/>.

<sup>35</sup> "Agape International Missions (AIM)." End Slavery Now, <https://www.endslaverynow.org/agape-international-missions-aim>.

cases received an average sentencing of merely six years. Increasing the minimum sentencing of human trafficking internationally for both child and adult cases involving human trafficking could send a formidable message to traffickers.

Whether someone decides to donate or join an anti-human trafficking initiative, it's essential to recognize that any upstanding person can be part of the coalition of modern-day abolitionists. Let silence never be an option as long as slavery is alive. As Martin Luther King said, "The ultimate tragedy is not the oppression and cruelty by the bad people but the silence over that by the good people."

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1. 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report - United States Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/>.
  2. "50 Million People Worldwide in Modern Slavery." International Labour Organization, September 12, 2022, [https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_855019/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_855019/lang--en/index.htm).
  3. "60,000 Young Refugees and Migrants Who Arrived in Italy Alone Need Ongoing Support as They Transition to Adulthood – U.N. Agencies." UNICEF, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/60000-young-refugees-and-migrants-who-arrived-italy-alone-need-ongoing-support-they>.
  4. "Agape International Missions (AIM)." End Slavery Now, <https://www.endslaverynow.org/agape-international-missions-aim>.
  5. Baker, Aryn. "Inside the Modern Slave Trade Trapping African Migrants." Time, Time, March 14, 2019, <https://time.com/longform/african-slave-trade/>.
  6. "Battle of Baltimore." National Parks Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, <https://www.nps.gov/fomc/learn/historyculture/battle-of-baltimore.htm>.
  7. Cervi, Laura, et al. "When Populists Govern the Country: Strategies of Legitimization of Anti-Immigration Policies in Salvini's Italy." MDPI, Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute, December 7, 2020, <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/12/23/10225>.
  8. Clayton, Ralph. "A Bitter Inner Harbor Legacy: The Slave Trade." Baltimore Sun, October 1, 2021, <https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-2000-07-12-0007120236-story.html>.
  9. "Covid-19 Brief: Impact on Conflict & Refugees." USGLC, April 13, 2022, <https://www.usglc.org/coronavirus/conflict-and-refugees/>.
  10. "Creating Safe & Healthy Homes through Positive Parenting." National Runaway Safeline, April 11, 2022, <https://www.1800runaway.org/creating-safe-healthy-homes-through-positive-parenting>.
  11. Cénat, Jude Mary, et al. "War in Ukraine and Racism: The Physical and Mental Health of Refugees of Color Matters." International Journal of Public Health, U.S. National Library of Medicine, April 27, 2022, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9091168/>.
  12. "The Dancing Boys of Afghanistan." PBS, Public Broadcasting Service, August 17, 2022, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/documentary/dancingboys/>.
  13. "Department of Justice: Homepage: United States Department of Justice." Department of Justice | Homepage | United States Department of Justice, December 15, 2022, <https://www.justice.gov/>.
  14. DHS. <https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2022-02/CCHT%20Annual%20Report.pdf>.

15. Elbagir, Nima, et al. "People for Sale: Where Lives Are Auctioned for \$400." CNN, Cable News Network, 15 Nov. 2017, <https://www.cnn.com/2017/11/14/africa/libya-migrant-auctions/index.html>.
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17. "Fast Facts: Preventing Child Abuse & Neglect [Violence Prevention]injury Center|CDC." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, April 6, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/fastfact.html>.
18. Gramlich, John, and Alissa Scheller. "What's Happening at the U.S.-Mexico Border in 7 Charts." Pew Research Center, Pew Research Center, November 12, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/11/09/whats-happening-at-the-u-s-mexico-border-in-7-charts/>.
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