

FIGHT SLAVERY NEWS

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FSN Participates in "Journey" Exhibit

By AVRA COHEN

Fight Slavery Now! was pleased to participate in the monumental interactive art exhibition "Journey" which came to Washington Square Park in November following acclaim in London and Vienna. The work is a collaboration between the renowned actress and tireless advocate Emma Thompson, an eloquent victim of sex trafficking from Moldova named Elena, and various artists in many media. Our group attended the exhibit as a group Meetup, and also had a number of members volunteer to staff different parts of the exhibit and explain it to visitors. The installation comprises seven shipping containers, each designed by a different artist

interpreting one part of what Thompson calls Elena's "journey into hell."

This brilliant exhibition is far more powerful than any passively viewed artwork or written account. Walking through these containers we are viscerally engaged through sight, sound and even smell, in the process of victimization. We begin as an innocent child lured away from home. We feel the initial terror of realization, the stripping of identity, the soul deadening daily abuse, the foul and filthy conditions, the arrogance of the johns, the indifference of government. All manner of art forms are cleverly utilized to good effect: graffiti, soundscapes, puppets, costumes, photography, sculpture and

literature. We walk through a chilling representation of a typical workplace with a dirty bed violently shaking, a sickly sweet stench, and a price list for sexual favors posted along with a tally of men serviced, as many as 40 a day, before exiting through a curtain of condoms. One container housed a work by noted sculptor Anish Kapoor, an eerie abstract work titled 'Stigma' that appeared to be an impossibly dark void. Finally we hear Elena tell her story as we read government documents callously denying asylum and assistance to victims of sex traffickers.

The exhibit was made possi-

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Fight Slavery Now Presents to Columbia Students

By FSN STAFF

On December 16, 2009, Fight Slavery Now! presented to a class of graduate students at the Columbia University School of Social

Work. A group of eight FSN members spoke to students interested in community organizing about the ins and outs of establishing a grass roots organization. We were hoping to shed

light on how it all looked from inside. We shared information on problems associated with getting a group of volunteers to act in concert in order to complete

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FIGHT SLAVERY NOW

Fight Slavery Now!

Established 2008

Founder and Organizer: Steven Blumrosen

Assistant Organizers: Sarah Porter, Avra Cohen, Tommy Fernandez

Steering Committee: Numerous individuals of conscience and courage

Human Trafficking: Closer Than We May Think

By SARAH ELIZABETH PORTER

Human Trafficking can be a very nebulous term. It also seems far removed from us as Americans. We aren't able to see the sweatshops, the underground brothels, the children that make our clothes and who are bought and sold. It is still widely looked at as an "over there issue"; something that happens, but not here in America. Along with the United States (and JFK in particular) being a major point of entry, a place where victims are sent, it is indeed happening on our doorstep.

There's this whole other issue of "Homegrown Trafficking". People from the United States, trafficked within. This primarily involves young women and girls. Girls may be shipped out via the highways to

truck stops, across the country, or just a few blocks from where they live. Traffickers and pimps will look for a very specific type of youth; a girl who is vulnerable and without a place to go. It's possible she has been kicked out, or is fleeing from domestic violence in her home.

There is no "Amber Alert", and she is not entered into the missing person's data base. Had she come from a different neighborhood or social class, you can guarantee the search parties would be sent out. She could be as young as 13, and he is much older. He takes her in, he shows her affection, he makes her believe he will be the only one to ever love her. He poses as her boyfriend, but also as a father figure. And then it starts to turn. Soon she is a sex slave,

working 7 nights a week, and he takes every penny thrown at her.

This is in no way a lesser form of sexual exploitation than women trafficked across the border from Mexico. And in this form, the girls are generally younger which makes them easier to control. It is an enormous problem that is difficult to quantify because funding for research has been inadequate. There is evidence that thousands of children are abused and many more are at risk for sexual exploitation. This is a very real issue that is happening right now. And no one is talking about it. We can't do anything about a problem we don't know exists. The more we educate ourselves and the more we can

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“Journey” Exhibit *(cont. from Page One)*

ble through the Helen Bamber Foundation, and the venerable Ms. Bamber was on hand herself offering wisdom and encouragement much as she has been doing for the past 60 years! The exhibit has moved on to Madrid, but you may get a small sampling of the experience watching Emma Thompson discuss it on YouTube: [The Journey - unfolded by Emma Thompson](#).

Closer Than We May Think *(cont. from Page Two)*

educate those around us. And then we can start to see some change.

Columbia Presentation *(cont. from Page One)*

a task, any task. Our tasks currently revolve around raising awareness of human trafficking internationally, as well as here in the U.S., and more specifically in N.Y. We talked in detail about trying to get our members to answer emails so that decisions could be made, among other things, as well as about crafting a message as a group so that we communicate effectively with the public at large.

We talked to the students about an actual process of creating materials to be handed out to our audiences after our presentations, of deciding who will

speak and what they will be speaking about, as well as writing material and organizing it into a newsletter. We introduced students to the challenges associated with all of us having full-time jobs while at the same time trying to get this organization off the ground and keep it running. We also spoke about framing the fight against modern-day slavery in the context of other social justice movements dating back to the civil rights struggle, and the importance and value of grass-roots organizing. We concluded by informing these future social workers about opportunities in their

field to become involved in this vital issue.

Fight Slavery Now! is proud to say that we were received by a grateful group of students who were very interested in our work as evidenced by their questions and who cared deeply which was one of the reasons why they donated money to our cause without having actually been asked to do it. We were also very happy to hear that a number of students were interested in becoming members of FSN.

2009: Looking Back on a Year of Achievement

Just over a year ago our founder, Steven Blumrosen, brought together a handful of people interested in the subject of human trafficking. Today *Fight Slavery Now!* boasts over 100 members, the largest all-volunteer anti-slavery group in New York City.

Over the past year, we've grown a great deal in who we are and what we can do.

Among other things FSN now:

- hosts two highly informative websites,

- publishes this quarterly newsletter,
- has amassed a trove of information accessible to the public,
- crafted a body of educational literature to enhance our outreach efforts, and
- has held over 50 Meetups including our presentations in schools and libraries across the city.

We have begun the work of building alliances with other

social justice organizations and elected officials. We have watched films and read, discussed, and reviewed a number of books. We have all learned much, both individually and from one another. A core group of committed volunteers has coalesced to form our steering committee.

The Vision of Some of Our Members

Avra Cohen:

This year has been, first and foremost, an enormous learning experience. I am still amazed at how little attention such profound abuse receives, but before joining *FSN* I thought exactly as do most people, "slavery is something that happens rarely and far away." I believe that knowledge is power. Learning that it's happening on a huge scale, right here in NYC, has made me determined to spread this knowledge.

Sarah Elizabeth Porter

What does Fight Slavery Now mean to me? The world is full of social injustices, which unfortunately comes as no surprise. They are not hard to find, they are everywhere if we care to look. The more I learned though about human trafficking, it seems to be an almost invisible crime. It is so hidden, buried so deep, but it's all around us. It's in our neighborhoods and communities, it taints the products we buy, it puts young girls on the streets. It calls us to fight against what we cannot see. I can't think of a greater social injustice and more obscene human rights violation than ripping someone's freedom away. We as a people have fought so others could be free in the past, and we're still fighting today. I am thankful that there are so many other people out there that feel the same way and want to use their skills for this.

2009: Looking Back

Alma Subasic

This past year has been about learning about the subject and figuring out what exactly I am trying to do. At the same time, it has been about silencing my inner demons that kept presenting facts that stated that my fight was a lonely one and would hardly make a difference. But once the demons have been silenced, one is presented with facts such as a large number of anti trafficking organizations and volunteers that began as my hypothetical lonely hero began and are currently helping former trafficking victims rebuild their lives. I say I am winning my fight against my inner dark forces.

Barbara Goldwyn

This year has been an eye opening experience about modern day slavery. I knew it existed but never realized the depth and ubiquitousness of its tentacles. It is a hard fight as we strive to make a dent in eliminating this most heinous crime. Raising people's awareness, being pro-active in whatever way we can to oppose any form of continuance is what we will continue to do in our next year. It is a difficult struggle with many obstacles but one worth fighting to achieve any success.

Tommy Fernandez

This year has proven to me how much good is possible if you care enough and work hard enough. It has been truly inspirational.

FSN's Goals

Our stated goals, enumerated from our inception, are as follows:

Raise awareness of all facets of human trafficking, its magnitude and scope in all its various forms.

Develop greater understanding of the root causes of human trafficking.

Plan effective interventions.

Grow our organization in both membership and outreach capacity.

Forge alliances with other groups fighting for social justice.

Demand responsive political leadership.

Advocate for victims rights.

2010: Looking Ahead

Here are some of the things we'd like to address this coming year:

Avra Cohen

I hope we can move this issue into the political arena by crafting a legislative agenda. This seems like a natural progression, applying the knowledge we've accumulated toward constructive action. This can engage the public, empower victims and leverage small resources to have measurable impact. Partnering with other social justice groups will be key.

Tommy Fernandez

I want to bring our message to as many people as who are willing to listen. Bring in more attendees to our presentations, more readers of our literature and visitors to our website. I want the Press to generate even more awareness of the subject, and more importantly, provide more practical information on how to stop it. I'm convinced we can serve as a valuable resource in this.

2010: Looking Ahead

Sarah Elizabeth Porter

I want to bring this issue even more to the community at large. The problem in New York City is growing fast, and is right on our doorstep. Young girls that live here and are from New York are finding themselves thrown onto the street and are forced against their will into prostitution. The average age of entry into prostitution is 13. Trafficking is not only an international problem, but one that affects youth within our own communities. I want to see our group work the prevention angle and get into schools to talk about this issue.

Alma Subasic

I would like our active member base to expand so that we can have a greater outreach impact and a greater range of suggestions as to how we can address the issue. Obviously, the greater our numbers are the more work we can do. Our organization is gaining publicity and it will be necessary to recruit as many members as feasible to be able to address quickly all aspects of the fight against this evil. Finally, I also agree with Avra and I therefore hope that we can begin to work to address the political angle. In addition, I also second Sarah's prevention sentiment.

Barbara Goldwyn

Looking forward I feel that we need to address the intervention of victims of sex trafficking. This is a vital missing link. My plan is to either do volunteer work as a therapist at an organization that has this component in their program or hopefully create our own social service program.

Make a difference! Join Fight Slavery Now!

Blood Chocolate

"We were never allowed to speak to our families. If we did, we were either beaten or killed." Child cocoa worker in Cote d'Ivoire

By AVRA COHEN

Another Valentine's Day has come and gone and Americans have shelled out a large part of the 13 billion dollars we spend annually on chocolate. With all its connotations of sweetness and affection, it is sad to note that cocoa is so abusively harvested in Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), source for almost half the world supply. The U.S. Department of State estimates that more than 109,000 children in Cote d'Ivoire's cocoa industry work under "the worst forms of child labor", and that some 15,000 are victims of human trafficking or enslavement. Other estimates run even higher. Children as young as 8 years old labor from dawn to nightfall, often under the lash. Most are lured by promises of good jobs. Many have been kidnapped from neighboring border regions. Some are sold by their parents. The work is exhausting and dangerous, exposing the children to a host of pesticides and other chemical hazards. The beans are bought by middlemen, giving big chocolate companies a layer of

insulation from the abject conditions that prevail. One web site devoted to this issue is [Stop Chocolate Slavery](#). The International Labor Rights Forum has a [Cocoa Campaign](#) with many actions you can take including an online petition to the major manufacturers

In 2001, to stave off pending legislation here in the U.S., the major companies signed a voluntary international agreement. Commonly referred to as the Cocoa Protocol, the [Harkin-Engel Protocol](#) was intended to curb the worst of these abuses and introduce accountability in the supply chain. Now, nine years later, it has yet to be implemented! You can help end this abuse in several ways. Nestle, Hershey and Mars are among the largest buyers of cocoa from the Ivory Coast. You can let these companies know that they must be accountable and that you care. You can also support proposed legislation to restrict imports produced by child labor and forced labor. Vote with your consumer dollars to buy only slave-free chocolate, preferably certified **Fair Trade**. [Divine](#) and [Sweet Earth](#) chocolates are two delicious examples available at specialty markets like Whole

Foods or online. Organic chocolate and chocolate produced in the Americas does not originate in the Ivory Coast and is unlikely to be tainted by child slave labor. Our web site, [FightSlaveryNow.Org](#) has further information, including videos, that detail this abuse and describe more ways you can help end it. We welcome your involvement.