



# FIGHT SLAVERY NEWS!

FALL 2009 ISSUE NUMBER 2

## Thousands Walk/Run in the Rain to Fight Slavery

BY KATE NEIDORF

“Save a child with your sole” was the theme of a very rainy Sunday, September 27th at Lincoln Center. As women and men strapped on their stilettos, enthusiastic cheers came up from under the sea of umbrellas waiting to start the race. Over 300 people came out to run the 80 meters in their thin heels breaking the Guinness Book of World Records for the most people running in stilettos at one time!

From the Fight Slavery Now! group came Sarah, Jessica, Kate, Tommy, Alma, Janna and Avra to show their support for Stop Child Trafficking Now (SCTNow). Decked out in shiny silver strappy heels, Tommy shuffled along with the ladies through the rainy street toward the finish line while Avra cheered us on in his homemade stilt—stilettos.

Following the stiletto run many more joined

for the 5K walk that took place down the West Side Highway along the Hudson River. There was a great sense of unity as many different anti-human-trafficking groups came together to raise money and awareness about child trafficking in the sex industry. The walk was a culminating event after a week of activities such as readings by Patrick Keefe, author of “The Snakehead”, panel discussions, performances and victims sharing their accounts.

The organizer of Freedom Week, SCTNow, hopes to fight human trafficking by going after the predators or johns, who buy sex. By going after the demand they anticipate stopping the supply as well. As there have been few arrests of the johns for trafficked children, SCTNow hopes to instill a new fear of repercussions among the clients. All of the money raised will go directly to this cause and putting people out into the field to build cases for arrests. Although the activities are over there is still an opportunity to donate at [sctnow.com](http://sctnow.com) ❀



# "My Three Cents!"

BY SARAH PORTER

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Prostitution - It's the world's oldest profession and it's not going away, or so we have heard. But on the flip side, it's the world's oldest *oppression* and until we go after the oppressors, it is true that it's not going to be eradicated anytime soon. What is mind blowing is that the exploitation of women and children continues to be the most grotesque human rights violation that is overlooked and ignored.

I have heard the argument several times before, that by legalizing prostitution we can control it. It will be safe. People are always going to want and buy sex, so why not just let the government control it? And for a while, I really thought that this could be something that would work. Not until recently did I learn how closely prostitution and trafficking are linked. It's easy for us to believe, or to want to believe, that all women who engage in prostitution have chosen it. For whatever reason they got into it to begin with, they are giving conscious consent and if they decide to leave, they can at any time. The reason they stay is because the money is just so good. They'll never make more than what they are making now, and many have children to feed.

Whatever your stance is on this, the reality that it's not always a choice, has to be intensely explored. What is true though is that a trafficked woman standing on a street corner, or working at a brothel, is under an expectation that she will bring back money. A lot of money. And if she doesn't bring back what is expected of her, she knows that horrible things will happen to her. This is because she is owned. She does not have control over her life. She cannot leave at any time. She is not bringing home more money than she could ever dream of to feed her children. But she will smile coyly and sell her body for sex to be able to stay alive. (continued on next page)



Fight Slavery Now!

Established 2008

Founder and Organizer: Steven Blumrosen

Assistant Organizers: Alma Subasic, Sarah Porter, Avra Cohen, Max Walters

Steering Committee: Numerous individuals of conscience and courage

Newsletter Editor: Tommy Fernandez

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(“My Three Cents!” continued)

So what do we do? We have taken the first step to educate ourselves and make the correlation between prostitution and trafficking. Which leads us to the glaringly obvious realization of who is buying the sex. Who is demanding that this continue to exist. Who is continuing to insist that women and young girls are exploited for a profit and so they can have 15 seconds of a physical release.

The johns. The group of people supplying the demand and demanding the supply. Women selling themselves and being sold are demonized as whores and sluts, where the men perpetuating this are clients, patrons and customers. Yet, they generally remain overlooked even though they are an extremely integral part of the equation. How could there be sex trafficking of women, if no one wanted to buy the sex?

So how do you get rid of the demand? How do we rid our global society of something that has been happening since the dawn of time?

“Shame Campaigns” have been proven to work well in other cultures. Instead of glorifying paid sex, the “pimp lifestyle” and teaching young boys that there is no greater power over women than being in a position to buy her, we instill a sense of shame and embarrassment for those who think that this is acceptable. If at a young age, boys were taught about human trafficking and that the woman lying in front of them that they paid for may be there against her own volition, we may be able to combat this maladaptive thinking. If buying a woman was considered a serious crime and the consequence was more than a slap on the wrist, we could begin to see some changes. But when our society would rather arrest and prosecute a 14 year old girl who has been coerced and enslaved on the streets, we will not begin to see any changes. If it’s considered statutory rape to have sex with a 14 year old and she is considered a victim, why in “prostitution” cases do we criminalize that same 14 year old for being raped?

It is an axiom in law that “ignorance of the law is no excuse”. Similarly it should be no excuse for a john to claim that he didn’t know a prostitute was not acting of her own free will. Most prostitutes are acting as a result of coercion and a great many are victims of childhood sexual abuse. Some people have equated patronizing such women as “pay to rape”. Where prostitution is illegal, johns should not get a free pass as they constitute the driving force behind the demand. Prosecuting only those who may in fact actually be victims, is a gross perversion of justice. While john schools are effective in educating men, jail time should not be reserved only for those that are selling sex. It is the buyers who create the demand! ❀

# THE ECONOMICS OF SLAVERY

Right now, without even knowing it, you may be supporting slavery! If you have bought common products such as sugar, coffee, or chocolate, it is very possible they are tainted by slave labor. Many bargain items are cheap for a reason. They are made by slaves! Rugs, baskets, clothing, shoes, cosmetics, electronic gadgets, and many other consumer goods are often found to be produced under abusive labor conditions, or contain materials that were so produced. If you patronize prostitutes, it is highly likely that you are supporting an operation that traps and traffics young girls.

Human trafficking is a hideous crime, but it is also a business. Like any business, it is affected by costs, supply and demand. To cut costs of products, traffickers ensnare and enslave vulnerable people and force them to work under horrific conditions for no pay. They are kept under control by abuse, threats, manipulation and other means. They live miserably, without freedom or dignities, and often die as a result of their slavery—if they are not murdered. The supply of victims comes from anywhere and everywhere there are poor, vulnerable or desperate people from every country in the world, including the United States.

The demand comes from you, the unaware consumer buying another bargain product, illicit sex or the latest luxury item. Becoming an educated and responsible consumer, and a concerned citizen, is one of the most powerful weapons out there against slavery. It breaks down the business of slavery. Every dollar directed away from products touched by slavery is one less dollar that funds human trafficking.

In each edition of this Newsletter, we will give you insights into the workings of the more common businesses capitalizing on human trafficking and provide resources and advice on how to fight.

Your capacity to care is an essential quality. If you are willing to help, join us and learn how!

## SLAVE-MADE GOODS

There are a myriad of products that are often made with slave labor, from basic commodities like sugar, beans and rubber, to manufactured items like artificial flowers and Christmas decorations to high-end items like jade, rubies and teak.

Sometimes, these commodities, either as raw materials or as recipe ingredients, can work their way into products that you wouldn't expect to be so tainted. Sometimes manufacturers themselves may not be aware.

Not all products in these categories are tainted by human trafficking. A growing number of businesses are working to ensure that what they produce is done without slave labor. However, there are still many businesses that don't know, don't care, or willfully violate the human rights of others.

The key is awareness and research. If you suspect a product or service you are buying may be tainted by slavery,

look into it on the Internet, and spread the word!

There are many resources available to help in this search. The Department of Labor has published a report listing 122 products that are often slave-made. It can be accessed in the Files section of our Meetup.com website.

There are also many websites of activist groups that provide similar information, including **change.org** and **humantrafficking.org** as well as that for our own organization, **Meetup.com/Fight-Slavery-Now**.

Once you learn that a product you have been buying is tainted by slavery, look for a free trade alternative. Tell your friends to do the same. If you find a retailer or manufacturer selling a product that is, in whole or in part, tainted by slavery, alert them to the problem. If the business is reputable, the alarm of selling slave-made products – or the fear of losing revenue as a result of it—should spur them to take action. ❁

### FSN! WINS DOUBLE CHALLENGE CONTEST

Two very useful, informative, well written, and commendable websites recently posed a challenge to their readers. In a unique collaboration, both Change.Org and The Human Trafficking Project asked readers to find slave-free products in two lists that included such items as coffee, couches, cut flowers, footballs, underwear... an odd assortment of products. Fight Slavery Now! rose to the challenge. We found suppliers in most, but not all, of the product categories in the contest.

To see all the results look for the discussion on our message board titled: "Response to Slave-free shopping challenge... (WE WON!)"

If you ever wondered whether slavery indeed takes place in New York City, you should check out this powerful interactive tool developed by the NOT FOR SALE CAMPAIGN.

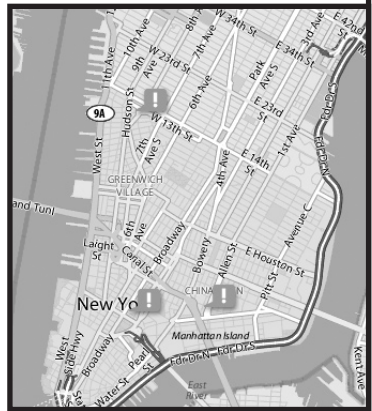
Visit their website at [slaverymap.org](http://slaverymap.org), log on, and you will be able to find details of incidents of human trafficking from around the world. Search your own neighborhood, your hometown, or your vacation destination.

You are sure to be surprised. Trafficking is everywhere. If you read of a new incident you can post it on the map yourself. We have found this tool useful in our presentations by reporting on incidents that are close to our venue, driving home the point of just how pervasive this invisible crime really is.



## This map shows incidents of child, labor and sex trafficking:

- A 64 year old woman was found running a brothel with girls under the age of 15. Police thought they were going to close down an illegal hotel operation but found something very different instead.
- Five Korean women were lured to NYC with promises of good jobs as hostesses in their night clubs. The women were subjected to physical abuse and held for the repayment of a 10,000 dollar debt. The women were forced to work as prostitutes to pay off their debt.
- Owners of the Kintex Factory, which employed approximately 20 Chinese immigrants, started to skim from their workers' wages. They stopped paying their employees altogether in May of 2000 and eventually closed and abandoned the factory in July.



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If you encounter a current situation of bondage, please immediately call this U.S. national trafficking hotline number so that the proper law enforcement and service providers can be alerted: 1-888-3737-888

## SEXUAL SLAVERY

Businesses revolving around sex can, frankly, be found everywhere in New York: sex clubs, escort services, massage parlors, phone sex operators as well as the clubs that cater to particular ethnicities. There are also the old fashioned brothels and prostitution rings. Anyone with the money and intent can readily find the supply.

Perhaps because these businesses are so common in New York, they stay below the radar because they are perceived as a sordid but inevitable reality of urban existence. However, this industry is becoming increasingly reliant on the trafficking of young, vulnerable women and children for their supply. All of these victims suffer with little hope of escape. They are at risk of dying from illnesses like AIDS or becoming murder victims.

If you patronize prostitutes, or know others who do, it is very likely that this is supporting an operation that is in-

involved in sex trafficking. Think about the mindset in our culture that allows us to view women as objects that can be bought and sold. These girls are somebody's daughter, sister, or mother. Think about it.

The sex industry involves many ancillary businesses, like limo drivers in the know and newspapers that run prodigious amounts of sex advertising. Steer clear, or better yet pressure, such businesses to look for more responsible sources of revenue. Tell your local newspapers to stop running such advertising.

There are not many resources yet available for the victims of sexual slavery. But that is changing. One important organization is Girls Educational and Mentoring Services (GEMS) whose mission is to empower young women, ages 12 to 21, who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation and domestic trafficking to exit the industry and develop to their full potential. The website is [gems-girls.org](http://gems-girls.org) ♣

**THERE'S NO**

# SLAVERY

**IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD...**

HUMAN TRAFFICKING IS MODERN-DAY SLAVERY  
IF YOU LIVE IN NEW YORK CITY **IT IS IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD!**



## DOMESTIC SLAVE LABOR

The plight of enslaved domestic workers is harder to address as a consumer, or even as a concerned citizen, but you can still have an impact. Domestic servitude is the second largest category of labor trafficking.

Domestic workers are vital to New York's economy, with over 200,000 nannies, caregivers, and housekeepers in the New York Metropolitan area keeping local families functioning and making all other work possible.

But New York's domestic workers are a workforce in crisis. They suffer low-pay, uncompensated long hours, punishment for taking sick leave, and a slew of various forms of mistreatment and isolation without any of the fair labor protections afforded to other more formalized workers.

Many domestics are also trafficked humans, living as slaves right in the home in the midst of neighbors who may have no idea what is going on. They need a Bill of Rights.

Domestic Workers United is an organization lobbying the New York State Legislature for just such a bill.

There are a number of ways you can support this bill.

- Write letters to your state legislators and other government officials.
- Attend rallies and other events supporting the bill.
- Raise awareness of the issue with your colleagues, neighbors and friends.
- Report any instances of possible domestic slavery to authorities.

More information about Domestic Workers United and the organization's effort to promote a Bill of Rights can be found at **[domesticworkersunited.org](http://domesticworkersunited.org)** ❖

### DOMESTIC WORKERS ARE VULNERABLE.

- Most workers are protected by federal law when they organize for better working conditions, but because domestic workers are specifically excluded from the National Labor Relations Act, they can be fired just for asking for a raise or for time off.
- The lack of legal protection creates steep barriers to negotiation for a domestic worker, who may be afraid to negotiate the terms of her employment, for fear she will be fired without warning.
- Domestic workers are extremely vulnerable to abuse, mistreatment, and labor violations because they usually work alone, behind closed doors and out of the public eye.

## FSN! Expands Resources Available on Meetup.com website

The Meetup sites have fostered a mini-revolution in social interactions. They uniquely bring together people with shared interests, not only in cyberspace, but also face to face, to meet one another in real life and actually DO things together.

While best noted for connecting people along the lines of recreational interests, Meetup has been useful as a tool for social justice groups as well. One feature that makes it especially suitable for this is the Message Board. Here we can offer news and announcements, discuss ideas, argue about strategy, and plan for events. The beauty of this is that unlike e-mails, this is a community bulletin board, there for all to view at their convenience and to contribute to if they wish.

Also, through the Meetup site, your personal email address as well as all other personal information, is never shared or displayed. Yet you may email others privately and they may contact you, with Meetup acting as the intermediary. Even the organizer and assistants are not privy to your personal information. The message board lends itself to being organized by subject, provides easy links between discussions, contains a search feature, and creates a permanent record. As replies are posted, those discussions come to the top of the queue so it is

easy to stay current.

You can track the entire board and receive an email notification whenever there is a new post, or you may choose to track just certain discussions. A discussion pinned to the top of the board is titled "INFO and LINKS". There you will find links to all the major discussion threads as well as instructions on how to use all the features of the message board itself.

Please also take look at our Files section. There we have accumulated a rich store of documents and information about human trafficking, the abolitionist movement and information from many other organizations about all aspects of this issue.

We strongly encourage all members to contribute their thoughts, questions, suggestions, or criticisms. It is always easy to go back and edit or delete anything you have written, so there is no need to be shy. This is the dynamic part of our web presence where we can actually communicate collectively and share with one another. Join us, and join in. ❀



## **The Slave Next Door— Human Trafficking and Slavery in America Today**

BY KEVIN BALES AND RON SOODALTER

Tatiana Omeltchenko has reviewed this riveting new book. To read her full review, please go to the Message Board of the FSN Meetup-site, and click on the link to “Book Reviews.”

“The Slave Next Door” is a new book by Kevin Bales and Ron Soodalter. This time Bales, the prominent scholar of modern-day slavery turns his eye to the situation with human trafficking in the US. His findings should make no one indifferent. Bales meticulously reconstructs three areas where traffick- ing occurs in the US: domestic servi- tude, agricultural labor and sex work. He tells some of the victims’ stories and attempts to uncover the psychology of the trafficker. He questions some of the US legal regulations which often, indi- rectly, contribute to the ease of turn- ing a person into a slave. Why is it that some types of visas allow foreign diplo- mats to bring in a domestic work-force without specifying the work conditions for these people? How is it that farm labor remains an industry where work- ers cannot unionize to fight for their rights? He also offers suggestions on how to counter this issue – for exam- ple, seeking government’s pressure on transnational corporations, pushing them towards better oversight of their

supply chains. Part 2 of the book con- tains a list of useful information ori- enting anti-trafficking activists in the existing US anti-slavery advocacy or- ganizations and federal agencies, and offering ideas on how to recognize and actively counter modern-day slavery in one’s own community. ❖

### **FSN! Starts Process to Become a Not For Profit Corporation**

We have decided to incorporate our- selves as a not-for-profit organization in order to further our legitimacy and progress our fundraising efforts.

The first stage of this process has in- volved research and filling out paper- work. As it turns out, this process is not as overwhelming as one might imag- ine. To achieve this status, one essen- tially needs an incorporator(s) who is a naturalized citizen 18 years of age or older, who signs the Certificate of In- corporation. The actual Certificate of Incorporation to be filed with the De- partment of State asks for the name of the corporation, its purpose, location of its office, names and addresses of the initial directors, as well as signature(s) of the incorporator(s).

The process actually takes much less time than expected and is much less complicated. The next step will be to file for a tax-exempt status. We are still in the process of gathering all neces- sary data to fill out the Certificate of Incorporation. So, stay tuned. ❖

## What Is In Your Hand?

Freedom Week has come and gone, a whirlwind of events: lectures, screenings, readings, discussions, and more. It brought together abolitionist organizations of many stripes. Folks from every part of the globe and all walks of life gathered in common purpose... to end modern-day slavery in this generation!

At the opening event, Kaign Christy of the International Justice Mission shared this instructive story. He was a middle aged attorney practicing law in Arizona, when on a trip to Uganda he first became aware of the human trafficking problem. He wanted to help but couldn't see how. He was inspired recalling this account from Exodus:

Moses is confronted by the burning bush and instructed that he is being drafted to liberate his people from bondage. He tries to decline, complaining that he is wholly inadequate to the task. He commands no army to confront the oppressor. He cannot speak well. No one will even believe him. He is a poor shepherd, 80 years old and infirm. G-d asks Moses: **“What is in your hand?”** Moses is

holding only his staff, the simple tool of his trade upon which he literally relies for support.

Of course as this quintessential story of liberation unfolds, Moses comes to use this very staff, imbued with divine power, to perform miracles and wonders including the dramatic parting of the Red Sea as he leads his people to freedom.

Kaign Christy had a law book in his hand. Today IJM is a worldwide organization helping victims and lending its expertise to nations trying to strengthen their criminal justice infrastructure. He was inspired to find a way to use what was in his hand.

None of us is completely empty handed. Not even the least among us. Some people have expertise, wealth, or influence. Others have time, talent or the power to persuade. Most of us hold more modest gifts: a warm smile, a strong spirit, or simply the capacity to care.

What is in YOUR hand? Do you hold that most essential quality... a willingness to help? ♣



**“Now is the operative word...**

**You don't need endless time and perfect conditions. Do it now. Do it today.  
Do it for twenty minutes and watch your heart start beating.”—Sam Ewing**