

FIGHT SLAVERY NOW

Established 2008

* Our Vision *

Human trafficking is a terrible crime which inflicts unspeakable horrors on men, women and children, depriving them of their most basic rights and needs – those of free human beings with unalienable dignity:

- A sense of Equality,
- The protection of Law,
- Freedom (the ability to make choices),
- Liberty (the right to be free from undue intrusion),
- the pursuit of Happiness, and
- Life, itself.

This crime takes many forms: pay-for-rape; forced labor in factories, fields, restaurants, and offices; domestic servitude; debt bondage; military conscription; and, other types of modern-day slavery.

By and large, the traffickers are profit driven business people who view their victims as commodities. They are very much the sort of people to whom the "banality of evil" tag would apply - were their chosen endeavors not so despicable.

It doesn't just happen somewhere "over there." Human trafficking is rampant in the United States, and right here in New York City.

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Our Mission

Human trafficking is a scourge in our midst. Sadly, New York is a major hub for this international multi-billion dollar criminal enterprise. Traffickers trade in human misery characterized by abuse and exploitation. Because of its low visibility, too little is being done to combat this crime against humanity. Becoming informed is the first step you can take in learning how to help.

Fight Slavery Now intends to stand up against this scourge by:

- Educating and promoting awareness of the existence of human trafficking abroad, in the United States and in New York.
- Educating the local public on the details of and processes of human trafficking and the variety of ways by which these crimes manifest themselves; and on actions they can take in case they spot it.
- Fostering widespread debate and discussion of the subject.
- Promoting action by communities, organizations, government agencies and individuals to do what they can to fight against these crimes, by small continuous, committed steps.
- Establishing connections with local organizations and agencies working in this field.

Let's Fight Slavery Now!

<p style="text-align:center">FIGHT SLAVERY NOW Founder and Organizer: <i>Steven Blumrosen</i> Assistant Organizers (In alphabetical order): <i>Avra Cohen, Max Mayer, Sarah Elizabeth Porter, Alma Subasic</i> Newsletter Editor-in-Chief: <i>Tommy Fernandez</i> Steering Committee: <i>Numerous individuals of conscience and courage</i></p>
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FOUNDER'S COLUMN:

You would be amazed how often the economics of slavery touches upon New York City life: bargain T-shirts, chocolate candy, meals in some fine restaurants, and teenage prostitutes on some of New York's tougher streets. Slavery and human trafficking is here, in ways and in numbers unimaginable.

My name is Steven Blumrosen. I founded this Meetup Group in December, 2008, when I came upon 400 people waiting to fight human trafficking.

I had been "editorial consultant" on *Slave Nation: How Slavery United the Colonies and Sparked the American Revolution* - a book about historical US slavery, how preserving the institution of slavery gave Virginia reason to join Massachusetts in 1776 in opposing King and Parliament, and the compromises the states made in 1787 to create the US Constitution and the Northwest Ordinance, which established the largest slave-free area then existing in the world. So I was aware of some aspects of the slave trade that resulted in kidnappings on the West Coast of Africa, horrific trans-Atlantic crossings through the Middle Passage, and sale into perpetual bondage to a master who owned the slave and the slave's descendants.

Modern day Slavery is usually not perpetual, though similar in its coercion, force, trickery and abuse. "Human trafficking" is a vast topic, spanning the globe and covering forced labor of all sorts, from rich people's domestics to tomato pickers in Florida, sweatshop workers in garment factories, and sex slaves (even in places where prostitution is legal as our member, Annemijn, taught us in her film). I was shocked to learn it still happens today, right here in New York City; and concerned that there was so much interest on meetup.com, without an organizer.

I paid the organizer fees and scheduled the first Meetup. Little did I realize that Meetup.com would automatically generate an announcement to everyone on the waiting list.

This meant I needed details and material for our webpage at <http://www.meetup.com/fight-slavery-now>. Fortunately, enough came together so we held our first Meetup in January, on a cold winter night, on the internet (using Justin.TV). The members insisted that the second Meetup be in person, with food, so we met at City Diner. In between some enterprising members organized a Meetup to see a film screening at Fordham University of “Very Young Girls.”

As you can see, this group provides a very supportive environment in which to participate. This tone was vigilantly carried forward during the first part of the year by assistant organizers, Max and Sarah. Now we have a Steering Committee, four assistant organizers (with the addition of Alma and Avra), and have held almost 20 meetups in Manhattan and Queens.

We are off to a busy start! And through our dedicated volunteers we’re becoming even more productive. Thanks everyone, and happy interdependence day.

Steven Blumrosen, July, 2009

FSN Now Established on the Web

Our Assistant Organizer, Max, has created a new website for us that will serve as a vital new face for our organization. Located at <http://site.fightslaverynow.org/>, this site will provide a mechanism for many more people to learn about the issue of human trafficking, to learn about our organization, and hopefully join us in our efforts to eradicate this scourge in our midst.

FIGHT SLAVERY NOW has two websites:

<http://site.fightslaverynow.org/> and <http://www.meetup.com/Fight-Slavery-Now/>

If you want to join our group, you can do it through our Meetup space! (<http://www.meetup.com/Fight-Slavery-Now/>). Feel free to check our discussions on the Message Board and our resource base in the files section. We look forward to hearing from you and seeing you at our meetings!”

First Major Success: Screening of “Dreams Die Hard”

Lessons on Presentations—How to Speak at the Podium

The fight against human trafficking still faces basic challenges of public awareness: convincing the public that this crime exists; explaining what it involves, and demonstrating that it can be fought. We feel it is important to raise awareness locally targeting places with high concentration of immigrant population and specific ethnic communities. Public libraries off Manhattan were our first choice for this mission.

On June 2, 2009 Fight Slavery Now held its first public event which included presentations on several elements of human trafficking, as well as a screening of the documentary “Dreams Die Hard,” a 30-minute piece which chronicles the lives of several victims trapped in slavery in the United States. The documentary is made by the major national anti-trafficking organization Free the Slaves <http://www.freetheslaves.net/>. The event was held at Queens Borough Public Library in Flushing.

It was a great first success (over 20-attendees) due to the combined dedication and talents of several FSN members. Tatiana made the arrangements for the event at the library, provided a copy of the film, Assistant organizers Sarah and Alma spoke about the horrible dynamics of modern day slavery and the purpose of our group. Asst. Organizer Max spoke about the important work of ECPAT (End Childhood Prostitution and Trafficking). The event was comprehensively marketed locally the weekend before by Alma and fellow asst. organizer Avra.

More than 20 people attended FSN's first public event on June 2 at the Queens Borough Public Library in Flushing. It featured four FSN presentations from organization members and was heavily promoted the previous weekend by two other organizers.



The event not only demonstrated FSN's effectiveness in public presentation, it afforded us the opportunity to learn important lessons about communicating to the public.

Here's some observations made at the presentation that will help us with future events: Activists should not assume that people understand the terms "human trafficking" and "modern-day slavery" the way that we do. It is very important, even in the introduction, to start carefully defining the terms that we operate in.

It is good to structure the presentation into clearly identifiable information segments: one person talks about international trafficking; another about the national situation, while a third could address the issue locally. Or, the presentation could be split into the different types: labor, sex and child trafficking. Presenters have to be careful about the subject of statistics. Statistics in this area are notoriously poor, but we need to keep track of recent reports and books. Don't assume from the very beginning that people in the audience don't know anything and that we are there to educate them. Provide ample time for questions—and equally important, comments and suggestions—even if the main presentations end up being shorter.

Lessons on Leafleting—How to Speak on the Street

One factor behind the success of the June 2 event at Queens Borough Public Library was the dedicated and well-thought out, leafleting and community marketing of the event by Avra and Alma. Communicating from sidewalks will always be a key element of all our initiatives. There's a lot that can be learned about doing this right.

Our observations of successful leafleting include the following insights:

- Vetting the venue is important. For example, in the case of the Queens Library for this event, it is not a part of the New York Public Library System, but rather an unaffiliated private non-profit corporation. For any activist organization, it pays to be thoroughly cognizant of the nature of all partners, alliances and venues with which we associate ourselves.
- Confirm details with the venue. Making sure that everyone is on the same page helps keep relationships with different groups and venues on sure footing. "It would be painfully self-defeating," Avra says, "to alienate either our host or our audience before we've barely begun."

- The Community needs to be respected and understood, and that means thorough research. “We are interlopers,” he says. “We are easily perceived as ‘do-gooders’ coming to lecture immigrants about problems in their community.” Success requires first-hand knowledge of the communities as well as scouting of their potential resources. For example, the neighborhood near the Queens library, Avra discovered, offered a church, a synagogue and a school. “All of these places could have been valuable keys to connecting with our audience,” he says.

Success at leafleting and sidewalk marketing is key for us maximizing our limited resources. We obviously will continue to learn and get better in these efforts with practice. Using our Meetup message board is also important for sharing information, ideas and to encourage each other as we master these essential elements of our awareness campaigns.

More FSN Screenings Scheduled for July

Following on the heels of our initial success in screening “**Dreams Die Hard**” at the Flushing Branch of the Queens Library, two more screenings of this film have been scheduled in July at different branches, Jackson Heights Branch in Jackson Heights of course, and Langston Hughes Branch in Corona.

Saturday, July 18th, 11 AM

Langston Hughes branch, Queens Library, 11 AM
100-01 Northern Boulevard
Corona, NY 11368
718-651-1100

For more information, go to: <http://www.meetup.com/Fight-Slavery-Now/calendar/10786830/>

Tuesday, July 28th, 6 p.m.

Jackson Heights branch, Queens Library, 6 PM
35-51 81 Street
Jackson Heights, NY 11372
(718) 899-2500

For more information, go to: <http://www.meetup.com/Fight-Slavery-Now/calendar/10786875/>

FSN New Graphics Now Available

Thanks to graphic artist Janna Passuntino, FSN has a powerful set of iconic new graphics that communicate the message and resolve of FSN. All of them follow the theme of “Break the Chains!” and are available on FSN’s Website. Many thanks to Janna for her generosity.

FSN Views TAPOLOGO Human Rights Film Festival

On June 23rd, at least ten members of FSN were at the Human Rights Watch International Film Festival to attend a screening of the movie TAPOLOGO. The film tells the moving story of sex workers in South Africa, who have turned tragedy into a tool for empowerment. These women live in Freedom Park, a squatter camp situated in the Northwest that accommodates a migrate workforce to mine the world’s single largest source of platinum. They service the needs of the male miners as a means of basic survival. However, a group of former sex workers living with HIV have created a

network called Tapologo and have learnt to be home-based care- workers, joining in solidarity to care for others in the community living with HIV. As we learn each woman's story, we come to understand how she herself was transformed—from someone who had lost hope into someone who decided to help others in the same situation.

Our FSN representatives got the chance to distribute some of our literature, meet with fellow fighters against slavery, and of course gain from the moving stories portrayed in the movie. They also got the chance to listen to one of the film makers speak after the screening. The event took place at the Film Society of Lincoln Center Walter Reade Theater on 65th street between Broadway and Amsterdam.

FSN to Launch Seal of Freedom Program

The forces of consumer economics are among the most powerful weapons New Yorkers have in fighting slavery. To tap into the power of enlightened consumers, FSN is launching a “Seal of Freedom” program. Periodically throughout the year, FSN will release lists of products, be they apparel, food, or other services or items, that FSN has researched and declared slavery free. We will look into the companies employment practices, both here and overseas. We will look into their supply chain, both here and overseas, and so on. In this way, consumers in New York will have one more option for voicing their approval of manufacturers and retailers that go the extra mile in the fight against slavery. If you know of any products worth noting, please feel free to alert us via FSN’s Meetup Message Board.

On Human Trafficking Statistics

Data on human trafficking is notoriously hard to come by due to the insidiousness of the activity. These crimes are difficult to track and document. However, just because a crime is hard to track doesn’t mean that the crime doesn’t exist.

To shed some light on the subject, some organizations and agencies have put together at least preliminary figures to illustrate the range and minimum depth of the problem.

Here are some notable resources and sites on the subject:

U.S. Department of State 2009 Trafficking In Persons Report
(Available on the FSN Meetup Website)

A comprehensive report on the efforts of 175-countries, including the U.S., to fight human trafficking.

<http://www.meetup.com/Fight-Slavery-Now/files/>

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
(Data courtesy of PBS.org)

Explores the different ranges of numbers, globally, collected on human trafficking by various agencies: ranging from 700,000 to 4 million per year.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/slaves/etc/stats.html>

Family Violence Prevention Fund

<http://www.ncdsv.org/images/ForcedLaborTraffickingCommonARoundWorld.pdf>

Includes estimates from International Labor Office of roughly 2.45 million trafficked each year globally.

More links are available on the FSN Meetup Website.

Book Review of “A Crime So Monstrous” By EB Skinner

To facilitate our efforts in promoting awareness of human trafficking, FSN organizers have decided to periodically read and review important books on the subject. Last month, Asst. Org. Alma Subasic reviewed “A Crime So Monstrous” by E.B. Skinner.

The full text of her review is available at:

<http://files.meetup.com/1337582/A%20Crime%20So%20Monstrous.pdf>

What follows are some highlights of her comprehensive review of the book.

The author (E. Benjamin Skinner) defines a slave as, “*a human being who is forced to work through fraud or threat of violence for no pay beyond subsistence.*” He starts out by journaling his trip to Haiti. He argues that if we assume that the center of the moral universe is the UN Secretariat in Manhattan, one will need only 5 hours from there to the streets of Haiti where one can negotiate a sale of a child. *Benavil* is the word for *courtier*, a broker who holds an official real estate license and calls himself an employment agent. Two thirds of his sales are child slaves. “*The average fifteen-year old child slave is 1.5 inches shorter and 40 pounds lighter than the average free fifteen year-old. They may have burns from cooking for their overseer’s family over an open fire; or scars from beatings, sometimes in public, with the martinet, electrical cables, or wood switches. They wear faded, oversized castoffs, and walk barefoot, in sandals or, if they are lucky, oversized shoes. If you arrive in the afternoon, you may see their tiny necks and delicate skulls straining as they tote five-gallon buckets of water on their heads while navigating broken glass and shattered roads. Or you might see them picking up Their overseer’s smartly dressed children from school.*”

In his book, Mr. Skinner then goes on to explore the lives of other slaves around the world, including those in the Sudan, Romania, Moldova and India. He also explores the burgeoning initiatives of the United States to fight against human trafficking, and the challenges. The book also explores some of the ongoing mistakes made by the U.S. in the fight.

To learn more about this book, we encourage you to read all of Alma’s excellent review, and then buy a copy of the book itself.

FSN Evolving to Help You Make a Difference

Thanks to many brave New Yorkers, Fight Slavery Now has reached an important milestone: over 70 members, representing a variety of different talents, resources, professions and experiences.

In order to help all of you contribute all that you can to this cause, FSN is evolving its structure to improve accountability, flexibility and effectiveness.

In addition to Founder and Organizer Steven Blumrosen, FSN now has four Assistant Organizers: Avra Cohen, Max Mayer, Sarah Elizabeth Porter and Alma Subasic.

The organization also has an informal, but active and growing Steering Committee of roughly 10 regulars who meet periodically at Djerdan Restaurant on 221 West 38th Street. This group meets and discusses projects, strategies and plans for FSN activities.

We are also reorganizing the Message Board to make information easier to access and to promote regular discussion.

Finally, to develop our identity and foster a shared vision for the group, we have launched this periodic Newsletter.

Now, all we need is you. We need your insights, your ideas, your expertise, any time and resources you can spare, and your dedication.

We need you to help us generate ideas for more projects, more strategies and more initiatives. You can make any suggestions or comments by e-mailing FSN's organizers or using the Meetup message board.

As projects emerge, we will start processes by which you can vote in favor of these efforts, so you can help us lead and shape FSN's vision.

We also invite you to join our informal Steering Committee, aka The Djerdan Gang, to eat good food and to discuss organization issues near and dear to our hearts.

Thanks again for helping us make a difference.

Please remember that if you spot instances of human trafficking, or want to find out about anti-trafficking services in your area, call National Human Trafficking Hotline: 1-888-3737-888. Your concerns may be reported anonymously.



Join us at www.meetup.com/fight-slavery-now