

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is the fifth in an occasional series of features about peace and social justice issues in international education. The first article, "Leaving Light Footprints," about sustainability in international education, was published in the May/June 2012 issue; the second article, "Transforming Lives" about refugees, was published in the November/December 2012 issue; the third article, "Intimate Proximity: The Human Face of Genocide" was published in the January/February 2013 issue; the fourth article, "Peace Pathways" about conflict resolution, was published in the May/June 2013 issue.

STOP TRAFFIC!

HUMAN TRAFFICKING and enslavement can take countless forms—from Eastern European women trafficked into Western Europe for the sex trade to domestic servants from Southeast Asia exploited in the Middle East to Brazilians enslaving their own countrymen to work in charcoal production.

Up to 27 million men, women, and children are victims of human trafficking at any one time, and no part of the world is immune, according to a U.S. State Department report on the situation.

"It's the human rights issue of our time," says Mohamed Mattar, executive director of The Protection Project, based at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington, D.C. "Everywhere you go, it's there. How can you ignore it?"

At a wide range of universities, faculty, staff, students, and alumni are joining in the fight against human trafficking internationally.

Students "need to understand why a young teenage girl is willing to sell herself to protect her family from the spell of voodoo if she is of African origin, or protect her neighbor from being killed by the mafia if she is from Eastern Europe, and

this requires cultural awareness and a basic understanding of how things can be different in different parts of the world," says Sheetal Agarwal-Shah, an adjunct faculty member in the Department of Behavioral and Social Sciences at Webster University's Leiden Campus in the Netherlands.

Last year, Webster created the Bijlmer Project, giving graduate counseling students pursuing master's degrees an opportunity to work with women and men who have been trafficked to the Netherlands to work in the sex trade from places such as Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Colombia, and Brazil.

One unexpected finding for students has been that "some of the women and men are in their late 30s and early 40s and have fallen prey to traffickers due to the circumstances in their home country," Agarwal-Shah says.

In Asia, students involved with The Protection Project have been gathering information about domestic workers and manual laborers. Men, women, and children, primarily from South Asia, are brought in to work in the Middle East. While the workers may have employment contracts, those often aren't respected, and the workers are exploited and sometimes sexually abused, says



Faculty and students
try to prevent and heal
wounds of one of the
greatest atrocities
our world faces—
human trafficking.

BY SUSAN LADIKA

Elaine Panter, director of programs and planning for The Protection Project.

“The economy needs domestic servants and it’s also become a status issue to have domestic servants,” says Panter. For those doing the hard work, “often they’re prepared to put up with unfair situations because they’re so desperate” about the economic situations in their homelands.

“Severe” trafficking is defined as instances in which children under the age of 18 are forced into the commercial sex trade, or “the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt, bondage, or slavery,” according to the U.S. Trafficking Victims Protection Act.



Silvia Scarpa

For universities, efforts to fight trafficking can come from work in the field, scholarly research and writings on the situation, or teaching students about the scope of the problem so they can go out and share what they’ve learned with others.

Silvia Scarpa, an adjunct assistant political science professor at John Cabot University in Rome, teaches on human rights, trafficking, and slavery and wants students to “know this exists in countries where they live.” Along with trafficking for the sex trade or labor, the label has been extended to include things such

as child sex tourism, child soldiers, illegal adoptions, trafficking in human organs, and religious slavery.

Many students come to John Cabot to study abroad for a semester before heading back home. By being exposed to these issues, they can return home and organize conferences and help educate friends and family about the problems. “I don’t want them to leave the course with the idea nothing can be done,” says Scarpa.

Protecting the Innocent

The Protection Project, a human rights institute focuses on human rights issues around the globe. Mattar, who has headed the program since 2005, has spent his career advising governments on creating anti-trafficking laws and complying with international human right standards.

The Protection Project’s work has included such things as helping the Iraqi government pass comprehensive human trafficking legislation in line with international standards, including protection for victims if they committed a crime in the context of being trafficked, Panter says. It also has worked with non-governmental organizations in the Middle East on public awareness campaigns to increase visibility of the problem. And it has helped schools such as Alexandria University in Egypt and Beirut Arab University in Lebanon establish legal clinics so students can get firsthand experience assisting vulnerable members of society, such as trafficking victims.

SAIS students also have been directly involved in the work, heading to the Philippines—a country of origin for trafficking victims—and Kuwait, a destina-

Students at John Cabot University in Rome during a special week of events about human trafficking and contemporary slavery



tion country for these victims, to do field research on trafficking.

Kristoff Kohlhagen, who graduated this spring, traveled to Kuwait to interview government officials, members of nongovernmental organizations, and others about the legal situation of domestic workers from the Philippines and the challenges they may face.

"It's a kind of strange patronage system," Kohlhagen says, with the workers sponsored by their employers to be allowed to enter the country. Often the sponsors take away the workers' passports. There may be allegations of mistreatment, and the workers will run away. "A system like that is open to some abuses."

The students researched different aspects of the situation and are compiling a report on their findings and recommending best practices.

Kohlhagen, who previously worked with former child soldiers and youth impacted by the war in northern Uganda, says he's always had an interest in human rights and "protection for people in tough circumstances."

He now is applying for jobs with NGOs and media outlets, trying to put his experiences to work.

Law Students in the Field— At Home and Abroad

Another school with boots-on-the-ground efforts is Regent University in Virginia Beach, Virginia, through its law school's Center for Global Justice, Human Rights, and the Rule of Law. The center was created in 2010 because "the law is a tool that can be powerfully utilized for the oppressed and marginalized," says Ashleigh Chapman, the center's former administrative director.

Each summer, students fan out across the world to put their knowledge to work in internship programs. This year they're doing everything from working in Mexico to help change laws and policies regarding child trafficking victims to working with a new anti-trafficking initiative at the Kansas State Department for Children and Families. "They really pour their legal degrees into the efforts in unique ways," Chapman says.

Minyeon Monica Ryou, a 2013 Regent law grad, spent the summer of 2011 in South Korea working with the Advocates for Public Interest Law, which deals with human rights issues for refugees, including trafficking victims. "A lot of people in Korea know extremely little about human rights issues, especially for refugees."

As an intern, she was involved in educational and public awareness campaigns. "One thing I realized was that public ignorance and apathy were real dangers to the lives and rights of refugees."



Anastasios Kamoutsas

During the summer of 2012, Regent law student Anastasios Kamoutsas interned with the A21 Campaign (Abolishing Injustice in the 21st Century) in Thessaloniki, Greece, which assists women being trafficked into the country from Turkey for the sex industry.

Many of the victims come from the Balkans and the former Soviet Union, and might have been sold into trafficking by their families, or told they would work as a waitress in Greece, and instead be forced into the sex trade, Kamoutsas says.

Through that experience, he developed a passion for the work to combat human trafficking. Kamoutsas



now is studying for the Florida Bar exam and plans to return to his hometown of Miami to work at the Miami-Dade Office of the State Attorney on an anti-trafficking task force.

A number of students have headed to India for internships with the Freedom Firm, which works to combat the overwhelming problem of girls forced into prostitution. An estimated half million girls are held in that situation—either deceived by promises of being employed in a good job or being sold by a relative into sexual slavery.

Evan Henck, a 2007 Regent graduate, had his first experience working with the Freedom Firm as an intern in 2005. He's been employed by the organization since 2008 and now serves as Western region director, overseeing rescue, restoration, and justice projects from its office in Pune Maharashtra.

Each year, Freedom Firm's staff is involved in at least 10 raids, designed to rescue girls from their lives

From her time at Regent, Ryou has developed a passion for fragile families and those with absentee parents, and hopes to use her legal skills working at an international adoption agency or with a state social services department.

During the summer of 2012, Regent law student Anastasios Kamoutsas interned with the

Minyeon Monica Ryou (in the blue shirt), a 2013 Regent University law grad, spent the summer of 2011 in South Korea working with the Advocates for Public Interest Law.

George Fox University student Jennifer Shaheed stands in a ditch she dug. Team members installed a new water line at a local daycare serving the dump community as part of their service activities working with professor Kelly Chang.

as sex slaves. Staff members help oversee the well-being of those who are rescued, and work to connect them with job placement services, educational opportunities, and counseling, says Henck. They also follow up on the court cases brought against brothel keepers, pimps and traffickers.

“These young girls experience trauma and deception that leads them down a long road to get to recovery, and during all that time, there are very few people who stand with them and advocate for them in their place of weakness,” Henck says.



Helping Girls and Women Learn New Skills

One student who feels moved to help address the plight of those who are exploited is Audriana Blackwell, who will graduate in 2014 from Western Connecticut State University. She'll spend this fall in a study abroad program in Bangkok, Thailand, attending classes at Thammasat University and working with NightLight International, which does outreach to those in the commercial sex trade; provides shelter, counseling, and other necessities to those who flee; and offers them employment opportunities making jewelry.

Although she's never been to Thailand, Blackwell says she feels pulled to that country, which is a hot spot for trafficking: “I've had a heart for the victims of human trafficking for quite a while.”

Blackwell, who is majoring in interdisciplinary social science with a concentration on global studies, says she hopes to put her experiences in Thailand to use in her future career. “I can't imagine living my life without

trying to do something to stop it (the sex trade).”

Other U.S. colleges and universities are giving their students an opportunity for a firsthand look at the problem of trafficking.

At Arcadia University in Glenside, Pennsylvania, faculty librarian Michelle Reale took 24 students to Syracuse, Italy, over spring break to study immigration, migration, and social justice in Sicily.

The group was based at Arcadia University's Mediterranean Center of Arts and Sciences, and spent time walking the city, observing society, and keeping journals of their thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

Students were surprised to learn many of those they passed on the street each day had been trafficked from Africa and Asia. “This was a real eye opener for my students,” Reale says. “You can't talk about immigration and migration without this aspect.”

Lori Halverson-Wente, a speech instructor at Rochester Community and Technical College in Rochester, Minnesota, leads a group of students and community members on a service-learning trip each year to Cambodia. Much has focused on increasing educational opportunities for girls in rural areas by doing projects such as building toilets in order to help girls remain in school.

“Education is a possible way to stop human trafficking” in a country where the problem is prevalent, Halverson-Wente says.

On a recent trip the group visited a shelter supported by the Somaly Mam Foundation, which works to end slavery, free victims, and empower the survivors. At the shelter, the group visited girls who were learning to sew. They wound up having a private session trying on and purchasing dresses the girls had made. “It helped us see the humanity that we share,” Halverson-Wente says.

At home, the students launched an effort called Sewing for Sustainability, in which they sell products that were made by girls and women who work with three different organizations in Cambodia. By teaching these girls and women skills that can help them establish their own businesses, “we're decreasing the likelihood they would be snagged into human trafficking,” Halverson-Wente says.

Students from George Fox University in Newberg, Oregon also are working on a project to bring hope to girls in Nicaragua.

Kelly Chang, an assistant professor of psychology, has visited Villa Esperanza (Village of Hope) outside Managua, Nicaragua, for five years. This year she brought nine students with her, where they helped provide psychological assessments for the 21 girls living at the villa.



Psychology professor Kelly Chang hugs a child named Miurel at the Villa Esperanza (Village of Hope) outside Managua, Nicaragua.

On her first trip, with a church mission group, Chang recalls bringing some of the girls to a hotel pool to give them an opportunity to play. Taking them home to the dump, “we experienced the smells and the vultures and all the stray dogs, so dirty and mangy, and the way the men looked at these girls. It was really hard.”

Villa Esperanza provides food, clothing, education, and mentoring services to those who have been rescued from that environment. When Chang and her group from George Fox visit, they examine the indicators of the girls’ mental health. Although they don’t provide a diagnosis, they look for signs of depression and anxiety, and in one case identified a girl with learning disabilities, who then received special services. A psychologist comes in three times a week to work with the girls.

Faculty at universities often talk about being in an academic bubble. “It’s so nice to break out of the bubble. So nice to do something in the real, needy, messy world,” Chang says. At the same time, her students get a chance to see that the efforts they make can help improve the lives of others.

The girls, who range in age from 8 to 20, had lived with their families at the local garbage dump. In some cases they had been pressed by their families into having sex with the garbage truck drivers so the families would have the first chance to pick through the trash, which the families use to sustain themselves.

One of the children that George Fox University professor Kelly Chang and her students helped in Nicaragua.



Ameena Bossier, one of professor Kelly Chang’s students at George Fox University, is shown here in front of the mural she designed to encourage girls rescued from exploitation in Nicaragua.

TOP: COURTESY OF KELLY CHANG; MIDDLE: COURTESY OF KELLY CHANG/SIERRA DONOHUE; BOTTOM: FELICIA NIEMANN

Regent University student Keila Molina in Mexico during the summer of 2011; she participated in a project with the university's Center for Global Justice, Human Rights, and the Rule of Law.



Trafficking Affects Everyday Citizens—Without Them Realizing It

Educators also are working to show human trafficking and enslavement aren't just distant notions that affect people hundreds or thousands of miles away. Their labor can be found in the products Americans use each day.

This summer, Mark Ensalaco, associate professor and director of human rights research at the University of Dayton, traveled to Brazil with Catholic Relief Services as part of their Scholars in Global Solidarity program to study sex trafficking, as well the role of human trafficking in the global supply chain.

Catholic Relief Services has been working for decades in Brazil to eradicate slavery. An estimated 25,000 to 40,000 people in the country are slaves, and about 4,500 are freed each year. Poor and landless Brazilians are lured to other areas for work, and then forced to labor as slaves. One of the keys to breaking the pattern is providing employment opportunities in the regions these workers are from so they aren't enticed to other locations.

One goal of the Scholars in Global Solidarity program is to raise awareness of slave labor in the supply chain, such as the use of slaves in Brazil's charcoal industry, which then is used in steel manufacturing in the United States, Ensalaco says.

The World Bank ranked Brazil in 2011 as the world's sixth-largest economy in terms of GDP. The impact is huge "if just a small percentage of the GDP is sustained by slave labor in the supply chain," Ensalaco says.

The group hopes to raise awareness of the issue with Americans, and aims to assist groups to combat sex trafficking during the 2014 (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) FIFA World Cup and 2016 Summer Olympics, both of which will be held in Brazil.

"I believe academic institutions are actors in the global human rights movement," Ensalaco says.

In her class at John Cabot University, Scarpa talks to students about things such as the chocolate they eat, and how the cocoa that's used might come from cocoa plantations in Africa where youngsters are exploited and enslaved.

Such lessons allow students to decide whether to continue to eat chocolate, or what kind they might consume.

Scarpa says human trafficking and exploitation are contemporary problems that stem from "issues that we have historically not properly resolved."

But she has found that with the current generation of students, "they have this idea we can bring change if we want."

Giving a Voice to the Powerless

Benjamin Lawrance, who holds the Conable Chair in International Studies at Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, New York, and is an expert on comparative and contemporary slavery and trafficking, has worked to give voice to the powerless.

His focus is particularly on Africa, and he's served as an expert witness for more than 130 asylum cases involving West Africans in North America, Western

FROM INTERNSHIPS TO IMPACT

AT WEBSTER UNIVERSITY in Leiden, the Netherlands, the Bijlmer Project, which was created as a means to provide internships for students, has become a way for them to see they can have an impact on the world.

The students at the Leiden campus are working with CARF (Christian Aid and Resources Foundation), a nongovernmental organization focused on ending human trafficking, particularly from Africa to the European Union.

Students do such things as collect sociodemographic data about the victims to try to identify factors that led to their trafficking; identify symptoms of mental health issues, such as depression and posttraumatic stress disorder; and try to determine the services they need. This information can be used to help develop an intervention

program for victims, says Sheetal Agarwal-Shah, an adjunct faculty member in the Department of Behavioral and Social Sciences at Webster.

Agarwal-Shah's own interest in the subject grew from her involvement with PSI (Population Services International). She worked in India, setting up and managing the organization's first helpline in Asia dealing with HIV/AIDS and sexual issues.

Through that she saw the vulnerability of commercial sex workers to HIV/AIDS and "this is where I saw the impact of trafficking firsthand, in the brothels of Mumbai."

The hope for Webster students is that "associating and working with the project can help them be global foot soldiers for this issue," Agarwal-Shah says.

It already has had an impact on Pauliina Pirskanen, a psychology major from Finland who will graduate in December. "I read about human trafficking for the first time when I was 8 or 9, and the experience had a profound effect on me. I was deeply saddened by the fact that children and young women get lured into something as brutal as sex slavery."

Through her involvement in the project, Pirskanen says she now talks with tourists and friends about the role human trafficking plays in prostitution. "I don't want to preach with anger, but to open up the topic for general discussion."

She also has found that "instead of talking and thinking about how terrible human trafficking is, the discussion is more solution oriented. Although this doesn't eliminate the difficulty in facing the reality, it gives a sense of genuine hope."

SHEETAL AGARWAL-SHAH



The Bilmer Project, a nonprofit grassroots collaborative project between Webster University (Leiden, The Netherlands) and the Christian Aid & Resources Foundation (CAFR) situated in the Bijlmer (Amsterdam Zuid Oost) received funds from an auction of student artwork to help support its mission of working together to address the psychosocial needs of victims of human trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation and to deal with the larger issue of modern day slavery.

Colleen Faherty, a student at Seton University School of Law and president of the law school's Dispute Resolution Society, took this image of two Zanzibarian children; Seton Hall professor of law Bernard Freamon takes students to Zanzibar every winter to help them understand human trafficking's connection to slavery in the past.

Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Often women and young boys have been trafficked into these countries.

Yet many cases of coerced labor occur within a country, or they occur in a subregion, such as boys trafficked to the Ivory Coast from other African nations to work on cocoa plantations, Lawrance says.

While sex trafficking tends to get the most attention from officials and the media, the majority of cases around the world involve labor exploitation, Lawrance says.

Andrew Gardner, an associate professor of anthropology at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington, focuses his research on workers from South Asia who migrate to the Gulf States to work as domestic servants or laborers.

"There are huge problems there involving millions and millions of labor migrants," he says. In many cases their passports are taken from them, and if they are mistreated, they lack access to the justice system.

Yet Gardner says, "I don't feel they fit squarely into the definition of trafficking."

These laborers are generally brought into the region through a "sponsorship" or "kafala" system, in which an employer sponsors their migration into the country. While some in the region want the system to be abolished, others say, "this is how we do things. This is how we've always done things. This is how we want to continue to do things," Gardner says.

Gardner now is completing work on a report paid for by the Qatari government on the situation of migrants in that country. Much of the research was done by a team of students from Qatar University.

He says the sponsorship program should be overhauled, and migrants should be free to change employers. The aim is to "improve the experience of millions of migrants coming to this region of the world seeking a better life."

Countries Ban Together to Prevent and Punish Trafficking Crimes

In 2000 the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime was signed in Palermo, Italy. The convention was supplemented by two protocols: the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air. The first of these protocols is sometimes referred to as the Trafficking Protocol and more usually as

the Palermo Protocol. It took effect in 2003, and 117 countries have signed on.

In the Persian Gulf states like many of regions of the world, human trafficking is a crime, but enforcement is lacking, Gardner says.

It's a similar situation in West Africa, where almost every country has laws on the books against trafficking and has stepped up spending on anti-trafficking efforts. But if someone is arrested for the crime, "it's very rare to have any successful prosecutions," Lawrance says.



In many instances, those who head to the Gulf region from places like India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Nepal make the decision based on "misinformation and disinformation," and are told one thing about the kind of job they'll have, the pay they'll receive, or the kind of conditions they'll work in, and then find something very different when they arrive, Gardner says. Often they wind up in labor camps owned by those who have brought them into the country, and they have no choice deciding where they live.



A group of Seton Hall University law students outside of the Zanzibar House of Representatives.

Despite all the public attention, “it’s an ongoing problem. There are probably more people enslaved than ever,” Lawrance says.

“Much of human trafficking is run by organized crime,” says Louise Shelley, who directs the Terrorism, Transnational Crime, and Corruption Center at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. “Organized crime always needs corruption to function.”

It’s a particular problem in countries where dictators have taken the country’s natural resources, leaving less money for social services, which leads to the likelihood of more trafficking. At the same time it needs the complicity of government officials, border agents, and law enforcement for it to flourish, she says.

Her interest was triggered while studying in the former Soviet Union shortly after its collapse. It went from being an area with limited prostitution and trafficking to becoming one of the global centers. She would see women forced into prostitution, “with a goon sitting next to them.”

Despite the laws, she doesn’t anticipate the situation will improve. Climate change will uproot more people and conflicts continue to disrupt societies. “Women suffer disproportionately in crises,” Shelley says.

And contemporary slavery and exploitation have strong ties to the past. Bernard Freamon, a professor of law at Seton Hall in Newark, New Jersey, works to make the connection alive, taking students to Zanzibar each winter. The island became a major slave trading center in the 1800s.

His first trip to Zanzibar, which is a semiautonomous part of Tanzania, was on vacation in the 1980s. “The history of slavery and slave trade in Zanzibar is palpable.”

Colleen Faherty, who will graduate with a law degree from Seton Hall in 2014, first went on the trip to Zanzibar in 2011–2012, and returned as a student assistant in 2012–2013.

She was “profoundly impacted” by her experiences on the island. Perhaps most moving was a visit to Christ Church, built on the site of a slave market. The students saw the slave chambers, which resembled a low-ceilinged wine cellar, where slaves were held before being transported. And the altar of the chapel was marked by a marble circle marking the location of the original slave whipping post.

After graduation, Faherty wants to become a prosecutor and wants to remain involved in working to combat human trafficking, “which is not well-known or understood.”

“Most people think we have abolished slavery and we haven’t,” Freamon says.

He sees today’s efforts to combat the problem similar to those of the nineteenth century. Back then, the focus was on donating money to groups trying to fight it, public education campaigns, and shaming the governments involved. “Much like slavery in the nineteenth century, only well-educated, intelligent opinion makers are part of the population that is really aware of this.”

Freamon sees growing awareness in North America and Europe, and little awareness in places like Africa and South Asia, which has seen much forced economic migration. “It may be you have to deal with poverty before you can deal with trafficking.” **IE**

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