Human Trafficking and the Modern-Day Slave Trade in Southeast Asia

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

By

Katrina Bieker

Thesis Advisor

Mr. Gerald Waite

Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana
December 2008

Expected date of graduation:

July 2009
Abstract

Slavery has flourished in the modern world because of the growing global economy. In the name of producing cheap products and under the guise of free market capitalism, slavery continues to be profitable. In addition, the ease of transportation between countries makes it much easier for slaves to be smuggled between countries and easier for tourists to frequent sex slaves. Furthermore, modernization continues to adversely affect impoverished people because governments have turned to choose economic advancement over sustainable livelihoods. Especially in Southeast Asia, the government emphasizes cash crops, and because of this, traditional kinship systems are dissolving. Since individuals have to compete on a global scale to sell their goods, they are willing to sell for low prices and then cannot help their extended families in times of hardship and must resort to desperate measures, including slavery. This paper provides information as to why slavery occurs and proposes ways in which governments, non-governmental organizations, and the average person can work together to eradicate slavery during this generation’s lifetime.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisor, Mr. Gerald Waite for giving me the opportunity to experience Vietnamese culture and also for his guidance in making this thesis the best it could be. I would also like to thank Nicole Knisley for convincing me to travel with her to London, where I first learned about modern-day slavery.
"I assume you come from a place where there is an idea that humans have rights... Why does no one care about our slavery here?"

-Muong, a Dinka man and slave

"Still, this is a fight we must win. Global abolition must remain a priority until the last slave is freed. Because slavery is a hidden crime, the greatest challenge is to raise consciousness, to expose it in all forms. When Americans feel it in their gut, they will understand that ending this crime so monstrous is not a political issue; it is an American imperative, and a human responsibility. This is why there are still modern-day abolitionists. And this is why the rest of us should join them."

-Richard Holbrooke
Introduction—Description and Definitions of Modern-Day Slavery

Although slavery has been abolished everywhere, it still exists in every country in the world. With an estimated 27 million slaves worldwide, more than were transported during the entirety of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, modern-day slavery is a horrendous affliction that touches every industry on a daily basis and, by extension, every human life. With so many victims, one would think that human trafficking would be more visible in a world so focused on human rights. The truth is that modern slavery is much more hidden than the old form of slavery talked about in schools, and fighting this form of slavery is even harder than it was during the nineteenth century. The world has seen rapid population increases and radical economic changes since World War II. When occurring together, these incidents contribute to the devaluation of human lives. Because these socio-economic changes are combined with the profitability and ease of transportation, human trafficking and slavery will only continue to grow as societies continue to turn a blind eye. Adding to the difficulty of identifying and prosecuting cases of human trafficking and slavery, arguments on the exact definition of slavery continue to rage between governments, organizations and scholars. While combating modern-day slavery has been growing more and more popular in recent years, much more work needs to be done before slavery can become eliminated.

The form of slavery that was abolished in the 1800s is strikingly different from the slavery that exists in modern times. Long-term relationships have ceased to exist between the slaveholder and the slave, and a surplus of potential slaves has made human lives more disposable. The importance of race has been replaced by
the importance of profits. Although profits have always been the major driving force of slavery, the subjugation of the "other" was very important in old slavery. Modern slaveholders have ignored these race barriers, and they are more willing to enslave people from their own race, cultural, and religious backgrounds. Today, the common denominator among slaves tends to be poverty, lack of education, and desperation. Seeking out people who fit these categories to take advantage of, slaveholders "are rapidly adapting an ancient practice to the new global economy" (Bales 2000, 11). A slave in the American South in 1850 might make his holder a 5% return each year. Contrast this to the 50% to 800% return per year a slaveholder could make on a slave now, and the profitability of slavery is undeniable. While slaves were bought and sold through the means of legal documents in the 1800s, slavery today is illegal in every country and slaveholders are not keen to express any sort of ownership. Instead of being entirely dependent on their holder for basic necessities, slaves are made to provide money for their own subsistence. Slaveholders habitually take this out of their "wages" and invent charges to create more debt for the slaves. This causes an ever-growing debt to ensure that the slave will be bonded to the slaveholder for as long as he or she is deemed profitable.

Since World War II, the world has gone through rapid changes that have unfortunately added to the growth of slavery. The rapid increase of the world's population has caused there to be a surplus of poverty-stricken people who are willing to do whatever is necessary to make money, even if it means selling their children or themselves into slavery. In the 63 years since the end of WWII, the population has tripled from about 2 billion in 1945 to over 6 billion in 2008, and
"the greatest growth has been in exactly those countries were slavery is most prevalent today" (Bales 2000, 12). For example, in Laos, 41% of the population is under 15 and the population growth rate is 2.344%, which is very high compared to the United State’s 0.883% growth and 20.1% of the population under 15 (CIA World Fact Book “Laos” 2008; “United States”). Children tend to be more susceptible to slavery than adults because slaveholders focus their attentions on the most vulnerable of people. Because they have such a large percentage of their populations under the age of 15, those countries experiencing population surges are more prone to slavery.

In conjunction with population increases, global economic and social changes have strongly attributed to the rise of modern-day slavery. In Southeast Asia, traditional methods of sustaining a family have been replaced by a much more Western-individualistic culture. In the opinion of many Southeast Asians, “modernity was defined largely in Western terms” (McCloud 1995, 264). While the conventional kinship celebrated relatives and assisted extended family members in times of crisis, this is slowly eroding away in the name of modernization. Cash crops used for export are replacing subsistence farming and families are being forced to sell at miserably low prices and not save any of their crops for themselves. Furthermore, the end of the cold war has only created more problems for these ailing families. Although the cold war was based on the ideas of individual freedoms, William Greider argues that, since then, “concern for human rights, including freedom of assembly for workers wishing to speak for themselves, has been pushed aside by commercial opportunity. Multinationals plunge confidently into new
markets, from Vietnam to China where governments routinely control and abuse their own citizens" (qtd. in Bales 2000, 13). The global economy has created human rights issues in countries all over the world, but especially for those in which a devaluation of families has also occurred.

Unfortunately, slavery will continue to exist as long as profitability is more important than human rights. The Federal Bureau of Investigation estimates that slavery generates $9.5 billion in revenue per year, while the International Labor Organization states that figure is closer to $32 billion annually (Batstone 2007, 4). Barry Tang, an employee with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, states that “in terms of profits, it’s on the path to overtake drugs and arms trafficking” (Batstone 2007, 4). In fact, it is the third largest and fastest growing illegal trade after these two. Not only does a bonded laborer take out a small debt that expands as much as the slaveholder wants, this debt can continue on through generations. Adding to the profitability of slavery, this gives the slaveholder the right to “seize and sell the children of the bonded laborer against the debt” (Bales 2000, 17). Low cost labor and a never-ending supply of workers will ensure that slavery will always be profitable for slaveholders.

Slavery is difficult for governments and modern-day abolitionists to fight because definitions slaveries vary by organization. There are many different types of trafficking, and for each type, there are gray areas that blur the lines between slavery and simple poverty. The main types of slavery are chattel slavery, debt bondage, and contract slavery, and each of these types have sub categories within them.
The most rare from of slavery is chattel slavery. This is traditional slavery where slaves are bought, sold, and born into their positions as slaves. It is a lingering tradition in Sudan and Mauritania, the two poorest countries in the Arab world. As E. Benjamin Skinner points out, “this is no coincidence” because poverty creates desperation (2008, 101). Chattel slavery has obviously been disappearing, but different forms of slavery have taken its place.

Bonded labor is the most common form of slavery and there are approximately 15 million bonded laborers in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal alone (Batstone 2007, 11). This form of slavery typically consists of an impoverished person taking out a small loan in exchange for work so he can afford basic necessities such as food or clothing. However, the lender then charges an insurmountably high interest rate and creates expenses to add to the debt. Sometimes it is not even the person taking out the loan that is indentured; oftentimes it is his or her children that must work to pay it. Since the slaveholders create a never-ending list of charges against the initial loan, the term of slavery ends when, and more often if, the slaveholder decides it does.

Contract slavery describes the use of false contracts that ensure a legitimate, legal job, but end up ensnaring a person in slavery. These slaves generally make wages, but are forced through real or threatened violence to hand in their wages to the slaveholder. The contract makes the slavery look legitimate and the slave is tricked into thinking that he or she is legally bound to the slaveholder to perform a job.
These forms of slavery are all very different in how they exploit human beings, but they can overlap easily. A bonded laborer can have a contract, just as a chattel slave might have a phony debt to pay. Because of these gray areas, it is difficult to identify exactly what slavery is. Unfortunately, slavery is often "a metaphor for underpaid and over-worked wage laborers," and singer Prince used it to "protest a binding contract that paid him $10-million advances per album," which are both gross misuses of the term slavery (Skinner 2008, 105). The real definition of slavery is much more unclear and horrendous.

Kevin Bales, the preeminent scholar on modern-day slavery, says the definition is simply "people [who] are enslaved by violence and held against their wills for the purposes of exploitation" (2000, 20). E. Benjamin Skinner adopts Bales' standards and states that slaves are people who are "compelled to work, through force or fraud, for no pay beyond subsistence" (2008, xvii). The United States' Trafficking Victims Protection Act defines slavery in two parts: "sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age" 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" (Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons 2008, Introduction). It also stipulates that it is not necessary for cross-border transportation to occur to be considered trafficking. The UN Trafficking Protocol of the Transnational Convention on Organized Crime, or "Palermo Protocol," defines slavery as:
The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons... by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, or fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving and receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person... for the purpose of exploitation...

Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. (United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region 2008)

These definitions all vary in small degrees, but the greatest difference is that the UN definition includes consensual prostitution and organ selling. Bales and Skinner have the most concise definitions that allow room for little ambiguity. Although many feminists and church groups have tried to define all prostitution as slavery, for the purposes of this paper, slavery will be defined by Bales' and Skinner's definitions and consensual prostitution will not be considered slavery. Because of its enigmatic and illegal nature, slavery is a subject whose research contains some degree of uncertainty, making it impossible to have completely accurate statistics. Studies on slavery are not perfect and often leave various unanswerable questions. However, this does not cheapen the existence of slavery or the necessity and ability to eradicate slavery entirely in this generation's lifetime.
Social Systems in Southeast Asia

Although slavery exists in every country in the world, it is important to understand the diverse viewpoints different countries have on slavery and on society as a whole. Different forms of slavery thrive in different areas, and in Southeast Asia (SEA), the most prevalent type is sexual slavery. In recent years, Southeast Asian governments have started to crackdown on slavery and prostitution, but it has been glorified as a means of increasing tourism as recently as the 1960s and 1970s. To understand why governments and inhabitants of Southeast Asia might have turned a blind eye to slavery, it is necessary to research and be familiar with traditional societal norms and how those standards are changing.

In SEA, the village was the epicenter of traditional daily life. American anthropologist Robert Redfield studied village communities and identified four main characteristics. These are:

"[it] is distinctive in terms of both its inhabitants and geographic locale; it is small enough that its members can all know each other; it is homogeneous so that activities, roles, and states of mind are well understood, accepted, and slow to change; and it is self-sufficient, providing for nearly all of the activities and needs of its members."

(qtd. in McCloud 1995, 40)

Although the structures of villages varied between and within the countries of SEA, they all exhibited each of these four main characteristics.
There was a great emphasis placed on the family, including extended family, and relationships within the village were very important. Because rice is a very labor-intensive crop and many people are needed in the production of it, "the success of many people depended on the work of others and on the sharing of resources such as water" (McCloud 1995, 48). Village houses were clustered together with a bamboo hedge separating them from the rest of the countryside, exhibiting the village's purposeful exclusion from other communities. A village was representative of a country within a country—self-sufficient and separate. A village would have various forms of economy, from agriculture to markets, and the village provided structure to the daily economic lives of all residents. Because they were so dependent on each other and their lives were closely intertwined, villagers accepted common goals and values amongst themselves (Hickey 1964). Outsiders and individualists were met with suspicion, and sacrifice for the common good was regarded as one of the best traits a person could possess.

Although all villagers relied on each other, none were more interconnected than family groups. It would not be uncommon to find three or more generations of a family living in the same house. An individual in a family has close connections to each family member and interacts daily with extended relatives. This caused a great deal of reliance on the other family members, and children were taught to focus on making choices that would not harm "relationships that serve as systems of support and cooperation in times of need" (Brown 2002, 176). Since this environment fostered the necessity of maintaining relationships, concern for others was taught at an early age in Southeast Asian societies.
In Vietnam, the most important values that every person must respect include reason, filial piety, moral debt, the relationship between brothers, and gender roles. The idea of reason relates to the idea of the natural order of the universe. This concept "rationalized and legitimated the hierarchical order of society and of nations, making hierarchy itself part of the intrinsic structure of the universe" (Jamieson 1993, 16). Filial piety and moral debt describe the relationship between parents and child. Children were taught that they owed their parents an unpayable debt, so they must always respect and honor their parents. If a child did not do as his parents wished, he was bringing shame to the family and this idea "was at the very core of Vietnamese culture, dominating everything else" (Jamieson 1993, 17). The relationship between older brothers and younger brothers was very important, and was the second most important relationship a male could have, after the relationship with his parents. Older brothers were supposed to act as mentors to their younger brothers, and younger brothers were meant to respect their older brothers unconditionally. Gender roles also played an important part in Vietnamese culture. In the natural order of the world, men were supposed to be superior to women, and an ideal woman was one who always followed her husband's wishes. Acting in accordance to these societal values ensured that a person was doing what was best for the community instead of for the individual.

Southeast Asian societies are generally patrilineal, meaning the lineage follows the male side of the family. This is traced to Confucian ideals of male dominance, and as a result, male children were often viewed as more desirable in SEA communities. Along with ideologies, religions also played an important role in
the view of the family. The predominant religion in SEA is Buddhism, but Christianity and ancestor worship also contribute strongly to societal mores. Oftentimes these religions are intermixed. For example, a Christian villager would consult his horoscope and pay attention to harmony and cosmological signs while still participating in Christian ceremonies. Common traditional village beliefs included belief in spirits, curses, ghosts, and exorcisms. Worshiping ancestors was very important, and shrines were built in a house to pay respect to the ancestors. Deceased and unborn family members were included in important decision-making, and this ancestor worship was practiced by every follower of any religion (Hickey 1964).

Buddhism also plays a role in the expansion of prostitution in Southeast Asia. Because this religion views women as distinctly inferior to men, a woman's life is worth less than a man's life. Buddhism also suggests that sex is not a sin, as it is viewed in Christianity, but rather it is "an attachment to the physical and natural world... if you must have sex, have it as impersonally as possible" (Bales 2000, 38). However, this applies only to men, as women are viewed as carnal and impure. Furthermore, children are taught that they owe their parents a great debt, and all children are expected to contribute to the household income in whichever way possible. Unfortunately, for some children this means being sold into sexual slavery.

Males carried on the family name whereas daughters were immediately integrated into their husbands' families upon marriage. Vietnam has a two-child policy, and this has contributed to an imbalance in birthrates between the genders there. Nearly 52% of the children in Vietnam between the ages of 0-14 are male,
which is equitable to nearly one million more male children (CIA World Fact Book "Vietnam," 2008). In Thailand, daughters were sometimes sold only during a serious financial crisis within the family, but "for the most part daughters were worth about as much at home as workers as they would realize when sold" (Bales 2000, 40). Daughters were very useful as workers within the household, but were also seen as being raised to be sent to another family upon her eventual marriage. Sons, on the other hand, "guarantee[d] the continuity of the family line and... represent survival in old age" (Belanger 2002, 322). Since the family was the most important structure in a Southeast Asian life, procreation was for the sake of creating a stronger family line. Women were often viewed as an outsider in her in-law's family until she produced a son, and women were often faced with the fact that "no other way [existed] for [her] to be fully accepted into her husband's family" (Belanger 2002, 326). The importance of male children directly correlates with the importance of the family in a patrilineal society, and there was no other way for the family line to continue than to have male heirs.

If a woman does not give her husband a male heir, it is acceptable for him to practice polygamy or concubinage. If a man chose to take a second wife, there would be no ceremony and various options for where she would live. Although she could reside in the same house as the first wife, "[the men] prefer keeping the wives separated, [because] it provides two households between which the husband can divide his time as he pleases" (Hickey 1964, 113). Because the husband has legal obligations to his children with the second wife, polygamy poses a threat to the first wife's children and their inheritance. On the other hand, concubinage is viewed as a
temporary relationship and the husband would have no legal ties to any offspring that might be produced. This is a traditional view of marriage in SEA society, but bigamy has since become illegal. However, it is possible for men to marry a second wife in a different district since no official records are kept. Still today, a second wife would threaten the security of the first wife and any offspring she might have since the second wife would require “upkeep, housing, and regular support, and [her] offspring [would] have a claim on the inheritance” (Bales 2000, 46).

However, since the end of World War II, SEA has been experiencing a shift in the impact of the family. Young people are breaking away from their families and spending more time outside the house. Because of increasing urbanization, the youth in SEA are relocating themselves to cities for increased job prospects. Perhaps the action that breaks away most from traditional family structure occurs when “young people [choose] to leave their families at an earlier age and to establish a family at a later age” (Brown 2002, 179). While, traditionally, children were expected to remain at home until marriage, and then the newlywed couple would live with the groom’s family, this shift to a more individualistic society most prominently exhibits the effects of globalization and social transformations.

In the last few decades, women have been presented with more options for marriage, residence, and occupations. While they are being presented with more job opportunities, women are expected to “exercise these choices and opportunities... within the framework of family needs and aspirations” (Brown 2002, 180). Males are expected to enjoy their freedoms, but women must meet the demands of the family as a foremost priority. Although women in SEA have been experiencing
relative independence and increasing financial prospects, “the freedom [they enjoy] is to be used for the purpose of carrying out [their] duty of caring for the family” (Brown 2002, 181). Traditional ways of life may be changing for SEA women, but traditional values remain the same.

For example, it is estimated that 50% of rural women are illiterate in Cambodia (LICADHO 2004, 35). When women are not granted access to education, they become vulnerable to traffickers because they will not know their rights. Although Cambodia has compulsory education, traditional gender roles equate women with the domestic sphere, so families tend to focus on the education of male children instead of female children. Furthermore, “education is even viewed as a hindrance to women as some men may not wish to marry an educated woman” (LICADHO 2004, 45). While the modern goals of equal education for all citizens are present in Cambodia, traditional values and gender roles inadvertently assist the trade and sale of vulnerable girls and women.

A chilling practice called bauk has been growing in popularity in Cambodia. This is when boys lure sex workers or “normal” girls to a location where anywhere from four to ten more males are waiting and they proceed to gang rape the female. Tong Sophrach, a researcher of bauk, says that “the young men who commit the rapes think it’s funny” and that oftentimes prostitutes do not come forward because “they think bauk is part of their job” (Snyder 2009). This practice shows that the men in Cambodia can justify the humiliation they inflict on females and do not believe that the women in their society deserve respect.
The devaluation of women is further encouraged by limitations on the number of children legally allowed in a family. Since male children are so highly prized for lineage reasons, "son selection is manifest prenataIy through sex determination and sex-selective abortion, and postnatally through neglect and abandonment of female children, which leads to higher female mortality" (Hesketh 2006, 13272). Vietnam is one such country that has adopted a two-child law and in the 0-14 age range, there are over 800,000 more males than females (CIA World Fact Book "Vietnam" 2008). While attempting to maintain a small population, the government of Vietnam has actually created a situation in which female children have a greater risk than male children.

Largely due to globalization and modernization, the social, political, and economic constructs in SEA are undergoing rapid changes. While some groups are becoming richer, the people who were already impoverished are becoming poorer. Governments are implementing policies to ensure their countries are competitive on a global scale while poor families are struggling to survive in such extreme competition. Many individual nuclear families are meeting production levels that are barely subsistence, so they are unable to assist extended families in times of necessity like in times past.

Globalization and the Economy of Slavery

As technology advances and communication becomes easier across the world, there is naturally going to be an increasing interdependence between governments. Since the United States has the "largest and most technologically
powerful economy in the world," it goes without saying that the US greatly influences the economies of other countries (CIA World Fact Book "United States" 2008). The United States has such a large impact on the global scale, and often it uses its economic influence to pressure developing nations to adapt more Western standards, especially on the issue of human rights. Because of this, human rights issues are increasingly becoming in the forefront of the SEA political scene. Increasing communication between Western and Asian societies and differing viewpoints on certain issues has caused some skeptics to argue that "this is only the most recent Western stratagem to redefine its superior status, which stems from the colonial era when moral, religious, and technological rationales provided the underpinnings of that superiority" (McCloud 1995, 271). What Americans view as denying standard human dignities, Southeast Asians may view as tradition and important aspects of their culture.

SEA communities have traditionally placed more of an emphasis on the rights of the community rather than the individual, and this can create tension between Western and Southeast Asian governments. The argument has been waged by Westerners that basic human rights are shared globally, regardless of cultural or religious traditions, and these beliefs often accompany criticism of Asian leaders for "excessive control of political systems and for lopsided economic policies that favor industrial and corporate interests over the interests of individual workers" (McCloud 1995, 272). SEA communities and governments often view this as an expression of Western desire to exert its values over the rest of the world and "some argue that Western interest in human rights has grown only as its economic
dominance has waned” (McCloud 1995, 272). Because of the importance SEA cultures have placed on the community instead of the individual, human rights breaches sometimes occur in the eyes of Westerners, but these views are not always shared by the SEA governments. However, while the importance of the rights of the individual is shown through the official stance of the government and is a shared belief among many Western people, grave human rights breaches occur because of Western cultural, technological and economic influences, as well as through tourism.

Rapid industrialization has left the countries of SEA with higher prices for goods but lower returns on agricultural products. With it, globalization has brought more superfluous consumer goods, such as refrigerators, televisions, and other electronics. To have these electronics is now a sign of wealth, and many families are willing to forgo necessities to obtain these. In Thailand, a popular response to this consumer envy is to sell a daughter. In the past, this only occurred when a family confronted a dire financial situation. Two-thirds of modern northern Thai families who have sold children could afford to keep their daughters, but “instead preferred to buy color televisions and video equipment” (Bales 2000, 40). Although this is an atrocious crime to many Westerners, it is largely Westerners fueling these transactions through sex tourism.

While tourism can be a major source of revenue, it can also lead to a disintegration of human rights. Brothels in large cities buy young girls from impoverished villages by telling parents that the daughters will gain a better education in the city. However, these girls never make it to a school to better themselves. During the 1960s, the government of Thailand created an image for its
country, and that image included sexual tourism. Although prostitution was illegal, a Service Establishments law allowed for an “entertainment” industry, and “explained that women in entertainment were expected to provide ‘special services’—in other words, sex” (Bales 2000, 75). Promoting sex not only continues, but works as a means of attracting tourists. From 1981 to 2003, tourists have increased from 2 million to over 11 million per year, and two-thirds of tourists are unaccompanied men (Bales 2000, 75). Of course, not all of these men came for sexual tourism, but it is safe to assume that a large percentage of them participated in it. Since many men would not be open about this habit, definite numbers are impossible to obtain, but a World Vision survey of travel agents estimates that “65 percent of all tourists to Cambodia are men and one-fifth of them travel with the express purpose to have sex” (Batstone 2007, 60). If left unchecked, sex tourism can lead to an increase in human trafficking if the demand for sex is great enough. Unfortunately, it often is.

Along with being victims of foreign sex tourists, many SEA societies turn a blind eye to the issue of prostitution because of religious and cultural beliefs. When Thailand experienced an economic boom in the late 1980s and early 1990s, new wealth meant conspicuous consumption for the first time in many Thai men’s lives. While this is largely seen as morally wrong amongst people in the United States, especially when it concerns married men, Thai wives will tolerate frequenting prostitutes as a “don’t ask—don’t tell” situation. In fact, “most Thais, men and women, feel that commercial sex is an acceptable part of an ordinary outing for single men, and about two-thirds of men and one-third of women feel the same about married men” (Bales 2000, 46). For a Thai woman, it is more profitable to
ignore that her husband sometimes visits prostitutes than to lose him, and her children's inheritance, to a second wife. These socially accepted behaviors fuel the sex industry in Thailand, which is mainly supplied by sexual slaves.

Not only are young SEA children being trafficked between the countries there, they are also exported “to brothels in Japan, China, Australia, Europe, and the United States” (Batstone 2007, 21). This adds vulnerability to the trafficked women because they are oftentimes sent to an unfamiliar country where they do not speak the language. Because they do not have any money and cannot communicate with anyone, these women are entirely dependent on their slaveholders to provide every basic necessity.

The growing problem of sexual slavery has gained publicity in the media and within politics, but it is still an issue that needs a wider breadth of understanding if it could ever be abolished. Modern-day abolitionists and researchers work to interview ex-slaves about their experiences and their views on slavery. Skinner reported that he believed “a human life should not be bought—even if it means that someone else may buy it instead... [he] would give no money to slave traders [or] slave masters,” (2008, 36). While this was the case for him, it has certainly not been the case for every slavery researcher. While it may appear that the easiest means of eradicating slavery is, naturally, buying freedom for the slaves. Since it is oftentimes a debt that is holding them in slavery, the fulfillment of said debt would grant their freedoms so they could make a life for themselves. However, New York Times Op-Ed columnist Nicholas Kristof learned that this is not the most effective means of granting liberty to slaves. While researching slavery, he bought freedom for two sex
slaves at the price of $203USD each. He returned to Cambodia after a year and discovered that one, Srey Neth, had started attending a beauty school and was learning to become a hairdresser. Srey Mom, however, was not on the same path as her peer. Srey Mom had reentered the sex industry because “she was addicted to methamphetamines, and that craving destroyed her will power, sending her fleeing back to the brothel so that she could get drugs” (Kristoff 2005). While Srey Mom’s brothel owner did not force her to take drugs, brothel owners often force or provide drugs to make the girls easier to control, and the girls’ addictions will keep them in the brothels where they have ready access to drugs. While she chose to reenter her brothel by her own accord, she was still forced to hand over her earnings to the owner and was only given enough money for necessities. Because of her and many other girls’ dependence on drugs, “eventually chains are often redundant” (Kristoff 2005).

Sexual slavery is not the only form of slavery that is afflicting SEA communities although it is the most common. Because many of these countries have been facing political instability, many people choose to become refugees to other countries and men, women, and children are often bought, sold, and kidnapped for labor. Burma (Myanmar) refugees in Malaysia have recently claimed that immigration officers have been selling the refugees “as slaves to fishing trawlers and the women as prostitutes in Thailand” (“Myanmar Refugees” 2008). Men are useful to slaveholders because they can perform labor intensive work that has traditionally be reserved for men. Labor exploitation is a major issue in SEA, and many Southeast Asians are being targeted for work in construction, fishing, manufacturing,
agriculture, factories, domestic work, and begging. Thailand has always been viewed as a hotspot for sexual slavery, but, because of its relative wealth, it also attracts many legal and illegal immigrants to other industries who are trapped in slavery situations upon arrival. According to the Trafficking in Persons Report,

"Children from Burma, Laos, and Cambodia are trafficked into forced begging and exploitative labor in Thailand. Four key sectors of the Thai economy (fishing, construction, commercial agriculture, and domestic work) rely heavily on undocumented Burmese migrants, including children, as cheap and exploitable laborers." (2008)

Transporting vulnerable victims across borders is not uncommon in SEA, and many of these countries’ modern-day slavery problems are because of this illegal smuggling or legal immigration. SEA slaveholders are dependent on the social and political issues of neighboring countries to ensure that there is a steady flow of defenseless, impoverished people.

On the political scene, slavery has been a background issue, but still present. In the epilogue to his book, A Crime So Monstrous, Skinner states, "George W. Bush did more to free modern-day slaves than any other president. But," he adds, "On the subject of human bondage, history does not grade on a curve" (2008, 288). While the United States has been a leader in eradicating slavery on a global level, it has not done as much as we could, and it has not set an example for countries to follow on eradicating slavery in their own homelands. As one of the most influential countries in the world with a wide-reaching economic influence, the United States could globalize its business and political practices in a way that helps impoverished
people and nations help themselves instead of contributing to the downfall of traditional ways of life that may result in more desperate measures being taken.

**What the Western World Is Doing**

Although its policies are not perfect, the United States has been working to combat human trafficking. Starting in 2002, the Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons has issued an annual report to rank 170 countries in four tiers based on their efforts to abolish human trafficking and modern-day slavery in their countries. The minimum standards the United States expects every country to meet in regards to working to abolish human trafficking are:

1. The government of the country should prohibit severe forms of trafficking in persons and punish acts of such trafficking.

2. For the knowing commission of any act of sex trafficking involving force, fraud, coercion, or in which the victim of sex trafficking is a child incapable of giving meaningful consent, or of trafficking which includes rape or kidnapping or which causes a death, the government of the country should prescribe the punishment commensurate with that for grave crimes, such as forcible sexual assault.

3. For the knowing commission of any act of a severe form of trafficking in persons, the government of the country should...
prescribe punishment that is sufficiently stringent to deter and that adequately reflects the heinous nature of the offense.

(4) The government of the country should make serious and sustained efforts to eliminate severe forms of trafficking in persons. (Trafficking in Persons Report 2008)

The United States also measures sustained efforts by compliance with data reporting on instances of human trafficking, protecting victims, prevention and education, cooperation with other governments in punishing cases of human trafficking, monitoring immigration and emigration, prosecutions of public officials who participate in or facilitate human trafficking, and how the country has progressed since the previous year. If a country meets minimum requirements and actively uses these efforts to eradicate slavery, it is placed in Tier 1.

The rank of Tier 2 and Tier 2 Watch List is for countries that do not meet the minimums but are taking the aforementioned steps to end slavery. The Tier 2 Watch List is for countries that were moved from Tier 2 to Tier 1 since the last report, countries that were moved from Tier 3 to Tier 2 since the last report, and countries that are ranked Tier 2 where:

a) The absolute number of victims of severe forms of trafficking is very significant or is significantly increasing;

b) There is a failure to provide evidence of increasing efforts to combat severe forms of trafficking in persons from the previous year, including increased investigations, prosecutions, and convictions of trafficking crimes, increased assistance to victims, and decreasing
evidence of complicity in severe forms of trafficking by government officials; or

c) The determination that a country is making significant efforts to bring itself into compliance with the minimum standards was based on commitments by the country to take additional future steps over the next year. (Trafficking in Persons Report 2008)

A Tier 3 ranking means that the country does not meet the minimum requirements and has not been making the necessary efforts to eradicate slavery. If a country is a Tier 3 country, the United States could impose sanctions if significant changes are not made after the release of the report, which includes withholding non-humanitarian, non-trade-related foreign assistance or withholding of funds for educational and cultural exchange programs. If the President declares that imposing these sanctions would be detrimental to the national welfare of the United States, he can waive these sanctions. They will also be waived if imposing these sanctions creates "significant adverse effects on vulnerable populations, including women and children" (Trafficking in Persons Report 2008). The report is also careful to state that no placement is permanent, and with the proper efforts, any country could be placed in the highest tier in the next report.

Although the United States does not rank itself, the authors of the report recognize that "regardless of tier placement, every country can do more, including the United States" (Trafficking in Persons Report 2008). However, former head of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, John Miller, routinely stated, "the United States would probably rank itself a Tier Two country—not
ending slavery, but making significant efforts to do so” (Skinner 2008, 282). A majority of countries fall in the Tier 2 rankings, with only 29 countries in Tier 1 and 14 countries in Tier 3.

In addition to the Trafficking in Persons report, the United States government has been proactive about passing legislation to assist in prosecuting trafficking cases and providing funds to grassroots organizations that fight modern-day slavery. In 2000, the US government passed the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act, which is renewable every two years. The Act is meant to strengthen law enforcement to reduce violence against women, strengthen services to victims of violence, limit the effects of violence on children, strengthen education and training to combat violence against women and assist battered immigrant women. Furthermore, to show continuing commitment to assisting organizations to combat modern-day slavery, on September 10, 2008, the Department of Justice allotted nearly $10 million in grants to NGOs, or non-governmental organizations, and task forces for the specific purpose of fighting human trafficking. A press release states, “Since 2001, the Department has partnered with state and local law enforcement and victim service organizations to convict 342 traffickers and assist 1,300 victims from 80 countries” (“Department of Justice” 2008). While the United States government can pass acts and provide funding, it is up to NGOs to interact on a personal level with victims of human trafficking.

Free the Slaves was founded in 2000 by Kevin Bales, Jolene Smith and Peggy Callahan. Its mission is to “[liberate] slaves around the world, [help] them rebuild their lives and [research] real world solutions to eradicate slavery forever. [They]
use world class research and compelling stories from the frontlines of slavery to convince the powerful and the powerless that we can end slavery” (Free the Slaves 2007). The Free the Slaves website has resources for modern-day abolitionists to learn more about slavery and become active in the movement to end slavery, such as literature to educate and supplies to aid in teaching others about slavery. Kevin Bales estimates that slavery can be completely eliminated in the next 25 years, but governments, NGOs, businesses and individuals have to work together to commit themselves and each other to this process. Much of the work Free the Slaves does is focused on educating the public to instill a desire to eradicate slavery, along with finding solutions to this global problem.

Organizations, such as Free the Slaves, and government influence can assist countries with ending slavery on their own soil, but it is not a complete solution. In order for slavery to end, it is necessary for governments worldwide to enact their own laws and help local NGOs and grassroots organizations in finding and prosecuting acts of slavery.

What Southeast Asia Is Doing

Of the Southeast Asian nations, only Burma was ranked as a Tier 3 country in 2008, while Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam are all ranked as Tier 2 countries. Burma is the only SEA country that has been on Tier 3 since the birth of the TIP Report, but Cambodia was on Tier 3 in both 2002 and 2005 and Laos ranked Tier 3 in 2006. The other countries have been on either Tier 2 or Tier 2 Watch List, so they have shown a continuing dedication to ending slavery in their own
countries. This is largely due to government cooperation with local NGOs and enforcement of anti-trafficking laws.

The United Nations Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (UNIAP) works closely with SEA governments to track and assess what they are doing to end slavery in their own countries. UNIAP keeps records of national plans and policies, along with projects that governments and NGOs are implementing in SEA countries.

Since human trafficking is illegal in every country, there are obviously laws against human trafficking in every SEA country. However, the treatment of these laws and the legislation that has passed that define human trafficking varies by country, but many of these laws focus on trafficking in women and children. In Vietnam, “those who traffic in women shall be sentenced to between two and seven years of imprisonment,” but if it is for the purpose of prostitution, to send them overseas, trafficking multiple people, or more than one trafficking occurrence, the sentence can be increased to be between five and twenty years (Vietnam Penal Code 1999). The rules for trafficking in children are much more vague, and offenders could receive between ten and twenty years if they traffic “for despicable motive..., for the purpose of sending them abroad, for the use of inhumane purposes..., [for] dangerous recidivism, [or if they cause] serious consequences” (Vietnam Penal Code 1999). In 2008, Thailand passed The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act that expanded on the Measures in Prevention and Suppression of Trafficking in Women and Children to focus on trafficking in all humans, not just women and children. Burma passed a similar act in 2005, but its act says that one aim is to “[prevent] and [suppress]
trafficking in persons to pay particular attention to women, children and youth" (The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Law 2005). Prostitution is one of the most prevalent forms of slavery in SEA. Because of this, governments are having the hardest time fighting the trafficking of women and children, and most governments place more attention on combating trafficking of these vulnerable groups of people.

Various NGOs have developed in SEA to fight trafficking in the areas of: prevention and vulnerability reduction, prosecution, law enforcement and criminal justice, protection and victim support, rescue and repatriation, and policy, advocacy and research. The Cambodian Children’s Fund (CCF) is one such organization. Founded in 2003 by Scott Neeson, an American businessman, the CCF started by housing 45 children in a shelter in Phnom Penh, but quickly grew to have five locations in Cambodia where 400 children could “receive nutrition and housing, as well as medical treatment, dental services and vaccinations” (Cambodian Children’s Fund 2006). Children are taught vocational skills, such as computer training, cosmetology, graphic design, restaurant management and language instruction. Although much of this language instruction is to teach the children English, they also learn traditional Khmer music, dance and drama as to not neglect their country’s history and culture. There are many NGOs like this one that are actively working to end the cycle of poverty and lack of education in an attempt to end slavery and it would be impossible to list every organization and every effort being made. However, these organizations exist in every country and they “are liberating slaves. They are doing the legal work and the rehabilitation that governments should be doing. Their pay is low, their hours long, and they are sometimes in real danger...
They are acting out our moral belief that slavery is wrong” (Bales 2007, 32). These organizations are crucial in the fight against slavery and oftentimes do more for individual rescued slaves than national governments and legal policy could do.

Working together, Western governments, Southeast Asian governments, NGOs and individuals in all countries can work together to eradicate slavery everywhere. While the work may be difficult and consuming, it is possible. Setting forth a feasible plan is the first step, but achieving lasting global abolition requires dedication in order for it to happen.

Conclusion and Solutions

In the introduction to Skinner’s A Crime so Monstrous, Richard Holbrooke stated that “when Americans feel it in their gut, they will understand that ending this crime so monstrous is not a political issue; it is an American imperative, and a human responsibility” (2008, xiii). Ending slavery is more than a human rights issue. The end of slavery is closing the chapter on a blemish in the history of mankind. People worldwide believe that victory over slavery was achieved in the 1800s with abolitionists such as William Wilberforce and Abraham Lincoln, but victory was taken prematurely. Slavery has not been abolished, and its effects are widespread.

The moral and ethical dilemma of slavery is obvious, but this dilemma is also something personal. In an ideal world, every person would become an abolitionist immediately upon hearing about the conditions in which many human beings still work today. Unfortunately, many people and companies see profits and low prices as a justification for dismissing human rights, but slavery also hinders economic
development. This may seem counterintuitive because slavery is free or cheap labor, but Bales states that “every slave is a creative intelligence in shackles... Without the parasite of slavery, poor countries begin to grow” (2008, 3). Even Adam Smith, the father of modern economics wrote that

“The experience of all ages and nations, I believe, demonstrates that the work done by slaves, though it appears to cost only their maintenance, is, in the end, the dearest of any... A person who can acquire no property can have no other interest but to eat as much and to labor as little as possible. Whatever work he does beyond what is sufficient to purchase his own maintenance, can be squeezed out of him by violence only, and not by any interest of his own.” (qtd. in Skinner 2008, 234)

Profits might be high for slaveholders, but the workers are inexperienced and the work is shoddy. Ultimately, it is the consumers who pay for the price of slavery.

Profitability is not an excuse to ignore slavery, and there is no moral or legal justification that can be created to let slavery continue. But how can slavery be stopped once and for all? Modern-day slavery scholars have been tackling this question and view teaching trades, reducing overpopulation, multi-field investigations, stricter law enforcement and educating the public as the most effective means of ending slavery.

NGOs like the Cambodian Children’s Fund are actively working to bring education to slavery survivors and at-risk children. Their work on the ground shows a dedication to ensuring that children are aware of the dangers of slavery and that it
can be avoided. Education also puts skilled workers into the future economy of that country, so fewer adults will need to sell or take out a loan against a child in an effort to provide for the rest of the family. In addition to learning trades, simple literacy can prevent slavery. If a child can read, it causes them to become less vulnerable and therefore less targeted by slaveholders. While education cannot completely eradicate slavery on its own, it can provide a stepping stone for children to achieve a better life. When used in conjunction with other methods of ending slavery, it is a valuable tool for modern-day abolitionists.

Slavery can exist in many countries because there is a surplus of people. Southeast Asian countries have been experiencing a surge of births in recent years, and slavery is most prevalent in these SEA countries that have seen the largest increase. Overpopulation creates a glut of desperate people, and "the only proven cure for overpopulation is to eliminate extremes of poverty" (Bales 2000, 234). Education can pave the way for better jobs, which can eliminate poverty on an individual basis. The argument that slavery can never be eradicated because poverty will always exist is an evasion of responsibility. The end of slavery does not require the end of poverty, but alleviating some cases of extreme poverty will assist in ending slavery.

Ending slavery cannot be done solely by educators, lawyers, and social workers. While these people can, and do, contribute greatly to rescuing and freeing slaves, freed slaves need other resources. David Batstone tells the story of a man named Pierre Tami who wanted to start a restaurant in Phnom Penh where newly liberated women could work. However, he knew nothing about the restaurant
business and it quickly failed. Pierre saw Frank Woods, a successful caterer from Perth, Australia, in a restaurant one day and approached Frank, a complete stranger, with his problems. Sympathetic to Pierre, Frank told him, "I have done quite well with my business career here in Perth... What do you think about my coming over to Phnom Penh and lending a hand?" (Batstone 2007, 276). This occurred in 2004 and now they employ seventy-three ex-slaves. This is one example of how anyone could help end slavery just by offering his expertise, no matter how distant the skills may seem from slavery.

Researchers are also important in ending slavery. While writing books may not be as hands-on as legal or social work, the information discovered by these researchers is important for the efforts of lawyers and social workers. Slavery, like all hidden crimes, is hard to trace back to the person that is in charge of the trafficking. Like mob boss Al Capone, the easiest way to eradicate the bosses of trafficking rings might be prosecuting for tax evasion. Skilled accountants are necessary for this. Good businesspeople, who are interested in being socially conscious, are needed to supply the public with slavery-free goods. It is also important for the businesspeople to educate their companies about slave-made products and how to avoid them. Furthermore, when consumers demand slavery-free products, businesspeople respond.

Corrupt governments create obstacles for modern-day abolitionists. However, it is not necessary for a government to be wholly corrupt to create these obstacles. If laws are in place but not enforced, the laws are rendered useless. Although individuals cannot realistically pressure international governments to
enforce their laws more strictly, the US government can. Ending slavery will not be easy, but it is “a crime of international concern, and UN member states must hold one another accountable for countenancing slavery—through multilateral coercion if necessary” (Skinner 2008, 292). When governments ensure that their laws are followed and the risk of trafficking outweighs the profits, slavery will diminish.

While governments have a large responsibility in regards to ending slavery, individuals cannot be inactive. One of the largest obstacles for modern-day abolitionists is that many people do not know that slavery exists. On a personal level, I first learned about modern-day slavery when I was working abroad in London in 2007. I saw a poster that advertised the website freetheslaves.net. When I saw the poster, I immediately thought, “That's ridiculous. Slavery doesn’t exist anymore.” However, the poster was effective and I went onto the website where I was shocked to learn how naïve I was. Since then, I have heard many similar statements. I told a friend that there were 27 million slaves in the world, and her response was, “I had no idea there were 27 million. I thought I realized [the extent of slavery], but I didn’t understand it was quite that huge.” It is hard for modern-day abolitionists to combat slavery when there is not a rallying force behind them. Lack of widespread knowledge about the extent of slavery is another obstacle that must be overcome before slavery can end.

Individuals can be overwhelmed by the issue of ending slavery because of its global size. However, individuals can make a huge difference. Simply telling others about slavery is very important, but if an individual wants to do more, there is plenty he or she could do. Bales has estimated that slavery could end with between
$10 billion and $15 billion. In an article written prior to the first stimulus check disbursement, Matt Renner said this number is approximately ten percent of what the government was issuing with these tax rebates. Bales opined, “It would be interesting if we held a national referendum and asked people if they’d be willing to take ten percent out of their stimulus check and use it to eradicate slavery across the globe... I’d be willing to take $540 instead of $600” (qtd. in Renner 2008). If each American could donate $60, slavery could end. $10 billion is an unfathomable number to an individual, but $60 is doable.

Even if an individual does not or cannot donate money, there are free methods of ending slavery. Urging politicians to stop slavery is an easy and effective tool for the common person. Voting for representatives at the local, state, and national level who want to end slavery will send the message that this is an important issue. Also, individuals who would rather save money than donate can ask questions of their pension funds and investments. Ethical funds have been set up to ensure that people can invest in companies that believe in fair trade. Finally, it is important to buy from socially conscious vendors. Local farmers are a good source of slave-free produce, but consumers that are not near farms can also participate in buying slave-free foods and goods. Reading labels can tell a consumer if an item is “fair trade”—meaning the worker who created that product was paid a livable wage. Through these simple acts, individuals can commit themselves to the fight against slavery without altering their daily lives.

Ending slavery is attainable, but many obstacles are in the way. Modern-day abolitionists are diligently working to overcome these impediments, but without the
assistance of governments, NGOs and individuals, slavery cannot end. Slavery is a
global issue that affects everyone, but luckily it can be overcome. In the conclusion
to *Disposable People*, one of the first major books to be written on modern-day
slavery, Kevin Bales poses the question: “Are we willing to live in a world with
slaves? If not,” he states, “we are obligated to take responsibility for things that are
connected to us, even when far away... If there is one basic truth that virtually every
human being can agree on, it is that slavery must end” (2000, 262). People have the
responsibility to end slavery, but more important, we have the power to do it. One
day, this generation will be able to say that they were the ones that ended it. Until
then, battling for human rights is a necessity.
Works Cited


