

Stop Trafficking !

Anti-Human Trafficking Newsletter



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1 This issue highlights issues of migration, slave labor and how fair trade counters these human rights' abuses.

Co-Sponsored by:

- Sisters of the Divine Savior
- Capacitar International, Inc.

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Hearings on Worldwide Slavery

House Sub-Committee on Human Rights and Wellness

(Excerpts from the testimony of Dr. Kevin Bales of Free the Slaves)

Free the Slaves is the American sister-organization of *Anti-Slavery International*, the world's oldest human rights group, founded to fight slavery in 1787. ... (I will) touch on four points: • the nature of modern slavery; • how slavery touches our lives; • the urgent need for a consistent approach to slavery by the US government, and • some practical suggestions about how America can use its influence to end slavery once and for all.

Slavery, real slavery, has increased dramatically across the world in the last 50 years. It has grown rapidly, in part, because of the belief among the public and even governments that slavery was ended in 1865. For years I have traveled the world, meeting slaves and slaveholders, and the people who are fighting slavery at the grassroots. I can assure you that slavery is not dead. My conservative estimate is that there are 27 million slaves in the world today.

Let me be clear that I am talking about slavery in its most basic form – *the holding of a person against their will through violence, paying them nothing, and forcing them to work*. It is the same basic slavery that has dogged humanity for at least five thousand years, but today it has some pernicious modern twists.

For example, slaves are cheaper today than they have ever been in human history. Rapid population growth, combined with the impacts of modernization and globalization on the economies of the developing world, has generated a bumper crop of people vulnerable to enslavement. When government corruption, particularly police corruption, removes the protection of the state, violence can be used to turn the vulnerable into slaves.

This is happening around the world, and once enslaved, the victims can be transported even to those countries where the rule of law is secure. The State Department estimates that up to 20,000 are brought to the United States each year. *In research that we have recently carried out for the United Nations we estimate up to 100,000 people are currently held in situations of forced labor in America. They may be forced to work as prostitutes, in agriculture, or as domestic servants. Moreover, slave-made products flow into our homes.* Despite the clear prohibition on the importation of slave-made goods in the 1930 Smoot-Hawley Tariff legislation, which is still in force, a host of slave-made raw materials and products flow into America.

A few years ago we asked a slave, newly freed on a cocoa farm in West Africa, if he knew what happened to

the cocoa he harvested. "No", he said. Had he ever tasted chocolate? Again, "No". So we asked him, what would you say to those millions of people who eat the chocolate made from the cocoa you have grown? "Tell them," he said, "*when they eat chocolate they are eating my flesh.*" I am happy to say that with the help of Congress, and the active and energetic participation of the chocolate industry through the Cocoa Protocol, we are making enormous progress in the area of cocoa – but this achievement stands



alone. *Slave-free trade is not yet a reality in the land of the free.*

So the picture is a serious one: millions of people enslaved, and both slaves and slave-made goods being bought and sold within the United States. There are, happily, several positive points. The *Trafficking Victims Protection Act* passed at the end of 2000 is now seen as a model for the world, and ... amended in 2003 ...it will be an even stronger instrument against the trade in human beings. The Trafficking Office and US-AID have made sizable grants having real impact in anti-slavery work abroad. Support



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Slavery *from pg. 1*

by the American government to the *International Labor Organization* (ILO) for the rehabilitation of freed child slaves is crucial to that effort.

On the other hand, there are several serious problems. Research that we have carried out for the *Department of Justice* delivers one very clear message: *that American law enforcement is under-resourced and uncoordinated in addressing the crime of slavery, forced labor, and human trafficking*. We must adequately resource our legislation. We have to avoid the situation prevailing in India – a country with one of the best and most comprehensive laws against slavery on the books, and many, many slaves waiting for the enforcement of that law.

Confusion exists in other parts of the government as well. We have had courageous statements by members of Congress against slavery in parts of Africa. Meanwhile the *US State Department* asserts that slavery has disappeared in some of those same countries. At times it seems that a succession of American governments has chosen to recognize slavery according to their international political goals.

I travel all over America talking about slavery; I've met and discussed our government's response to slavery with citizens across the country.

Let me say very clearly what they would want you to hear:

What is morally wrong cannot be politically right. America must not play politics with slavery. If we are to imagine ourselves a bastion of freedom, our foreign policy must apply this principle in a way that is consistent and universal. Our belief in freedom is soiled and diminished when we condemn slavery in one country, while turning a blind eye to slavery in another.

At the same time, while the problem we confront is large, the obstacles are not insurmountable. Three key battles are already won. We do not have to win the *moral argument*, everyone agrees that slavery is wrong. Second, we do not have to win the *economic argument*, ending slavery does not threaten the economic well being of any state or industry. Third, we do not have to win the basic *legal argument* – laws exist in virtually every country against slavery.

Because this is truly an international crime, our government needs to press for more action within international agencies. This is not a problem of just the United States or any other single country – it is a global problem needing global cooperation. Eradicating slavery is a challenge shared by all humanity. We all know about the UN teams that searched for biological weapons in Iraq, or international efforts to protect minorities in the Balkans. But where are the *UN Slavery Inspection Teams?* Where are the contingents that protect freed slaves and help them toward reintegration? Working together we can verify, assist, and ensure that nations are doing all in their power to find, liberate, and rehabilitate enslaved people.

Our own government's law enforcement policy suggests other tools we could use to confront the problem of slavery worldwide. Our *Department of Justice* has located

their anti-slavery work soundly on the 13th Amendment, they are extremely expert, and that expertise can be shared. The cooperation, funding and training of foreign law enforcement could be extended to help end the police corruption that supports slavery. Assets confiscated from slaveholders and traffickers could help provide desperately needed resources for the rehabilitation of freed slaves.

We must remember that liberation is only the first step to freedom. Helping ex-slaves achieve a decent, independent life must follow. In many ways our country still suffers from a botched emancipation. Shelby Foote, the historian of our civil war, put it this way: *"Slavery was the first great sin of this nation. The second great sin was emancipation, or rather the way it was done. The government told four million people, 'You are free, hit the road.' Three-quarters of them couldn't read or write. The tiniest fraction of them had any profession that they could enter."* We must not allow that mistake to be made again anywhere in the world – or our children and grandchildren will still be dealing with the ugly legacy of slavery.

Despite 5000 years, if there is coordinated and integrated leadership and effort, the eradication of slavery is possible in the 21st century. Founded upon the primacy of individual liberty, and given its role of leadership in world affairs, the United States can reasonably mobilize an international consensus to eradicate slavery. There is historical precedence for this. In the 19th century, the British government led an international movement to abolish legal slavery. Britain deployed, from 1819 to 1890, a sizeable naval force devoted to the interdiction of slave ships. The fleet peaked in size at 36 vessels and the operation to free slaves cost the lives of nearly 2000 of Her Majesty's sailors and marines.



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Two Important Updates

Maria Suarez Is Free!



Maria Suarez (r.) with her mother (l.) after her release.

In May 2004 Maria Suarez, now age 44, was granted a T-visa, originally created in 2000 as compensatory help to victims of severe forms of human trafficking, i.e., the smuggling of men, women and children into the U.S. for slave labor or prostitution.

Shortly after Maria Suarez, age 16, had arrived from Mexico in 1976, she was sold for \$200. to a 68-year-old man, living in Los Angeles, who practiced witchcraft. He raped and threatened her over five years, forcing her to tell no one about the abuse. Then in 1981, she witnessed her captor being beaten to death by a neighbor because of abuse to his wife. Although she did no violence, Maria hid the weapon and was arrested along with the murderer. She was charged with first-degree murder and given a sentence of 25 years to life. In 1981 there was no legal defense for battered women charged with a violent crime against their abusers. Maria served nearly 25 years in prison, during which time she completed a GED and volunteered for many projects.

Rep. Hilda Solis, D-Monterey Park (LA County) and many others worked for many years to free Maria. Two years ago the State Board of Prisons declared her eligible for parole. When finally released in December 2003, she was immediately re-arrested by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, since according to

federal law, non-citizens convicted of violent crimes must be deported upon their release. In April 2004 an immigration judge ruled that Suarez must be deported. Suarez filed an appeal.

Contributing to the effort to overturn that ruling was a bi-partisan letter signed by over thirty members of Congress and forwarded to Tom Ridge, Secretary of Homeland Security. The letter urged Ridge to let Maria Suarez remain in the U.S. where all her family reside. Solis credited the success of the effort to the overwhelming recent public support.

Recently Maria learned she'd been granted the special T-visa, which is issued for three years. To date 371 T-visas have been issued to victims of human trafficking. After three years holders of a T-visa may apply for permanent residency and after five additional years, those awarded residency may apply for citizenship.

Now that Maria is free, her family and supporters will also work to have her original conviction overturned.

(Ed. Thanks to all who wrote their legislators on behalf of Maria Suarez!)

Mozambique Missionary Threatened by Government Officials

Sister Maria Elilda dos Santos, a Brazilian member of the Servants of Mary, received a letter from the governor of the northern province of Nampula, where she had worked for nine years, asking her to leave Mozambique. In February 2004 the Servants of Mary in Nampula had informed authorities of kidnappings and killings of many people, often children, victims of a suspected network of organ trafficking.

The sisters' convent is located between the farm where the victims were taken and the airfield where the boxes of human organs were allegedly transported by night to be flown out of the country. Sister Maria Elilda discovered a body in the region of Nampula from which the eyes, heart, and kidneys had been removed. The sisters recorded that scene on video and took photos of that and other clandestine graves. Since 2001 more than 100 minors have disappeared from the Diocese of Nampula, many of whom have been found in common graves with their bodies emptied of their organs. Yet the local authorities have done nothing to investigate these grisly crimes.

After reporting the illicit trafficking of human organs, S. Maria Elilda dos Santos received much negative pressure from local Mozambique government officials. She decided she had no alternative but to return to Brazil. The sisters have escaped from at least four ambush attacks and



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received death threats.

Also in February, Doraci Edinger, a 53-year-old Lutheran missionary, who also had reported the suspected traffic in children's organs, was found dead in front of her house in Nampula. The sisters believe Edinger's death is related to the accusations. In March, Sister Angelina Zenti, the provincial of the Comboni women missionaries in Mozambique, made an appeal to "break the silence" over the disappearance of children, victims of organ traffickers.

In statements to a Rome television station, Father Claudio Avallone OSM said the Servite Generalate has already received 190,000 signatures of support worldwide.

(Ed. Thanks to all who took the time to send in signatures.

Let us continue to voice our support for the Servites and for those they seek to protect!)

In late May, before returning to Brazil, Sister Maria Elilda dos Santos plans to visit the European Parliament to request the support of the European Union in the investigation of these cases. Despite the growing number of accusations and the increase in international interest in the case, the situation in Nampula "is getting worse," she said.

Slavery *from pg. 2*

Compared to that grim sacrifice, the human and financial cost of eradication would be minuscule. Recall that while 27 million is the largest number of slaves to ever live at one time, it is also the smallest proportion of the world population in slavery in human history. Note that the extremely low cost of slaves worldwide means that criminal slaveholders do not have large investments to defend. In our work with partners in Northern India, we find the costs of freeing, rehabilitating, and reintegrating slaves average about \$30 per family – and this does not involve paying criminals to set their slaves free.

The American people and the American government must ask this question: *Are we willing to live in a world with slaves?* If not, we are obligated to take responsibility for things that connected us to slavery, even when far away. Unless we work

to understand the links that tie us to slavery and then take action to break those links, we are puppets, subject to forces we can't or won't control. If we don't take action we are just giving up and letting other people jerk the strings that tie us to slavery. Of course, there are many kinds of exploitation in the world, many kinds of injustice and violence to be concerned about.

But slavery is exploitation, violence, and injustice all rolled together in their most potent combination. If there is one fundamental violation of our humanity we cannot allow, it is slavery. If there is one basic truth that virtually every human being can agree on, it is that slavery must end. What good is all our economic and political power, if we can't use it to free slaves? Indeed, if we can't choose to stop slavery, how can we really say we are free? (Oct. 29, 2003)



today's fight for tomorrow's freedom

Logo for Anti-Slavery International



Advocacy

Will Taco Bell Stand with Farm Workers?

The *Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW)*, a farm workers' rights organization based in Florida, is pressuring fast-food giant YUM Inc. to pay one penny more per pound for its tomatoes, and see that this pay increase is passed on to farm workers. In March 2004 *Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and former UN High Commissioner of Human Rights*, along with the President of *Oxfam America* and the President of the *National Council of Churches* visited Florida to join CIW in calling for better pay for tomato pickers.

Long gone are the days when small, family farmers supplied area stores and chains with locally grown tomatoes in season. Today, huge corporate growers with multi-state operations sell tomatoes year round to even bigger corporate buyers, including fast food mega-chains like *Taco Bell* and *Burger King*. Those fast food giants receive cheap, high-quality U.S. tomatoes, thanks to the sacrifices of thousands of hard-working Florida farm workers, who pick tomatoes at a piece rate that has remained virtually unchanged for over two decades. The result is that farm workers today effectively earn 30% less for picking tomatoes than they did in 1980.

Why Taco Bell?

Taco Bell is part of YUM Inc., together with *Kentucky Fried Chicken*, *Pizza Hut*, *Long John Silver's*, and *A&W Restaurants*. These five chains together control more than 30,000 restaurants around the globe, forming the "world's largest restaurant system in terms of units," according to YUM's Annual Report. In 2001, *Taco Bell*

generated nearly \$5 billion in sales, while YUM Inc. reported system-wide sales of over \$22 billion in 2003.

Taco Bell is a major buyer of Florida tomatoes. YUM purchases about 40 million pounds of tomatoes a year, and is just one of the largest companies pushing the cost of low-priced fast food down onto workers.

Farm Worker Conditions

Oxfam America's Report "Like Machines in the Fields: Workers Without Rights in American Agriculture" documents farm workers' deplorable situation: They are exempt from federal laws that require a minimum wage and overtime pay, and have no right to organize unions. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the median annual income of farm workers today is \$7,500. They receive no health insurance, no sick leave, no paid holidays, no vacation, and no pension. Farm workers generally live and work in unhealthy and dangerous conditions. As many as 300,000 farm workers each year suffer from pesticide poisoning, far more than any other line of work in America.

Farm workers, who pick for Florida growers who sell tomatoes to *Taco Bell*, earn between 40-50 cents for every 32-lb bucket of tomatoes they pick. For example, the Immokalee-based "Six L's Packing Co., Inc.," one of the nation's largest tomato producers and a contractor to *Taco Bell* (according to the industry journal "*The Packer*"), still pays 40 cents per bucket, the same rate paid in 1978. To earn \$50 per day, a worker must pick and haul 4,000 pounds of tomatoes (see photo above).

Photo:
Greg Asbed



By filling all 125 32 pound-buckets (4000 lbs.) with tomatoes, a farm worker earns \$50.

To date, *Taco Bell* has refused to take any responsibility for these sweatshop conditions in the fields where their tomatoes are picked. Given the sheer volume of Immokalee tomatoes *Taco Bell* buys to supply its worldwide operations, and given its size and economic strength, *Taco Bell* has the power to help bring about more modern, more equitable labor relations in Immokalee's tomato fields. Lucas Benitez, a CIW farm worker organizer and recipient of the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award, was quoted to say farm workers are, "the ones paying the consequences. We don't want fast food, but fair food."

What can Taco Bell do?

Taco Bell could nearly double the picking piece rate paid to farm workers by agreeing to pay just one penny more per pound for the tomatoes it buys from Florida growers. *Taco Bell*, as part of the "world's largest restaurant system" could easily afford to pay one penny more. But even if they passed the cost on to the consumer, it would still be less than 1/4 of 1 cent more for a Chalupa.

Oxfam America and the CIW are asking *Taco Bell* to:

- Convene a meaningful, three-part dialogue -- bringing together representatives of *Taco Bell*, their Florida tomato suppliers, and representatives of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers - to discuss solutions to the problems farm workers face in Florida's fields.

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Taco Bell *from pg. 5*

- Contribute to an immediate increase in farm worker wages through a raise in the per pound rate Taco Bell pays for tomatoes from its Florida suppliers.
- Join with CIW and tomato industry representatives in drafting strict wage/working condition standards to be required of all *Taco Bell* tomato suppliers. Such standards would necessarily require respect for pickers' fundamental labor rights, including the right to a living wage and overtime, and the right to organize without fear of retaliation.

Raymond Offenheiser of Oxfam America called for change: "We publicly call on the CEO's, the boards of directors and the major investors in these leading [food] companies to guarantee that their supply chains adhere to the highest standards of respect and responsibility for workers rights," he said in Immokalee.

Pres. Mary Robinson was familiar with the areas of Chiapas and Oaxaca, Mexico, where many of the farm workers in Immokalee came from. "I know the conditions they left; they came here hoping for the American dream. They must be so disappointed, because now they are so exploited. These workers are excluded from core labor standards. We saw people living in containers, and mobile homes with six or seven men in one room. It was stuffy on a warm day like today, so I can't imagine what it must be like in the heat of summer. It's important to recognize the purchasing prices paid by YUM and Taco Bell have a direct connection with the conditions the workers face. It would be good for a senior representative of YUM to visit Immokalee and see the situation on the ground here."

A RESOLUTION IN HONOR OF THE COALITION OF IMMOKALEE WORKERS

WHEREAS, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers advocates for human dignity through just wages, democratic participation, solidarity with the poor, and the elimination of slavery and trafficking in human persons; and

WHEREAS, by calling attention to the structure of our food system, in which international trade practices and large corporate buyers constrain both farmers and workers, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers promotes the principle that economies must exist for people, not the other way around; and

WHEREAS, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers does not ask that farmers earn less for their labor, but rather, that wholesale and individual consumers pay more fairly for the fruits of others' labor, and thereby, offers grounds for finding common ground, where there has been so much mutual distrust; and

WHEREAS, the Catholic Church, through the Dioceses of Venice and the Catholic Campaign for Human Development, has supported the Coalition of Immokalee Workers from its founding and applauds the organization's growth, courage, and commitment to peace and justice; THEREFORE, the bishops of the Florida Catholic Conference offer warm congratulations to Lucas Benitez, Julia Gabriel, and Romeo Ramirez, recipients of the 2003 Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights' Award issued by the RFK Memorial Center for Human Rights, and to all members of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, whose work for human dignity is recognized by the award.

In Venice, Florida,
December 10, 2003

Signed by all nine bishops of the
Florida Catholic Conference.

You can help! Boycott the Bell!

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) needs your help to make Taco Bell a part of the solution in Florida's farm workers' fight for dialogue and a fair wage.

Would you be willing to pay 1/4 of 1 penny more for your Chalupa, if it meant that farm workers could earn a living wage?

CIW believes you would!

Knowing the situation of the farm workers that pick the tomatoes you eat, let *Taco Bell* know that you expect them to help raise these hardworking men and women out of poverty.

Call, fax, or write:

Emil J. Brolick, President and
Chief Concept Officer
Taco Bell Corp.
17901 Von Karman
Irvine, California 92614
tel. 949-863-4500,
fax. 949-863-4537





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URGE WAL-MART TO SUPPORT LABOR JUSTICE!

Co-op America believes Wal-Mart, as the world's largest retailer, has a responsibility to ensure that its products are not being manufactured in sweatshops or with child labor. Wal-Mart claims that it adequately monitors its suppliers' factories, but independent reports have uncovered abuses that Wal-Mart's own monitoring failed to find.

For instance, *Business Week's* 2000 investigation into a factory that manufactured Kathie Lee handbags sold in Wal-Mart found *numerous worker abuses, including frequent worker beatings and the confiscation of workers' identity papers, of which the company was unaware.*

Shareholder groups, noting that Wal-Mart has still failed to implement independent monitoring practices to catch these kinds of abuses, continue to press the company to commit to a *Code of Supplier Standards* that includes:

- the right of workers to organize a union and bargain collectively;
- tight controls to cut down on long work weeks;
- a sustainable living wage; and
- the monitoring of suppliers' factories by independent third parties from the communities where the supplier factories are located.

Shareholder groups contend that until Wal-Mart adopts such standards, the public cannot be confident that the company's products don't come from sweatshops.

As part of a campaign for fair labor standards, Co-op America is asking Wal-Mart to adopt labor standards that mandate fair wages, healthy and safe work environments, and independent factory monitoring.

Wal-Mart needs to hear from shoppers that their sales will suffer unless they take the necessary steps to ensure that their profits aren't built on sweatshops and child labor - so please take a few seconds to visit the web site and take action.

(Source:
[http://www.sweatshop.org/
takeaction/default.cfm](http://www.sweatshop.org/takeaction/default.cfm))

Stop Trafficking! is dedicated exclusively to fostering an exchange of information among religious congregations, their friends and collaborating organizations, working to eliminate all forms of trafficking of human beings.

Use the following web address to access back issues of *Stop Trafficking!*
[http://homepage.mac.com/
srjeanschafersds/stoptraffic/index.html](http://homepage.mac.com/srjeanschafersds/stoptraffic/index.html)

To contribute information, or make requests to be on the mailing list, please use this e-mail address:
jeansds2000@yahoo.com

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Informative Web Sites:

(Each contains information related to human trafficking)

House SubCommittee Hearings

[http://reform.house.gov/
WHR/Hearings/EventSingle.aspx?
EventID=564](http://reform.house.gov/WHR/Hearings/EventSingle.aspx?EventID=564)

Oxfam America

[http://www.maketradefair.com/en/
index.php?file=us_labour_event.htm](http://www.maketradefair.com/en/index.php?file=us_labour_event.htm)

Fair Trade Federation

<http://www.fairtradefederation.org/>
Transfair
[www.transfairusa.org.](http://www.transfairusa.org/)
[http://www.transfairusa.org/content/
about/pr_040329.php](http://www.transfairusa.org/content/about/pr_040329.php)

Coalition of Immokalee Workers

[http://www.ciw-online.org/tz_site-
revision/tbnyou/tbnyou-main.html](http://www.ciw-online.org/tz_site-revision/tbnyou/tbnyou-main.html)

Sweatshop Watch

<http://www.sweatshop.org>

Toll-Free Hotline:

(Trafficking Information and Referral)
1-888-3737.888

Important Web-Site:
Office of Refugee Resettlement
www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking