

Human Trafficking: The Victims of Exploitation and Oppression (FINAL)

In the year 2014 police have identified possible victims of human trafficking—40 victims—in Hampshire. Of the 40 victims, 5 children were found. It is also revealed that children who were possibly being trafficked have been found by themselves in Portsmouth International Port. This is known as modern-day slavery. The ‘call to responsibility’ resonates voices like Jess Gealer that say, “It’s about stopping that and recognizing them as vulnerable people. They are not illegal or irregular migrants.” Jess is the coordinator of the Modern Slavery Partnership, and experience has taught her that, “A lot of trafficking victims are coming in the back of lorries, hiding in commercial lorries, and coming out at night in the port.” [1] For those that don’t know what human trafficking is, it is when a person is moved from place to place to be used and exploited. The traffickers themselves use nefarious tactics to target those considered vulnerable.

The source of human trafficking can be traced back to slavery; the trafficking of human beings for the purposes of forced labor makes it one and the same. Human trafficking can be defined as the practice of transporting (illegally) people from one place to another to exploit them for labor or sex. Slavery shares the same theme with this definition as both describe how one is kidnapped and exploited for some form of labor or another. These similarities lead me to believe that the trafficking of humans stems from the inception and eventual reliance of slavery. Slavery in and of itself is essentially about taking advantage of others (groups that we would now consider marginalized) and making a profit out of their forced labor. Since trafficking shares this same concept it is necessary to acknowledge the fact that although slavery has been outlawed in the UK (our central geographic focus), human trafficking is essentially modern-day slavery with a different name to it. The scholarly article, *Trafficking, Gender & Slavery: Past and Present*, even states, “It is now commonly, and increasingly, held that contemporary trafficking in persons and all forms of forced labor constitute modern forms of slavery. This view was given official support in Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s introduction to the State Department’s 2009 *Trafficking in Persons Report* where she began: ‘we have seen unprecedented forward movement around the world in the fight to end human trafficking, a form of modern-day slavery.’” [2] With those that benefited from slavery, it is no wonder that regardless of the laws put in place the predecessors still found ways to continue this system of oppression and exploitation. The laws around slavery may have changed to try and stop it, but the practice is still alive and well with, once again, just a different name associated to it--human trafficking.

The primary sources that I have collected—that date back before 1980—are news articles from The Times of London. Those that bought the newspaper and read it to stay informed with the latest news at the time would also be considered the intended audience. The overall general purpose of these articles on human trafficking was to inform the reader of what’s going on in the world; more specifically each article contains information about local smuggling or human trafficking for the

purposes of exploitation or trying to smuggle someone in the country. Suffice it to say it's not exactly good news. The historical context may be different, as the two news articles are from different time periods; one is from 1927 and the other dates back to 1974. For the earliest primary source (1927) I'd say that it was during a time when World War I had ended (9 years earlier) and it was considered the "Roaring Twenties," a time where the UK was flourishing with economic prosperity. One fact is that women in Britain also gained the right to vote 9 years earlier as well, if that helps one gain a better understanding of the times. As for the article during 1974, technology was continuing to thrive as for example the first computer games came into existence. Also, the hippie movement spread to the UK after starting in the US, and for more context of that decade the Beatles broke up around 1970. Both articles don't state a specific author, but I can expect that perhaps their gender, race, and socioeconomic class could have been similar to the readers during that era. In other words, they were probably making a decent wage as a writer for supporting a family. Some assumptions that the sources might have held would have been that the reader had no knowledge of the given information, which is why they provided local citizens with news of human trafficking problems.

In order to understand how the systematic trading and treating of people as commodities is still going strong today, an analysis of the root (slavery) and its causes must be addressed. According to the book *Slavery and the British Empire: From Africa to America*, "The chequered history of the British involvement with slavery covers four centuries and most parts of the globe. Though the heart of British involvement with slavery and the slave trade lay in the operation of the triangular trade with Africa and the Americas, the British connection with slavery can be found, as this book has shown, in Asia and the Indian Ocean." [7] This provides us with an idea of the breadth of slavery in Britain. Such strong influence and growth of the idea of owning slaves is what resonates throughout the issues of trafficking in the modern world. In the context of the British Empire, supporters of slavery argued that it was a huge part of Britain's economy and the country's consumerism. [9] This acceptance of the practice of owning other human beings was commonplace at that time. In a nutshell, the idea that black slaves were lesser than the white man was what justified such beliefs. Although in the year 2017 any form of slavery is looked down upon, this doesn't stop the fact that the majority of victims are woman and children (those that are considered by society to be lesser than).

The intersectionality of race and slavery/trafficking is also something to consider. In the text written by Don Jordan and Michael Walsh there is a quote which explains that, "For decades, this underclass was treated just as savagely as black slaves and, indeed, toiled, suffered and rebelled alongside them. Eventually, a racial wedge was trust between white and black, leaving blacks enslaved and whites apparently upgraded but in reality just as enslaved as they were before." [8] Something that was thought to only apply to kidnapped black slaves now extended towards anyone who could be easily manipulated. This is an important turning point, as it shows how as long as someone can be taken advantage of they are susceptible to becoming a victim caught in this system of cruel treatment. So what does this mean? Over time we find out that the power of those that rely on the forced labor of others has increased tremendously despite the eventual

public distaste in slavery. The transition from the term slavery to human trafficking takes place in a way—culturally speaking.

When looking further into the laws passed to abolish slavery in the UK it is shown that human rights had finally taken the stand in politics. Starting with the outlawing of the slave trade (for British territories) with the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833. However, alluding to *Slavery and the British Empire: From Africa to America* again, it will say, “During the twentieth century, the British connection with slavery and other forms of involuntary servitude continued.” [7] Regardless of the fight for human rights and freedom, there is proof that to this day that the practice of slavery has adapted and morphed into human trafficking to operate under the radar. Slavery, which has lasted for hundreds of years was not about to be eradicated just like that. The gradual shift from slavery to trafficking people could be identified by the growing practice of fooling those that were vulnerable by, for example, making them think that complying with the trafficker would give them a better life with more opportunities.

For legislation against modern-day human trafficking in the UK, the fight continues. The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 that provides extra-territorial jurisdiction for cases of trafficking. This law provides the ability to prosecute cases where victims were taken anywhere around the world; this supports the effort of tackling more organized criminal networks. [5] As we can see, the issue remains prominent in the day-to-day lives of UK citizens if such measure needed to be put in place. According to the article from Women News Network, “Victims are primarily women and girls who are exploited in the sex industry and domestic servitude, not always here in the UK but sometimes pass through en-route to the sex trade in Europe. These may have paid as much as EUR 70000 for their passage to Europe, a debt which enforces their enslavement.” Does this sound familiar? As with the cases of white slavery reported in *White Cargo: The Forgotten History of Britain's White Slaves in America* when marginalized groups were practically tricked, captured, and forced into servitude, this pattern can still be seen in the UK today.

The commonalities of slavery and human trafficking are all due to the fact that human trafficking is essentially a predecessor of the term slavery; with the wording simply changing over time. The transition from exploiting black slaves, to forms of indentured servitude have led to this point in the modern world where victims are still tricked into believing that a better life awaits them. This factor is key, as it shows the manipulation factor to keep the industry that relies on enslavement alive and strong. Hence why human trafficking is considered a type of modern-day slavery. Overall this means that slavery and human trafficking are practically the same, with the exception of what they are named as to reflect the historical context of events and has led slavery to now be called human trafficking. Whether one decides to interchange these terms, neither can downplay the severity from which this issue plagues the UK and globally. It is impossible to have a single solution to stop human trafficking, but for now I will leave with you this statement: “It is crucial that our continuing aim to ensure there are no safe havens for traffickers and that their victims are fully and properly

protected. This is important globally as it is locally." [5]

[1] "Revealed: The Modern-day Slaves of Portsmouth." *ProQuest*. N.p., 28 Sept. 2015. Web. 17 Jan. 2017. .

[2] Patterson, Orlando. "TRAFFICKING, GENDER & SLAVERY: PAST AND PRESENT." Scholar Harvard. Accessed April 28, 2017. https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/patterson/files/trafficking_gender_slavery_12_20_11_cambria__autosaved_.pdf.

[3] "The White Slave Traffic." *The Times*. N.p., 10 Mar. 1927. Web. 6 Feb. 2017. .

[4] "British Girl Arrested as 'human Trafficker'." *The Times*. N.p., 8 June 1974. Web. 6 Feb. 2017. .

Endnotes:

[5] "Human trafficking has long history in UK says Solicitor General." Women News Network / WNN Global. June 18, 2013. Accessed February 20, 2017. <https://womennewsnetwork.net/2013/06/18/human-trafficking-history-uk/>.

[6] Wylie, Gillian, and Penelope McRedmond, eds. *Human trafficking in europe: character, causes and consequences*. Place of publication not identified: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. Accessed February 20, 2017. [https://books.google.com/books?id=zJrWCwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=human trafficking in the united kingdom&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi83N2_g6LSAahUD0GMKHWviBRgQ6AEIJTAC#v=onepage&q=human%20trafficking%20in%20the%20united%20kingdom&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=zJrWCwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=human+trafficking+in+the+united+kingdom&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi83N2_g6LSAahUD0GMKHWviBRgQ6AEIJTAC#v=onepage&q=human%20trafficking%20in%20the%20united%20kingdom&f=false).

[7] Morgan, Kenneth. *Slavery and the British empire: from Africa to America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Accessed February 21, 2017. [https://books.google.com/books?id=u6IUdAAAQBAJ&pg=PA203&dq=involuntary servitude in britain 20th century&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwilt8fqkKPSAhVB2mMKHc0rAuoQ6AEIHDA#v=onepage&q=involuntary%20servitude%20in%20britain%2020th%20century&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=u6IUdAAAQBAJ&pg=PA203&dq=involuntary+servitude+in+britain+20th+century&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwilt8fqkKPSAhVB2mMKHc0rAuoQ6AEIHDA#v=onepage&q=involuntary%20servitude%20in%20britain%2020th%20century&f=false).

[8] Jordan, Don, and Michael Walsh. *White Cargo: the forgotten history of Britain's white slaves in America*. New York: New York University Press, 2008. Accessed February 21, 2017. [https://books.google.com/books?id=V-ygBwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=white slavery in uk&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwihyvaNnKPSAhUP5mMKHawCB6YQ6AEIGjAA#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=V-ygBwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=white+slavery+in+uk&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwihyvaNnKPSAhUP5mMKHawCB6YQ6AEIGjAA#v=onepage&q&f=false).

[9] "The slave trade - a historical background." The British Library - The British Library. March 16, 2007. Accessed March 25, 2017.

<http://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/campaignforabolition/abolitionbackground/abolitionintro.html>.

Geographic focus: UK

Search Terms: human and trafficking, human trafficking, Portsmouth, United Kingdom, UK, traffick*, slavery, slav*

The course theme is, "Roots of Contemporary Conflicts," because I will soon delve further to gather information on the history of the issue of human trafficking and perhaps explain how it is considered modern-day slavery and its "root".

Primary Source Database: The Times

Historical Questions:

Question A:

How has the UK handled human trafficking during the 1920s versus the 1970s or now and were their methods effective?

Question B:

How has the trafficking of humans affected the UK politically and socioeconomically?

Date Range: Anywhere between 1600-2000s