

Justice Peace Links

Justice and Peace Committee – Churchwide Coordinating Team – Presbyterian Women

2018 • Issue 1



Together in Action to end human trafficking

Introduction

January 11, 2018, is Human Trafficking Awareness Day and PW's fifth annual Together in Action Days to end human trafficking! Together in Action Days were begun by the Mission Relationships and Justice and Peace Committees of the Churchwide Coordinating Team in 2013. During Together in Action Days, Presbyterian Women around the country join in taking action on an issue that is important to them. One of the issues important to Presbyterian Women, where we feel lots of energy and an urgent desire for change, is the issue of human trafficking. Therefore, the CCT committees chose it as the issue of focus for PW's Together in Action Days in January.

January 11, 2018, falls on a Thursday, but feel free to hold events through the week and honor this day in worship on Sunday, January 14! Whether you started planning months ago, or are just thinking about what you can do, you will find ideas that you can use in the resources included in this newsletter. It might be as simple as including a bulletin insert and Minute for Justice in worship. It might be a full-blown panel event that includes social service agencies, law enforcement and survivors. It could be a fundraiser for a shelter for trafficking survivors in your community or a mission co-worker who is addressing the issue in another country. Whatever your timeline or group, this issue of *Justice & Peace Links* can help you prepare.

This issue of *Links* is based around the issue of human trafficking and the resources of Presbyterian Women and the PC(USA) to address it. One of the resources recommended is the *Human Trafficking Toolkit* created by the Human Trafficking Roundtable of the PC(USA). The roundtable brings together staff members from several ministry areas within the PC(USA), including Presbyterian Women, Presbyterian Ministry to the United Nations, Presbyterian Hunger Program, World Mission, Office of Immigration, Presbyterian Men and the Office of Public Witness, for the purpose of working together to raise awareness, formulate policy and address the issue of human trafficking. Download the full toolkit at www.pcusa.org/humantrafficking.

The will to survive

By Cathy Chang

Mission co-worker in Southeast Asia

Where did such strength and courage come from? I wondered as I listened to the testimony of a young girl at the New Life Center Foundation in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Someone must have compelled her to believe in a different life than she had, I thought.

She was nurtured by grandparents until she was old enough to care for them. But she endured multiple rape attempts by her father. She told her aunt and then her mother about the attempted rapes; the mother eventually left her abusive husband. But not before her daughter was subjected to abuse and exploitation.

Due to their lack of Thai national ID cards, her family suffered a lack of opportunities. With her father, she performed hard manual labor on a construction site alongside other young children and adults. What minimal compensation she earned went to her parents. Without ID cards, there was no access to school, work, or medical care. Aware of this, her father lured her into traveling alone with him to obtain her ID card. Behind her screams for help at the guest house where they stayed and her running for hours through the forest was a fierce determination to survive.

This young girl now lives in safety and peace. For almost 30 years, New Life Center has provided shelter, therapy, and education for at-risk young girls who are vulnerable to harm, abuse and exploitation. Before arriving there, this young girl's life was limited to the opportunities of an undocumented migrant girl.

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This girl was vulnerable to exploitation because of several factors: she was born a girl; she was born outside of Thailand; she lived with domestic violence; she had no documentation; she worked in manual labor where, in many countries, there is little regard for safety or protection of workers.

Although she temporarily escaped her limitations, many important questions remain unresolved. What led her family to move to Thailand? What is life like now for her younger brother and mother? Did any of her family members obtain Thai ID cards? Where is her father? Who recruited workers for that construction site where she and her father worked? Were there laws to protect her and other underage or undocumented construction workers? What must change for such exploitation to end?

When the girl completed her testimony, all I could utter was something like “Thank you for the courage to share your story. You are a strong girl.” Looking back on that moment, and especially as I look forward, I encourage all of us to acknowledge the Lord, who never grows tired of upholding all our lives, including the life of this one young girl, and the many girls whose lives are saved by ministries such as those of the New Life Center Foundation.

Stories from the United States

- Nadine Hill was an active Presbyterian Woman at Second Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis. She was volunteering at a community center on the east side of Indianapolis when a 9-year-old girl disappeared from the playground. The police later learned that she had been sold by her 14-year-old cousin to a pimp for \$1,200. The girl has never been found. Police believe she was trafficked out of state.
- At 15 years of age, Theresa Flores was drugged, raped and tortured for two long years—kept in bondage, forced to pay back

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As Presbyterian women prepare to engage in national days of action on the issue of modern slavery, it is my prayer that we remember, as Richard Holbrook observed,¹ that trafficked people are first and foremost persons capable of making their own decisions and living out their own dreams. May our responses honor those capacities.

—Arlene Gordon, *retired teaching elder in the PC(USA) and former president of the National Black Presbyterian Caucus*

What does our church say?

There are many PC(USA) policy statements about human trafficking that have been affirmed by the General Assembly.

- “Human Trafficking and Human Rights: Children of God, Not for Sale,” 222nd General Assembly (2016)
- A 2010 resolution by the 219th General Assembly that the PC(USA) urge the United States to ratify the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), including Article 6, which ensures that governments take all measures available to suppress all forms of trafficking and exploitation of women
- “On Preventing the Trafficking of Women, Internationally and Nationally,” 218th General Assembly (2008)
- “A Resolution to Expand the Church’s Ministry with and Advocacy against Human Trafficking,” 218th General Assembly (2008)
- “On Condemning International Trafficking In and Sexual Exploitation of Children,” 217th General Assembly (2006)
- “Resolution in Support of Ongoing Partnership Work with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and the Campaign for Fair Food,” 217th General Assembly (2006)

Read more about most of these policies by downloading the *Human Trafficking Toolkit* at www.pcusa.org/humantrafficking.

What does the Bible say?

The Bible includes many stories about enslaved people and those who enslave them. Choose one or more of the following stories to focus on in this study:

- Abraham and Sarah in Egypt (Genesis 12:10–20)
- Sarah, Abraham’s wife, and Hagar, his concubine (Genesis 21:1–21)
- Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 37–50)
- Hebrews as slaves in Egypt (Exodus 1:1–14)
- Moses’ mother and sister (Exodus 1:8–2:10)
- A concubine’s killing (Judges 19)
- Book of Ruth
- Book of Esther
- Letter of Paul to Philemon

Thirty percent of sex workers in Indonesia are children, according to UNICEF.² More than 14,000 children are trafficked in six provinces in Indonesia for sexual tourism.³ More than 50 percent of children trafficked for sex tourism in Batam, Bali and Jakarta are younger than 16 years old.⁴

What we do to “the least of these” (God’s most vulnerable)

- Jesus said, “[T]he king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you . . . ; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me’” (Matt. 5:35–37). “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me’” (Matt. 5:38–41).
- Jesus also said “‘Then [God] will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me’” (Matt. 5:42–44). Jesus did *not* say “I was a child from a good family and you neglected me.” Jesus added, “Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me’” (Matt. 5:45–46).
- Jesus said, “[J]ust as you did it to *one of the least of these* who are members of my family, you did it to me” [Matt. 5:41]. And, “[J]ust as you did *not* do it to *one of the least of these* who are members of my family, you did not do it to me” [Matt. 5:46]. That is, “When you did not do it to the kid whose mother left, or the child on the streets of Calcutta, the runaway in New York, the orphan in Congo, the girl in the poor side of town whose father molested her, the child sold by her family in Thailand . . . ‘members of my family’ . . . you did not do it to me.” Who are “members of my family”? Who is my neighbor? Anyone in need, regardless of country, faith, gender, age, race, circumstance. See Luke 10:25–37.



For discussion

1. Who has the power in the biblical stories? Who acts? Who is acted upon?
2. Who has the power in the modern stories? Who are the vulnerable?
3. Where do you see tactics used by traffickers in all the stories? Can you identify different kinds of slavery, both ancient and modern: sexual slavery, forced labor, chattel/property slavery, debt bondage?
4. Compare the biblical stories to Cathy’s, Carla’s, Nadine’s, Theresa’s and Kenny’s stories. Are there parallels? What has changed? What has not changed?
5. Does someone in each story right the wrong or bend the situation toward righteousness? Where is God in each story?

an impossible debt as a sex slave—all the while living at home, attempting to keep her family safe in an upper-middle class suburb of Detroit, Michigan. She attended school during the day alongside her traffickers, only to be called into “service” late each night while her unknowing family slept. Involuntarily involved in a large criminal ring, Theresa endured more as a child than most adults will ever face their entire lives. Today, she travels the U.S., sharing her story and raising awareness of trafficking; she also tells her story in *The Slave Across the Street*.⁵

- Kenny Morgan, director of Sunset Gap Community Center in Tennessee, told PW participants on the USA Mission Experience to Appalachia of a 14-year-old girl brought in for counseling. “When she came in, she was oblivious; she couldn’t even move, they had her so doped up. She had dug scabs in her face you could put a finger into. We got her clean in a couple of weeks, and she left. They took her. The sheriff, the police chief are friends of mine. We were trying to figure out who it was. She wouldn’t tell on ’em. We tried. They got her out of here, and there was no trace. We think they took her to Florida.” “They” are traffickers, moving drugs and young women.

Seeking home

By Carla Natan
Member of the Working Group on Violence Against Women and Children and Trafficking in Persons, Ministry of Social Affairs, Indonesia. This story is excerpted from the November/December 2018 issue of Horizons magazine.

Risda, just 14 years old, could not continue her secondary school education because her mother, a widow at 32, needed help caring for her six children. Risda left her remote village in Riau Islands (in

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western Indonesia) to find work. She went to Batam—the largest city in Riau Islands, where her older sister lived—and sold cakes in the market, then worked in a bakery. Her wages weren't enough to make ends meet, so Risda returned home.

After spending a few months with her mother, Risda returned to Batam, where her sister found her a job at a laundry. Risda liked her new job until her boss's friend came in after hours and raped her. She found a new job at the market, selling meals. She collected money until she could return to her home.

Risda's sister called her to work with her in a café in Batam. The job turned out to be markedly different than she expected. She could only endure that job for one month because she could not drink alcohol every day—a requirement of her job as “hostess.” Later, a male “friend” offered her work in a bar as a dancer. She accepted his offer. However, when she asked for her wages, she discovered that her friend had become her pimp and would not give her her money. He offered her work in Malaysia.

While her documents to travel to Malaysia were being processed, another girl who was also traveling to work in Malaysia told Risda that they would not be dancers but sex workers. That's when Risda reached out to a friend who knew of an NGO that helped trafficking victims. The pimp was arrested and sentenced to three to four years for trafficking a child.

Risda's life and her desperate choices echo her mother's life. Risda's mother married when she was just 13 years old, after daily beatings by her aunt. Her new husband's addictions to gambling and alcohol took a toll. Risda grew up seeing her father beat her mother.

Once away from her pimp, Risda was able to complete a rehabilitation program. She exercised, played guitar and studied to pass her secondary school exam. She continues to participate in weekly counseling sessions. She still wants her mother to be proud. ☺

Get involved!

- Download the PC(USA)'s *Human Trafficking Toolkit* at www.pcusa.org/humantrafficking. The toolkit includes several good resources and action ideas.
- Pray for those who are trafficked, their traffickers and those working to create and enforce laws to end trafficking.
- Learn more about migrants and refugees in the November/December 2017 issue of *Horizons* magazine. Displaced peoples are among the world's most vulnerable.
- Learn the signs of trafficking. Be alert to situations in which you might identify victims—restaurants, airports, next door, the “red light” district, produce farms, the factories where your clothes are made.
- Learn more by reading articles, taking a quiz to test your trafficking knowledge, finding out what a “human-rights-centered” approach to human trafficking looks like, and more.
- Use websites like PolarisProject.org, TraffickFree.com, SlaveryFootprint.org and LifeboatProject.org to learn more and find actions you can take (like S.O.A.P. campaigns).
- Use resources such as the *Trafficking in Persons Report*, published annually by the U.S. State Department, to learn and educate others.
- Find out how you can host a free training from Freedom Network USA, sponsored by the PC(USA), or another option for workshops and seminars in your community.
- Support organizations—community centers, libraries, schools, shelters and counseling centers—that can make a difference in at-risk youths' lives.
- Mentor young people who might be vulnerable to unhealthy attention and risky situations.
- See *Interfaith Toolkit on Human Trafficking: Resources for Worship and Action* by the Washington Inter-Religious Staff Community Working Group on Human Trafficking for what you can do as a faith community.
- Also see the *Interfaith Toolkit to End Trafficking* from UNICEF.
- Learn about the Tourism Child-Protection Code of Conduct, an industry-driven initiative to combat sexual exploitation of children in the travel and tourism industries, at www.thecode.org. Order Code Cards from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Human Trafficking Roundtable (email htroundtable@pcusa.org or call 212.697.4568).
- Support ECPAT-USA, a long-time Presbyterian Women partner.
- Learn what “safe harbor” laws are and how to get them through your legislature. Lobby Congress to end criminalization of victims.

Notes

1. Quoted in *Trafficking in Persons Report 2011*, “In Memoriam: Richard Holbrooke (1941–2010),” U.S. Department of State.
2. *East Asia: Children and HIV/AIDS—A Call to Action*, UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Office, 2005, <https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/files/EastAsiaFinal.pdf>, 10.
3. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), “Children in Indonesia: Sexual Exploitation,” July 2010; https://www.unicef.org/indonesia/UNICEF_Indonesia_Sexual_Exploitation_Fact_Sheet_-_July_2010.pdf; cites Directorate General of Tourism Destination Development of the Ministry for Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Indonesia, October 2008.
4. “Stop Sex Trafficking of Children and Young People,” Indonesian Factsheet, ECPAT, 2017; www.ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/legacy/Factsheet_Indonesia.pdf, 3.
5. Theresa Flores, *The Slave Across the Street* (Garden City, ID: Ampelon, 2010).