

## **Human Trafficking: Modern Day Slavery**

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### **Abstract**

*Human trafficking children and adults forced into prostitution, sex work, labor, and victimized by organ harvesting—is a modern day form of slavery that affects over 40 million people across the globe. This moral abomination violates every core principle of democracy, such as liberty, equality, justice, and due process. Human trafficking is an enormously profitable industry that spawns traffickers to engage in violence, coercion, fraud, threats, and predatory actions against the world’s most vulnerable populations, including children, immigrants, the poor, and individuals from dysfunctional families, communities, and nations. It is imperative that all educators recognize the warning signs to help victimized students and teach about this scourge. Human trafficking is an excellent topic for social studies because students may engage with the didactic, reflective, and affective domains on an issue with powerful moral, political, and economic implications. This article provides basic information and teaching suggestions.*

**Keywords:** human trafficking, slavery, liberty, human rights, international law

### **I. Introduction**

Many Americans believe that the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the United States Constitution, adopted in 1865 after the Civil War, abolished slavery and indentured servitude; henceforth, slavery would be an anachronism in a democracy ostensibly committed to liberty, equality, social justice, and due process. Yet, in 2019, there are about 403,000 people, on any given day, including children and adolescents, experiencing modern slavery in the United States (Global Slavery Index, 2018a). In fact, many American students native-born as well as immigrant children are trafficked for sex and labor in the United States (Ellery, 2019). This fact exposes the myth that human trafficking only impacts developing world countries or countries with weak, corrupt, and incompetent governments. Globally, estimates of the number of enslaved persons range from 21 million to 45 million; the wide range reflects the statistical and logistical difficulties in identifying victims as traffickers use sophisticated methods to conceal their illegal and immoral behaviors (End Slavery Now, 2019). Furthermore, there are competing methodologies and definitions that exacerbate efforts to compile accurate numbers, exercising caution when interpreting any statistics or quantitative data is always prudent. Nevertheless, human trafficking is ubiquitous and a fundamental violation of human rights and democratic ideals (United Nations Human Rights, 2019).

Thus, human trafficking is an ideal topic for social studies students because it encompasses powerful moral, historical, political, social, and economic elements that can motivate students to learn more about trafficking and engage in civic action to abolish this barbaric practice. Modern day slavery and historical slave systems (such as the Transatlantic Slave Trade) have a common root: the brutal exploitation of human beings for profit. It is quite possible that educators will have trafficking victims in their classes or schools and acquiring knowledge about human trafficking and recognizing the warning signs are prerequisites for helping to protect students. Education is the best antidote for Americans’ lack of knowledge about trafficking; national obliviousness puts children in all states at risk (Head, 2019). This article will define human trafficking according to international and American law, describe the nature, extent, methods, and consequences of human trafficking, and provide an overview of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Compelling ideas, activities, and resources for teaching about human trafficking will be described for educators. Hopefully, teaching about human trafficking will motivate active student engagement joining domestic and international organizations, voting, protests, activities increasing public knowledge, and in-school efforts to help students at risk of trafficking to abolish trafficking and expand the ideals of liberty, equality, human rights, and social justice. Active student civic participation motivated by a genuine passion to eradicate a moral atrocity is a primary goal of social education in a democracy.

## II. The Nature and Extent of Human Trafficking

The United Nations (UN) passed the Palermo Protocol (2000) designating human trafficking a crime and seeks to eliminate its practice by punishing traffickers; 175 signatories have signed the Palermo Protocol and, as of 2019, 20 countries have refused to sign the law (United Nations Human Rights, 2019). The Palermo Protocol (2000) defines trafficking as using force, the threat of force, abduction, deception, or coercion in any attempt to exploit human beings, including any exchange of money or benefits. The consent of the victims is immaterial if it involves children (under age 18) and any method designed to exploit them is illegal (United Nations Human Rights, 2019). The U.N. proclaims, “Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices like slavery, servitude or the removal of organs” (United Nations Human Rights, 2019). The perpetrators may include businesses, criminal organizations, private individuals, and governments, such as China where human rights, individual liberty, democracy, and due process are virtually absent from the authoritarian political system. The Protocol establishes a variety of services to victims—housing, medical treatment, education, employment, and psychological services—and procedures for international cooperation among countries to stop human trafficking. Despite increased international and national laws, human trafficking remains ubiquitous globally, in part because traffickers conceal their actions, victims are terrified, and there are colossal profits from trafficking.

Polaris, the anti-trafficking organization that operates the National Human Trafficking Hotline, estimates that 4.8 million people (the vast majority are females) are forced to engage in sex work globally (Polaris Project, 2019a). Sex traffickers employ threats, violence, fraud (false promises of employment), debt bondage, and other forms of coercion to force submission from their victims. From 2007 until 2017, Polaris reported 34,700 cases of sex trafficking in the United States (Polaris Project, 2019a). This includes the commercial sexual exploitation of children and infants whose videotaped rapes create profits when sold on social media and other distribution methods (ECPAT-USA, 2019). It is likely that this number is a fraction of the true number of victims, but shame, fear for their safety, or their families’ safety prevent reporting the crime to law enforcement agencies. Simultaneously, experts claim that 20.1 million people are involuntarily laboring in agriculture, mining, manufacturing, construction, hotels and restaurants, and domestic service (Polaris Project, 2019b). Labor traffickers also employ force, threats, debt bondage, fraud, and other means to keep their victims enslaved. Most laborers are males and many are poverty-stricken, powerless minorities, uneducated, and undocumented (in the United States); these traits attract traffickers and significantly reduce law enforcement’s ability to arrest, convict, and imprison perpetrators (Global Slavery Index, 2018b). Since 2007, Polaris states that 7,800 cases of labor trafficking have been reported to American authorities; this number is likely underreported and exacerbates efforts to stop labor trafficking. The U.S. Department of Labor found mandatory labor produced 146 goods in 76 countries illustrating the global nature of trafficking (Polaris Project, 2019b). The United States imports circa US\$144 billion in products from countries that rank high in trafficking and forced labor, such as China, Thailand, India, Malaysia, Indonesia, and others (Global Slavery Index, 2018b). The interdisciplinary nature of the high-tech modern economy means that human trafficking has symbiotic role in international trade and affect all countries to some extent.

Human trafficking is a \$150 billion business that generates enormous wealth for traffickers and destroys millions of lives annually (Human Rights First, 2019). While sex trafficking and labor trafficking constitute the major types of trafficking (Polaris Project, 2019); some victims are forced to be child brides, conscripted soldiers, or kidnapped and killed for their organs; this is especially serious in parts of Africa and Asia (Children and Armed Conflict, 2019). Some specific cultures, countries, or ethnic/religious groups have ingrained practices that violate modern international and national laws and norms. For example, child marriage (forced married before age 18) has decreased from 25% in 2008 to 21% in 2018 (Amnesty International, 2019; UNICEF, 2019). Still 650 million females married before age 18 globally. South Asia (285 million), Sub-Saharan Africa (115 million), and East Asia (75 million) lead the way in the number of child brides (UNICEF, 2019). Child marriage violates Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (General Assembly, 1948) that states, “Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses (p. 44). Once these girls are married, they lack access to education—the single most influential factor in predicting future socioeconomic status and success—and viable economic opportunities. They are more likely to live in poverty, experience life-threatening medical issues during pregnancy, contract HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, and suffer physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, as well as depression, isolation, and suicidal ideation (Amnesty International, 2019; UNICEF, 2019). The victims suffer from a wide array of physical and emotional health issues that require prompt medical attention; this is problematic because many victims fail to report their experiences to authorities out of fear, shame, or meager confidence in the justice system to convict their traffickers.

Although traffickers can target anyone, the most vulnerable include immigrants, children from dysfunctional, abusive, or disintegrated families, children in the foster system, addicts, homeless and runaway children, LGBTQ individuals, and children/adults from war-torn countries (Polaris Project, 2019c).

However, victims span all socioeconomic, racial, sex/gender, and geographic realms and trafficking is a reality whose abolition requires comprehensive education, as well as increased efforts from the international community, national governments, the private sector, and law enforcement agencies. Human trafficking—modern day slavery that destroys millions of lives via sex trafficking, labor trafficking, child brides, organ harvesting, and child soldiers—is a moral abomination that violates all norms of natural rights law and democratic ideals espoused in American and international law. The National Council for the Social Study (NCSS, 2014), in a Position Statement, affirmed the importance of human rights education in the social studies curriculum. It is incumbent upon educators to incorporate human trafficking into their curriculum because it is a vital contemporary topic with historical links and affects American students. Human trafficking is anathema to the ideals, such as democracy, liberty, equality, due process, and social justice, which are the moral foundation for social studies education in a pluralistic democracy (NCSS, 2014). Students must understand traffickers are experts in using social media to recruit their victims. While traffickers still stalk malls, group homes, bus stations, and other geographic locations, modern traffickers use almost every popular social media site, according to FBI special agent Marty Parks (Robertson, 2017). In fact, 70% of sex trafficking begins online (Leins, 2019). Traffickers are skillful at manipulation and flattery; these methods are especially effective with vulnerable adolescents and children. Traffickers and pedophiles searching for victims use chat rooms to establish a trusting relationship before they trap victims. Teaching students to reject all friend requests from strangers is effective in protecting children. Furthermore, parents should monitor social media sites and report all suspicious activity to law enforcement or social media sites (Robertson, 2017).

### **III. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

The end of World War II in 1945 the most lethal war in human history—witnessed the death of 60 million people (15 million battle deaths and 45 million civilian deaths) and 25 million wounded (History Channel, 2018; National World War II Museum, 2019). It is impossible to quantify the emotional scars suffered by veterans and civilians, including Holocaust survivors. Six million Jews, as well as six million others (Roma, homosexuals, individuals with disabilities, and political prisoners), were systemically slaughtered via gas chambers, forced labor, and executions (Berenbaum, 2006). Furthermore, victims suffered from starvation, sexual assault, depression, violence, and infectious diseases. The Nazi Party attempted to destroy Jewish humanity via official policies of genocide spawned by a virulent anti-Semitism (Berenbaum, 2006).

The horrors of the Holocaust motivated the international community to create the United Nations in 1948 in an effort to prevent future genocides, establish world peace, enforce international law, assist with sustainable economic development, provide humanitarian aid, and protect human rights (United Nations, 2019). The U.N. created the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) to affirm the primacy of individual liberties, equality under the law, social justice, and limited government (the idea that national sovereignty cannot justify genocide, slavery, and other human rights violations). The Thirty Articles protect the basic rights of human beings, such as the right to food, housing, education, medical care, travel, and employment. Furthermore, the UNDHR protects freedom of religion, expression, press, and assembly; freedoms so crucial to human liberty they are enshrined in the United States Constitution. For example, Article 4 of the UNDHR states that, “No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms” General Assembly, 1948). Thus, human trafficking is a violation of international law as well as the United States Constitution’s 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which prohibits slavery. Moreover, member states (countries) of the United Nations have created national laws that criminalize human trafficking and seek to impose harsh penalties for individuals convicted of human trafficking. Thus, educators have a strong legal, educational, and ethical foundation to support their instruction about human trafficking.

### **IV. Human Trafficking: Miami-Dade County’s Human Trafficking Program**

Reducing human trafficking, especially efforts to protect children will require public school systems to establish specific programs aimed at educating faculty, staff, and students about this contemporary form of slavery. Social studies courses should include instruction on human trafficking that teaches all interested parties how to recognize the warning signs and information on contacting the proper authorities. However, fighting trafficking requires more than instruction in social studies, a comprehensive program involving state governments and school districts will contribute to efforts to reduce trafficking (Head, 2019). Therefore, in 2019, Florida, with the support of Governor Ron DeSantis, became the first state requiring a curriculum on child trafficking for all K-12 students (Head, 2019). The Florida Department of Health estimates that half of the state’s trafficking victims are under age 18 (Head, 2019).

It is imperative that all students understand human trafficking specifically, how traffickers identify, recruit, and compel children to engage in sex and labor trafficking to protect themselves and their peers from this barbaric fate. The Miami-Dade County Public Schools understands its geography and demographic characteristics dramatically increase the trafficking risks for students. For example, substantial racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and cultural diversity produced by immigration trends is a chief characteristic of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools. There are 250,000 Latino students, 70,000 African American students, and 23,000 non-Latino white students (Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 2019). Minorities, immigrants, high-poverty students, and children from dysfunctional families are more likely to be victims. Diversity, as well as Miami's relative geographic location, renders Miami a hotbed for trafficking. Many students face poverty, language barriers, cultural differences, and ignorance about America's legal system; some students' undocumented status renders them magnets for traffickers and may prevent them from seeking help. Consequently, the Miami-Dade County Public Schools created a program to educate employees and students about human trafficking (Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 2012). This program includes fact sheets produced by the United States Department of Education that detail the definition, warning signs, and risk factors for child trafficking and provides guidance and information for teachers when trying to identify possible victims.

For instance, teachers should look for signs of neglect, abuse, violence, poor health (malnutrition, unmet medical needs), or a student's behaviors (suicidal ideation, depression, fear, anxiety, new and older friends, increase in material possessions, and isolation from peers). Similarly, tattoos and branding, which invoke property rights and control, could be signs of victimization (Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 2012). Traffickers may implant electronic devices in victims to track their location and activities. Educators must be proactive because many victims are petrified and may not talk about it because they or their families face threats of violence. Establishing positive relationships with students based on trust, caring, honesty, and respect may encourage them to tell teachers, who can then take appropriate actions. Miami-Dade's program also provide contact information for law enforcement, medical, legal, and social services organizations to help students and their families. Social studies teachers would benefit from using these resources as they design their curriculum and instructional activities about human trafficking.

#### **V. Teaching about Human Trafficking: Methods and Resources**

Human trafficking provides educators with numerous and diverse goals, objectives, methods, activities, and resources. For example, the topic is suitable for didactic questions (How many people are in modern day slavery? What are the demographic characteristics of victims?), reflective questions (How can society reduce human trafficking? Why is trafficking so prevalent globally?), and affective questions (Why is trafficking immoral? How is trafficking a betrayal of human rights?). Asking excellent questions thought provoking, complex, open-ended, and subject to dissent—is an excellent method to stimulate student concern about trafficking (Chapin, 2015; Zevin, 2015). Teaching about human trafficking requires an interdisciplinary approach incorporating history, geography, economics, and political science/civics.

For example, the author produced a comprehensive PowerPoint presentation to introduce teaching about human trafficking in a secondary social studies methods course. This PowerPoint presentation is composed of several sections designed to offer a comprehensive overview of trafficking and several effective teaching methods. First, to introduce the concept of human rights and trafficking, teacher candidates examine the following quote from Charles Darwin: "If the misery of our poor be caused not by the laws of nature, but by our institutions, great is our sin" (Gould, 1996, p.19). Darwin, a strong opponent of slavery, understood that slavery was a moral atrocity rooted, not in nature, but in human-created institutions. In 2019, 137 years after Darwin's death, modern-day slavery still exists across the globe (UNICEF, 2019; End Slavery Now, 2019). A discussion of Darwin's quote demonstrates to teacher candidates how to introduce powerful moral and political issues with historical overtones. Moreover, using quotes provides opportunities to teach vocabulary skills and the use of analogies, metaphors, symbols, and other literacy devices. Second, the presentation offers a legal definition of human trafficking based on American law and the United Nations "Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons" (United Nations Human Rights, 2019). This discussion is crucial because punishing traffickers requires due process and protecting the rights of the accused. This includes sex and labor trafficking, child marriages, child soldiers, and victims of organ harvesting, all of which are atrocities spawned by profits for traffickers (End Slavery Now, 2019).

Finally, this section describes the physical, health, and emotional consequences of trafficking on victims. This discussion seeks to highlight the affective domain—the development of empathy for victims in such a manner that teacher candidates become passionate about this issue and impart that passion to secondary students. Third, the presentation discusses the warning signs of human trafficking—this includes a meticulous discussion explaining why teachers must acquire an understanding of each student's background—and why high-poverty students, immigrants,

students with disabilities, and students from dysfunctional families are at much higher risk for trafficking. Moreover, immigrant students from specific countries, such as Somalia, Sudan, Afghanistan, and many others in Africa and Asia, are likely to have experienced trafficking, war, sexual abuse, female genital mutilation, child marriage, and other human rights abuses.

These children may require special medical and psychological care; it is imperative that all educators recognize the warning signs and refer students to the appropriate authorities. Traffickers are increasingly targeting American children because of advances in technology (social media sites are effective in recruiting victims) and growing immigration from the developing world.

Fourth, this presentation identifies how educators and citizens can get involved in reducing human trafficking; abolishing it entirely may be unrealistic at this time in history. There are numerous organizations dedicated to fighting trafficking, including law enforcement agencies, the United Nations, Amnesty International, A21 (this group has developed a free secondary school curriculum), and others. These groups welcome new members and offer opportunities to engage in special activities. Educators and/or students can start clubs dedicated to exposing the true extent and harms of trafficking; education is the best weapon to fight any form of injustice (Ellery, 2019). Schools, teachers, and students do not have to be bystanders; they can actively seek change via action. It is crucial secondary students get involved, not because it is a course requirement or mandated community service, but because it is the morally right action to further social justice. Finally, the entire PowerPoint Presentation (and associated materials, such as copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, primary sources, websites, and handouts) employs political cartoons, maps (showing the nature and extent of trafficking in spatial terms), artwork, music, and pictures of victims (some are graphic but required to illustrate the horrors of human trafficking). Images are powerful and stimulate emotions and thoughts in a visceral manner that can have a lasting impact on students. Creating crossword puzzles (vocabulary terms, political ideas, and laws), a Jeopardy game, and short videos enhance instruction. An interdisciplinary approach, incorporating the humanities, science, and technology, is an effective method for teaching about trafficking.

Educators may choose numerous other methods when planning their curriculum about human trafficking. Designing a lesson comparing contemporary trafficking to the Transatlantic Slave Trade fuses history with current topics and illustrates the relevance of history to students. Comparing maps, explaining similarities and differences among slave systems, analyzing legal systems, and structural changes among cultures and countries, and evolving moral standards are excellent activities. For example, it is important students understand the primacy of agriculture, specifically sugar, cotton, and tobacco in the Transatlantic Slave Trade (Walvin, 2018); simultaneously, contemporary trafficking focuses on sex and labor trafficking in industry, mining, and agriculture. Profits are the common denominator undergirding all slave systems. Debates, mock trials, essays, student-produced documentaries, and news reports are excellent student-centered activities. After an introduction to human trafficking, assigning students to create a piece of art, write a poem, draw a political cartoon, or interview a victim or law enforcement official are effective activities to motivate students' concern about trafficking. Many students are adept at technology and producing a multimedia presentation—including interviews with victims and law enforcement officials, videos, maps, charts, music, art, graphs, and other materials—is an excellent project-based inquiry activity. Educators may choose to use the C3 Framework, a comprehensive project-based approach to teaching the social studies (NCSS, 2013). This C3 Framework incorporates compelling and supporting questions, original research, the scientific method, collaboration, and community involvement. A detailed examination of the C3 Framework is beyond the scope of this article but educators may wish to review the entire program online (NCSS, 2013). While the C3 Framework and other activities are time-consuming and require hard work from teachers and students, the results can be an outstanding educational experience that motivates students to become actively engaged in many political, cultural, and economic issues. Fortunately, finding resources, websites, and teaching materials is an easy task.

In addition to the resources used in this article (a brief examination by teachers may yield a plethora of instructional ideas and resources), there are many organizations dedicated to human rights education and the abolition of human trafficking. For example, the Frederick Douglass Family Initiatives (FDFI) is an abolitionist organization that provides educator training, an educational curriculum, and coordinates community resources (Fredrick Douglass Family Initiatives, 2019a). These resources are free to educators who fill out a request form on the website and include student activities and resources. Furthermore, the FDFI has created the *Globalize13*, a secondary school service-learning project that examines human trafficking in the context of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment's abolition of slavery in the United States. Regardless of the activities, resources, and specific curricula decisions by educators, the most valuable contribution to abolishing human trafficking is introducing it in social studies classes—and establishing state and school districts programs, as witnessed by Florida's 2019 mandatory human trafficking instruction—and informing students of its insidious nature and how it destroys lives, including those of their peers.

When Charles Darwin declared, “If the misery of our poor be caused not by the laws of nature, but by our institutions, great is our sin” (Gould, 1996, p.19), he understood that slavery was a moral atrocity rooted, not in nature, but in human-created institutions. The solutions lie with intentional actions taken by citizens committed to the ideals of liberty, equality before the law, due process, justice, and the essential dignity of all human beings. Human trafficking is not immune to abolition; students and other citizens can help abolish modern day slavery via education and effective actions by national governments and international organizations. Social studies educators can contribute to this noble effort by incorporating human trafficking lessons into their courses.

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