

Modern Day Slavery

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation declaring that all persons held as slaves are and henceforth shall be free. More than 150 years have passed since President Lincoln delivered these immortal words, yet slavery is still a reality for millions of women around the world. While slavery may have a different face than in the past, the practice happens to people in every country, across races, and at all ages. Modern slavery is so prevalent there is a good chance that you have been in contact with a modern day slave and not even realized it.

As contemporary slavery has evolved into its modern form, the terminology has evolved along with it. There are several types of slavery that are most common today including bonded labor, forced labor, child labor, sex trafficking, domestic servitude, and forced marriage. When one thinks of modern day slavery, generally forced labor comes to mind. Forced labor is prevalent in many parts of the world. Often people are taken to other countries with the promise of a job only to be forced to work for no pay, frequently in dangerous conditions. Captors take identifying papers from their captives making escape nearly impossible.

Formerly known as indentured servitude, bonded labor or peonage is debt based labor where a person will take a loan or incur a debt, often to pay for immigration to a new country. The captor continually tacks on additional debt for life necessities such as food and shelter. This ensures the debt will never be repaid in the victim's lifetime, forcing those in slavery to pass their debts onto their children and families.

Another form of modern day slavery is sex trafficking, where individuals are kidnapped or coerced into sexual slavery. Victims are then forced into prostitution and usually controlled with illegal drugs and physical abuse.

An especially depraved aspect of modern slavery is child slavery which is not limited to labor, children are also forced to be soldiers and sexually exploited. Children toil in deplorable conditions and often are subjected to mental, physical, and sexual abuse.

Generational slavery, or descent-based slavery, is passed down through generations, offering no chance of escape. Domestic servitude is most prevalent in affluent countries, where people are lured with the promise of jobs to a household and then forcibly kept there to perform household duties such as cleaning and child care. Forced marriage is still prevalent in many countries, even more affluent countries in Europe and America, and often the bride becomes an indentured servant to her husband. Over 51 million girls under the age of 18 were forcibly married in 2003.

There are a staggering 21 million enslaved people worldwide according to the UN's International Labor Organization. Men, women, and children are all trafficked in modern day slavery and children make up one quarter of all those enslaved and men comprise

an additional quarter, leaving women to make up the majority of those entrapped in modern slavery.

The psychological damage one endures while enslaved is often so severe that without proper help and education they are forced back into slavery. They often lack housing, the means to support themselves, and an education. Many women and girls who are forced into human trafficking will not or cannot return to their families because of the shame that accompanies what they have endured. Unfortunately, many have no understanding of how to change their circumstances especially if they are born into slavery.

CWA must take a stand against modern slavery and educate all our members on how to recognize and report victims of trafficking. Our Brothers and Sisters at AFA-CWA have been trained to recognize human trafficking on planes and have rescued several people from modern day slavery as a result. Moreover, we need to regularly reach out to legislators for stricter human trafficking legislation and implore our elected representatives to devote resources to aid victims of modern day slavery.

The National CWA Women's Committee encourages members to attend the 2016 Human Rights Conference in Atlanta, GA where you can learn more on Modern-Day Slavery, as well as several other thought provoking and educational workshops.

As always, if your Local needs help creating a Women's Committee, please feel to reach out to anyone on the Women's Committee.