

IT COULD BE YOUR DAUGHTER:  
WHITE SLAVES TO BABY PROSTITUTES

by

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## Abstract

Human trafficking is one of the most pressing issues of our time, impacting diverse communities in multifaceted ways in every country across the globe. Despite this level of priority and complexity, the popular discourse around human trafficking remains focused on a single narrative. This focus has narrowed our understanding of the issue and stifled our ability to combat it. This paper seeks to analyze the rhetoric on human trafficking in the United States as both cultural myth and propaganda. Through the review of both documentary and fictional media representations of the human trafficking narrative, we create a composite “perfect victim” over three distinct eras. As with any persistent cultural myth, the details of this narrative shift with evolving cultural fears while the ultimate moral of the story remains the same. By unpacking these details, we can better understand the cultural fears of each era and explore why each story captivated the media. Also explored are the advocacy groups which promulgate these narratives, and with them their legislative agendas, which have consistently done more to hinder female migration and further criminalize “sexual immorality” than end exploitation.

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## **Glossary of Acronyms**

**AVA:** American Vigilance Association

**CAASE:** Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation

**CATW:** Coalition Against Trafficking in Women

**COYOTE:** Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics

**GEMS:** Girls Educational & Mentoring Services

**G/TIP:** Office to Combat and Monitor Trafficking in Persons

**IB:** International Bureau

**IAF:** International Abolitionist Federation

**LGBTQ:** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer

**NVA:** National Vigilance Association

**SHI:** Shared Hope International

**TIP:** Trafficking in Persons Report

**TVPA:** Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000

**WAP:** Women Against Pornography

## Introduction

Over the last century there have been three distinct waves of increased attention to trafficking in persons which have focused extensively on the sex industry as the primary, if not only, recipient.<sup>1</sup> Beginning in 1903 with the white slavery panic, the concept of human trafficking in the United States has become a vehicle to express American cultural fears about migration, migrants, and the economic and sexual independence of young women. While the details of the story have shifted over the last hundred years, the moral of the story has not.

This is not to say that human trafficking is not a very real crime in dire need of attention and solutions. The issue of trafficking and forced labor is one of the greatest challenges facing the world over. As borders become more porous, and as economies shift, the question of labor, formal and informal, domestic and international, is becoming more important than ever. This paper, though, does not seek to discuss trafficking as an international crime against persons, but will focus on the rhetoric of human trafficking, exploring this narrative as both cultural myth and as propaganda.

Since the turn of the century, discourse on trafficking in the United States has gone through a number of evolutions, peaking in three distinct periods. This paper seeks to explore the narratives, advocacy agendas, and resulting legislation of each of those three waves. While they occurred in distinctly different eras, they are essentially variations on a theme, with the core cultural myth remaining intact and only details changing. As a cultural myth, the trafficking

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that the sex industry, despite increased focus, is **not** the primary recipient of trafficked persons. According to studies of service providers for trafficked persons, domestic work is the largest recipient of their services. Shelley Cavalieri, "Between Victim and Agent: A Third-Way Feminist Account of Trafficking for Sex Work," *Indiana Law Journal* 86 (2011): 2010.

narrative has created an accepted story around the subject. As propaganda, it has fueled legal and social action to combat this powerful myth, which speaks to many of our cultural fears and concerns in symphony.

## **The Trafficking Narrative as Propaganda**

As we consider this discourse, it is necessary to note that the coverage around trafficking has never constituted simple news reporting over events or studies of the issue. Instead, it has comprised numerous media outlets, both fictional and non-fictional in their work, disappearing and reappearing seemingly of its own volition. From 1900-1920, it is estimated that more than a billion pages were written on the subject of prostitution.<sup>2</sup> In addition to mainstream news media's widespread coverage of the issue during the major waves of discourse, there have also been fictionalized accounts in popular media.

Trafficking has also been discussed in conjunction with an advocacy agenda, whether it be more general abolition, or specific to a piece of legislation. For this reason, the concept of the propaganda model of media is an essential part of understanding the media's role in the trafficking movements over time. The definition of how we will discuss this concept comes from Jacques Ellul's 1965 text, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, which states,

Propaganda is a set of methods employed by an organized group that wants to bring about the active or passive participation in its actions of a mass of individuals, psychologically unified through psychological manipulations and incorporated in an organization.<sup>3</sup>

Edward Bernays updated this definition, noting that "Modern propaganda is a consistent, enduring effort to create or shape events to influence the relations of the public to an enterprise,

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<sup>2</sup> Jo Doezeema, "Metaphor, White Slavery and Trafficking," University of Sussex, April 2005, 4.

<sup>3</sup> Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of the Attitudes of Men*, (New York: Vintage Books: 1965) 61.

idea or group.”<sup>4</sup> The three important points from this definition which will be employed are that the media outreach has been a constructed narrative, constituted psychological manipulation, and that the purpose is to cause action among its participants, all of which are essential to understanding the use of the trafficking myth in propaganda.

The constructed narrative of human trafficking centers on the single story of an iconic victim/pathetic victim paradigm. As described by Diana Tietjens Meyers, “the pathetic victim paradigm requires claimants to have undergone severe, documentable, humanly inflicted harm that they are not responsible for incurring. The irreproachable innocence of pathetic victims is crucial. Otherwise they can be accused of provoking their own suffering...”<sup>5</sup> When reporting on the issue of human trafficking, the personal stories highlighted contain a description of an iconic victim which “created a popular discourse on trafficking that is based on the idea of saving the helpless, beaten, sexually abused, victimized third world woman and child.”<sup>6</sup> This iconic victim has been the central narrative throughout the history of the trafficking discourse precisely because they are engaging in at least one, if not more, illegal activities. By negating the agency of the victim in the story, she cannot be held accountable for her actions, whether it be crossing an international border or providing commercial sexual services, and gives full culpability for the actions to the traffickers being prosecuted.<sup>7</sup> The repercussions of this iconic victim story not only re-appear in the legislation, but in the implementation of the laws themselves. One fact sheet released by the Department of Justice entitled, “Distinctions Between Human Smuggling and

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<sup>4</sup> Edward Bernays, *Propaganda*, (Brooklyn: IG Publishing: 1955) 52.

<sup>5</sup> Diana Tietjens Meyers, “Two Victims Paradigms and the Problem of ‘Impure’ Victims,” *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 2:2 (2001): 258.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Uy, “Blinded By Red Lights: Why Trafficking Discourse Should Shift Away from Sex and the ‘Perfect Victim’ Paradigm” *Berkeley Journal of Gender, Law and Justice* 26:1 (2011): 208.

<sup>7</sup> Jayashri Srikantiah, “Perfect Victims and Real Survivors: The Iconic Victim in Domestic Human Trafficking Law,” *Boston University Law Review* 87:157 (2007): 195-196.

Human Trafficking” even noted, “[p]ersons smuggled are violating the law. They are not victims.”<sup>8</sup>

The psychological manipulation inherent in the anti-trafficking narratives used has been to isolate a single strain of the story, instead of the wide breadth of experiences in trafficking. The reliance on this single narrative has not only been narrow in scope, but expansive in its ability to resonate with viewers. As more coverage of the story fills the news, the more it is considered important by the public. According to the agenda-setting theory “the way an issue or other object is covered in the media... effects the way the public thinks about that object, [and] the way an issue or other object is covered in the media... effects the salience of that object on the public agenda.”<sup>9</sup> In line with the agenda-setting theory, that abolishing the practice of “sex slavery,” which has become the stand-in for all prostitution, is the only way to address a major human rights violation. In the difference between the issue of trafficking and the cultural myth of trafficking, the media has mostly covered the latter, and as one researcher noted, “The dominant discourse of trafficking is based upon a set of assumptions... [that] flow from unexamined hypotheses, shoddy research, anecdotal information or strong moralistic position.”<sup>10</sup> In addition, the bulk of the advocacy which has been attached to media has come from the position of abolishing prostitution, which is an underlying principle, but not an overt message.

To find the push for action within trafficking discourse, we need look no further than the media itself. From the White Slavery era, books such as *The Truth about Women in the White Slave Trade* which ends with a chapter entitled “For God’s Sake, Do Something” compelling

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 192.

<sup>9</sup> Ghanem, 1997, 4. As quoted by Caroline S. Wallinger, “Discursive Divisions in Human Trafficking: Political Violence and Media Misrepresentation.” MA thesis, Arizona State University, May 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Jyoti Sanghera, “Unpacking the Trafficking Discourse” in *Trafficking and Prostitution Reconsidered: New Perspectives in Migration Sex Work, and Human Rights*, ed. Kamala Kempadoo, (Boulder, CO and London: Paradigm Publishers) 3-24. As quoted in Wallinger, “Discursive Discourses in Human Trafficking.”



readers to mobilize.<sup>11</sup> Modern anti-trafficking advocates incorporate mainstream news outlets, with films such as *Very Young Girls*, and social media websites such as Twitter and Change.org in their outreach to promote “public education” campaigns, and encourage people to get involved on a number of levels for legislative and non-legislative change. Advocacy websites such as “End Demand”<sup>12</sup> and the Polaris Project<sup>13</sup> frequently recommend both fiction and non-fiction films in order to learn more about the subject. Media is also responding, highlighting profiles of advocacy groups and integrating themselves into advocacy work. In 1885, journalist William T. Stead “purchased” a 13 year old girl in order to write about the experience of White Slavery.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, in 2004, The New York Times reporter Nicholas Kristof “purchased” two young Cambodian women from a brothel in order to write a series of articles on human trafficking.<sup>15</sup> Also blurring the line between participation and reporting, media outreach is being used to deter possible “trafficking victims” from entering situations where trafficking may occur, but often reflect more on the producer’s prejudices about the target population.<sup>16</sup> This active and purposeful integration of media into advocacy and vice versa is a key component of the human trafficking debates and an important factor in understanding such a discourse.

While this has been one recurring story over the last hundred years, the narrative of trafficking has peaked in three distinct waves, each unique to its context. From 1906-1913, the story of the White Slave was a potent narrative which led to the passage of the White Slave

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<sup>11</sup> Ernest A. Bell, *The Truth about Women in the White Slave Trade*, (Brooklyn: Run For Cover!: 1910).

<sup>12</sup> “Recommended Books and Films,” Demand Abolition, accessed 06 October 2011, <http://www.demandabolition.org/learn-and-act/build-expertise/recommended-books-films/>.

<sup>13</sup> “Plan a Movie Night” Polaris Project, accessed March 10, 2012, <http://www.polarisproject.org/take-action/raise-awareness/plan-a-movie-night>.

<sup>14</sup> Chris Llyod, “WT Stead: Sensationalist or Saint?” *The Northern Echo*, April 10, 2012, [http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/features/leader/9640559.WT\\_Stead\\_\\_Sensationalist\\_or\\_a\\_saint\\_/](http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/features/leader/9640559.WT_Stead__Sensationalist_or_a_saint_/).

<sup>15</sup> Nicholas Kristof “Girls for Sale.” *The New York Times*, January 17, 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/01/17/opinion/girls-for-sale.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Wendy Chapkis, “Soft Glove, Punishing Fist,” in *Regulating Sex: The Politics of Intimacy and Identity*, ed. Elizabeth Bernstein and Laurie Schaffner (New York: Routledge: 2005) 63.

Traffic Act of 1910. This story re-emerged in 1990 with what I will call Foreign Cargo, which catalyzed the passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000. Beginning in approximately 2006, this wave then moved seamlessly into what we are undergoing currently, the Baby Prostitute Next Door. Each wave is distinctly viewed through a specific type of victim, which share many characteristics but differ on a few relevant details. I seek to identify these details, and look at the cultural context which created these three specific stories.

## **The White Slave Panic, 1903 – 1913**

The original conceptualization of the conversation focused on the issue of White Slavery. The issue spent its nascent years in Europe, born out of the growing purity movement of the nineteenth century.<sup>17</sup> The international movement focused on the experience of women from Europe migrating independently to newly-formed colonial regions such as East Asia and the Middle East, often to engage in sex work. Much of the movement was facilitated by a government-sponsored system of brothels, a practice which horrified purity movements and feminists alike. As the debate to end this practice grew, the two opposing sides formed, maintaining positions of either abolition, or regulation, which saw its goal as reforming the existing system. The movement did not find sympathy in the United States until 1909, when international purity reformers encouraged and supported the growth of local, American purity reformers to make domestic calls for change.<sup>18</sup>

The domestic White Slavery movement had a number of differences from its international counterpart. Instead of focusing on international emigration, the domestic literature depicted naïve country women moving into the city, or urban women being lured into poorer urban areas by new immigrants.<sup>19</sup> This narrative complimented the growing trend in nineteenth century literature in the US which often revolved around both the de-sexualization of women in fiction, which grew out of the beginnings of the domestic feminist movement, and the

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<sup>17</sup> Stephanie Limoncelli, *The Politics of Trafficking: The First International Movement to Combat the Sexual Exploitation of Women* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) 42.

<sup>18</sup> Frederick K. Grittner, *White Slavery: Myth, Ideology, and American Law* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990) 61 – 64.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 66-72.

popularization of “captivity literature,” which centered on the cultural myth of white women being abducted by Native Americans on the frontier.<sup>20</sup> Though studies from that time were unable to find any evidence of either large conspiratorial networks, as they had predicted, or wide-spread forced prostitution, as was also claimed, the movement was able to pass the White Slave Traffic Act of 1910, now more benignly known as the “Mann Act,” which for the first time brought domestic prostitution into the purview of the federal powers of policing. It wasn’t long after the passage of the Mann Act that the decline in interest around the topic began. Increasing attention on World War I and the sexual revolution of the 1920s both were contributing factors to the end of the peak of White Slavery as a relevant national issue.

By the time the concept of White Slavery reached the shores of the United States, it had already had a long history in Europe, including an 1899 conference of the First International Congress on White Slavery.<sup>21</sup> Since the 1860s, the UK had been seeing activists such as early feminist Josephine Butler take on the issue of prostitution from a stance outside of the traditional “toleration versus regulation” model and push for abolition. The European Purity movement had, in response to a surge in the regulation and institutionalization of prostitution and concubinage, moved to end these models of regulation and hopefully the entire profession.<sup>22</sup> By the 1870s two international groups had formed to address what they saw as the growing issue of trafficking, the International Abolitionist Federation (IAF) and the International Bureau (IB), whose strong networks of abolitionists were some of the main promoters of the anti-trafficking agenda. At the time, trafficking referred to “any movement of women and girls into brothel prostitution.”<sup>23</sup> The IAF in particular advocated for abolishing prostitution as a profession, advocating for expanding

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>22</sup> Limoncelli, *The Politics of Trafficking*, 46.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 47.

use of “trafficking” to describe the “procuring of any women or girl for prostitution, with or without her consent, within or across territorial borders.”<sup>24</sup> The IAF in particular also saw legislation as a secondary goal for their work, but instead focused on public education as the means of their advocacy.<sup>25</sup> To do this, the IAF utilized the widespread media attention to advocate for their agenda.

The makings of an American anti-trafficking movement were a much slower process, despite the history of the American Purity movement which stretched back almost as far as the European movement. Part of that disconnect stemmed from the content of the advocacy work of each of the different movements. The European movement had focused on the internationalization of prostitution, fighting the presence of state-sponsored and sanctioned brothels and prostitution in newly formed colonial eras. This focus was directly in response to colonizing governments’ pushing to normalize the use of brothels for their forces stationed abroad for significant periods of time. With the acknowledgement of male desire for sex, the colonizing governments wanted to control the spread of disease and prevent inter-racial mixing with local populations, and opted to create a state-sponsored brothel system. The hope was to staff the brothels with women from the home countries, a process which had mixed results. The policies even adopted a system of accepted “concubinage,” where a local mistress would be accepted and receive some of the privileges only afforded to married spouses.

The Abolitionist movement, tightly interwoven with the growing Feminist movement, mobilized strongly around these issues. European feminists such as Josephine Butler saw the informal labor of prostitution in her home country and sought to end what she was degrading to

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 51.

women everywhere. As an extension, the idea of not only condoning prostitution in a country of origin, but sending women abroad to live as state-sponsored prostitutes in a foreign, colonized country, horrified the newly forming movement. This capitalized on fears of both moral degradation through prostitution, but opened the situation to the possibility of serving men of different races, an injustice Butler and the European purity movement could not stomach.<sup>26</sup>

The United States, on the other hand, lacked a colonial presence elsewhere, and the call to end White Slavery and human trafficking rhetoric based on European needs could not gain a foothold in the US. In addition, the US lacked a singularly-focused anti-prostitution organization until 1906. While it fell under the purview of American purity reformers, they considered it secondary to the fight against alcohol.<sup>27</sup> It was not until 1906 – 1907 that the movement found its footing in the US. It was 1906 when the anti-prostitution organizations began to form independently and 1907 when media began on the issue that the cause took off. In 1907 George Kibbe Turner, a journalist responsible for some of the more prominent media pieces of the period, wrote the first major article on White Slavery, coinciding with a tour of one of the leading purity reformers from Europe, William Coote.<sup>28</sup> Coote was there to visit and galvanize several of the local chapters of the American Purity Alliance, which were re-organized to form the National Vigilance Committee.<sup>29</sup> This mobilization of reformers specifically to address prostitution catalyzed the movement, and with it an onslaught of media which described aggressive new immigrants, vulnerable young women dislocated from their homes, and a growing social crisis.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>27</sup> Grittner, *White Slavery*, 51.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 61.

The turn of the century also saw a galvanization of the American temperance and purity movements, which had growing relationships with the vestiges of the abolitionist movement<sup>30</sup> and the nascent American feminist movement. As previously mentioned, the American temperance and purity movements had seen alcohol as their primary target, and saw prostitution and domestic violence as sins which simply flowed from abuse of alcohol.<sup>31</sup> This was unique to the American movement, as the National Vigilance Association (NVA), which focused on white slavery and the abolition of prostitution, had been active in England since 1885. William Coote, who had founded the NVA, had made multiple trips to the US in the years after, trying to expand his message across the Atlantic, only to find a lack of interest. To a country which was not facing the same international challenges, the White Slave myth rung hollow.

The American myth of White Slavery became more potent only after the turn of the century, with a new generation of purity reformers and this new influx of migrants into the country. By 1906, immigration had become a major issue in the United States, and anti-immigrant sentiments had become stronger, after a thirty year period of increasing urbanization, industrialization, and becoming the world leader in a number of industries.<sup>32</sup> This led to a major disruption of the country at that time, and between 1860 and 1910 the urban population had grown from six million to 42 million.<sup>33</sup> The new found mobility of people for economic growth had meant a major restructuring in the landscape and culture of America. Newfound independence had meant newfound disruption, and purity reformers seized on this coalescence.

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<sup>30</sup> Frederick Douglass, "Temperance and Anti-Slavery: An Address Delivered in Paisley, Scotland on March 30, 1846." *Renfrewshire Advertiser*, April 11, 1846, in *The Frederick Douglass Papers: Series One—Speeches, Debates, and Interviews: Vol I.* ed. John Blassingame, et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979) 205.

<sup>31</sup> Grittner, *White Slavery*, 51.

<sup>32</sup> "History, Industrialization and Urbanization," *Country Quest*, accessed March 15, 2012. [http://www.countriesquest.com/north\\_america/usa/history/industrialization\\_and\\_urbanization.htm](http://www.countriesquest.com/north_america/usa/history/industrialization_and_urbanization.htm).

<sup>33</sup> "Industrialization and Urbanization," *Country Quest*, accessed March 15, 2012. [http://www.countriesquest.com/north\\_america/USA/History/Industrialization\\_and\\_Urbanization/Growth\\_of\\_Cities.htm](http://www.countriesquest.com/north_america/USA/History/Industrialization_and_Urbanization/Growth_of_Cities.htm).

When Coote visited again in 1906, touring and reorganizing chapters of the American Purity Alliance into the National Vigilance Committee, was the country ready to receive a message which ingrained so many of the fears, and White Slavery found a new resonance in the new century.

This concern over an increasing flood of migration was not an unfounded one in 1903. Since the opening of Ellis Island, the US saw an unprecedented number of immigrants into the United States. From 1900 the processing center was seeing almost 5,000 immigrants per day, peaking in 1907 with over one million immigrants being processed that year.<sup>35</sup> Beyond the sheer volume of migrants entering the country, the ethnic make-up of the population was also

becoming an issue. This new influx meant a notable shift from primarily Western and Northern European immigration to Southern, Central, and

<b>Country of Origin for Foreign-Born US Citizens by percentage of total foreign-born citizens (table 1)<sup>34</sup></b>			
	<b>1910</b>	<b>1900</b>	<b>1890</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,515,886</b>	<b>10,341,276</b>	<b>9,249,547</b>
Europe	87.38%	85.88%	86.82%
Northern & Western Europe	54.06%	69.67%	78.80%
Northern Europe	29.25%	37.89%	43.85%
Western Europe	24.80%	31.78%	34.95%
Southern & Eastern Europe	33.30%	16.19%	7.88%
Southern Europe	11.42%	5.22%	2.34%
Eastern Europe	21.88%	10.97%	5.54%

Eastern Europe. Whereas in 1890 this population made up onto 35% of immigrants, by 1896 they made up 56% of the incoming migrants.<sup>36</sup> The US Census also noted this change, and from 1890 to 1910, the country of origin for the foreign-born population went from almost 80% from

<sup>34</sup> "Table 4. Region and Country or Area of Birth of the Foreign-Born Population, With Geographic Detail Shown in Decennial Census Publications of 1930 or Earlier: 1850 to 1930 and 1960 to 1990," U.S. Census Bureau, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0029/tab04.html> (accessed 06 December 2011).

<sup>35</sup> "Ellis Island Timeline," The Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation, Accessed April 30, 2012, [http://www.ellisland.org/genealogy/ellis\\_island\\_timeline.asp](http://www.ellisland.org/genealogy/ellis_island_timeline.asp).

<sup>36</sup> Claudia Golden, "The Political Economy of Immigration Restriction in the United States, 1890 – 1921," The Regulated Economy, A Historical Approach to Political Economy, edited by Claudia Golden and Gary Libecap, 223 – 258 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 228.



Northern and Western Europe to only 54% by 1910, with the bulk of the transition being taken up by migrants from Eastern and Southern Europe (see table.1).

In light of the panic around the shifting landscape of the racial make-up, the forced sexual exploitation of young, white women had the additional panic of meaning the increased likelihood of the sexual intermixing of races. This fear is implicit in the primary notation of clients as from distinct ethnic groups, which was exploited by the many purity reformers of the time. In *War on the White Slave Trade: A Book Designed to Awaken the Sleeping and Protect the Innocent*, Ernest Bell commented that “We do not speak against their nationalities but for their crimes... {O}nly an awakening of the whole Christian conscience and intelligence can save us from the importation of Parisian and Polish pollution which is already corrupting the manhood and youth of every large city in this nation.”<sup>37</sup> The influx of recent immigrants was to blame for the degradation of not only young women, but the morals of the country, and it would be the curbing of this immigration which would address this new panic. This caused concern in the American public and spurred legislators to attempt to curb the near unrestricted immigrant flows into the country. Federal control over immigration had a short-lived history by 1903, but prostitution had always been a deciding factor on who was allowed into the country. The 1875 Immigration Act was the first law to exclude groups from entering the country, defining them as on any immigrants considered “undesirable” or women who were entering for the purposes of prostitution.<sup>38</sup> To many, the expansion of Ellis Island, and the incoming flood of migrants only underscored the need to develop more stringent policies regarding entering the country. Between 1903 and 1907 three different immigration bills were passed nationally to expand the exclusion

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<sup>37</sup> Thekla Ellen Joiner, *Sin in the City; Chicago and Revivalism, 1880-1920* (St Louis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007) 127.

<sup>38</sup> “Page Act of 1875” Sect. 141, 18 Stat. 477.

list to include political radicals, polygamists, and the Japanese, among others, as well as requiring knowledge of English as a barrier to citizenship.<sup>39</sup> It would not be long before the expansion of this led to the 1924 quota system, which regulated entrance of migrants based on nationality.<sup>40</sup>

Cultural fears about the shifting familial structure were also essential to the rhetoric of the period. While young women were not only moving independently, they were experiencing marriage and family in new ways, and often engaging in less cut-and-dry relationships with men. In one example of an entire system which grew out of this new cultural structure, New York City saw a rise in the practice of “treating,” in which a man would “keep” a woman, dating her for an extended period of time and often taking care of many of her financial needs while either remaining single, or married to another woman.<sup>41</sup> This meant that the accepted practices of marriage, children, and a house-bound mother were fading in the face of new, larger cultural pressures. While there had been a long acceptance of the economically-motivated migration of men, the feminization of this pattern was unfamiliar and signaled that something irreparable was happening. Like much of the captivity literature, the parable of anti-trafficking became about frightening women into staying home, and trusting their provincial upbringing. In almost all of the stories, some agency is shown on the woman’s part in their desire to move to the city and, to many of the reformers of the time, curbing that decision would have meant that this shift, as well as White Slavery, would have ceased.

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<sup>39</sup> “Naturalization Act of 1906,” Enotes.com, accessed December 18, 2011, [http://www.enotes.com/topic/Naturalization\\_Act\\_of\\_1906](http://www.enotes.com/topic/Naturalization_Act_of_1906).

<sup>40</sup> Immigration Act of 1924, or Johnson–Reed Act, including the National Origins Act, and Asian Exclusion Act PL 68-139, 43 Stat. 153.

<sup>41</sup> Elizabeth Alice Clement, *Love for Sale: Courting, Treating and Prostitution in New York City, 1900-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

## **Creating the White Slave**

The use of media was an essential force in the promotion of an agenda, and the transformations media was taking made it a unique and essential pairing. The story of White Slavery “was narrated not only in a great variety of written forms – plays, fiction, government reports, memoirs, newspaper reports – but also in non-written forms – paintings, photographs, cartoons and sculpture.”<sup>42</sup> The narrative of innocence lost, though, had been resurgent in American literature for longer than the period of White Slavery. Since the nineteenth century, “American Captivity Literature” had been a major literary genre, which centered on the abduction of white women and girls by Native American tribes. In a dissection of the evolution of this specific genre, it is important to note that with the growth of women writers led directly to the de-sexualization of the stories. Whereas they had been provocative in the 1750s, the nascent feminist movement had led women writers to attempt to create a heroine who was emotionally strong and sexually pure or asexual.<sup>43</sup> By the turn of the century, journalism was taking a cue from these best selling narratives and incorporating more personal accounts and story-telling into its reporting.<sup>44</sup> William T. Stead, who some consider the father of modern journalism, was a pioneer exposé-style journalism and close friend of Josephine Butler, and inspired many to tell the story of White Slavery. This style also allowed journalists to become participants in the process in their own right, with Stead trying to “purchase” five young women as part of one of his investigations.<sup>45</sup>

To establish this “perfect victim” for the period of White Slavery in the United States, a number of media pieces were reviewed. George Kibbe Turner, who wrote the original, explosive

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<sup>42</sup> Jo Doezeema, *Sex Slaves and Discourse Masters* (London: Zed Books, 2010) 53.

<sup>43</sup> Grittner, *White Slavery*, 15-17.

<sup>44</sup> Jane L. Chapman, Nick Nuttall, *Journalism Today; A Themed History* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011) 265.

<sup>45</sup> Doezeema, *Sex Slaves*, 61.

story of White Slavery in 1907, published the exposé “Daughters of the Poor” in *McClure’s Magazine* in 1909, and it was one of the formative stories about the issue. Reginald Kaufman’s book *House of Bondage*, published in 1911, told the story of Mary Denbigh, a rural Pennsylvania girl who is lured, abducted, raped, and then sold by a Jewish city-dweller. The novel follows Denbigh as she is forced into prostitution, voluntarily engages in prostitution, and then is rejected by the whole of society and eventually the profession itself, resulting in alcoholism and suicidal inferences. Of note, Kaufman was open about his intentions, and that the novel was meant to “convert as many readers as possible to [his] way of thinking.”<sup>46</sup> Clifford Roe’s 1910 book *Panders and Their White Slaves* purported to be a non-fictional account of cases he had seen in his time working as a public prosecutor. The book covers a number of stories, both from the “slaves” as well as the “traffickers” as they come through the court. Stories include that of 20 year old Adelaide, who was drugged and tricked into leaving her rural home in Illinois, only to be sold to a brothel in Chicago. Also incorporated is Ernest Bell’s *Fighting the Traffic in Young Girls*. Bell was the secretary for the Illinois Vigilance Association at the time, as well as superintendent of Chicago’s Midnight Mission, a group which promoted and executed the “rescue” of women engages in prostitution.<sup>47</sup> Finally, the institutionalization of these ideas comes in the form of The White Slave Trade Act, passed in 1910 in response to the panic over White Slavery. The Act criminalized moving someone across state lines for the purposes of prostitution, and coercion of a woman for “immoral purposes.”<sup>48</sup> This was the first time that domestic prostitution had been brought under the domain of the powers of the federal government as opposed to the states’, and was later restricted through case law to only regulate inter-state travel for the purposes of prostitution, as stated in *Hoke v. United States*, 227 U.S. 308

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<sup>46</sup> Grittner, *White Slavery*, 109.

<sup>47</sup> Joiner, *Sin the City*, 128.

<sup>48</sup> Grittner, *White Slavery*, 87.

(1913) or “debauchery,” as decided in *Athanasaw v. United States*, 227 U.S. 326 (1913), which remains the law today.

The construction of the perfect White Slave began long before the panic crystallized. Harkening back to the American Captivity Literature of the previous century, there are a number of consistent characteristics to the White Slave. She is always a young female, characterized as white, and naïve to a fault. In each story she is tricked by a pimp or trafficker, and finds redemption once she is rescued.

In most of the literature, the youth of the woman is an essential construction of her naiveté, though she is rarely underage. In much of Kaufman’s book, the women are in their late teens to early twenties, and at a time in her life where she is growing restless, seeking to find a husband, and setting her life’s course. As portrayed in the story of Kaufman’s Mary Denbigh, she is unfortunate enough to meet a man who claims to want to marry her, and take her off to Chicago for her new life. She is tricked, of course, and he is a trafficker who leaves her in a Chicago brothel. This stage of her life one in which she is young enough to still lack the trappings of adulthood such as a family or responsibility, but she is still young enough to be considered naïve of the world.

Naiveté is also exemplified by her lack of awareness around alcohol. Roe’s Adelaide is given a foreign drink, which she only later realizes was alcohol, which causes her to lose consciousness, and she awakes to find that she has been carted off to an urban brothel. This lack of agency and awareness is central to the plight of the white slave, whose innocence is protected by her lack of knowledge of the situation. With her inability to conceptualize sex, let alone prostitution, she is recused from the culpability of voluntary prostitution, and her purity remains

central to her identity. Roe, in his role as a public attorney, was exclaimed to the Judge in response to an accused traffickers pleas for mercy, “I say, yes, let her go free when she can return to this little girl her virtue; when she can turn the clock back and make this little girl as pure in mind and body as she was before she was taken to this resort... She has taken from this girl that which can never be restored, her chastity, her honour and purity.”<sup>49</sup>

Also central to her naiveté is a rural background and upbringing. While prostitution occurred in urban areas, the women themselves are generally from rural areas. Much of the work was focused in the growing cities of Chicago and New York City, though the women tend to be from Illinois, Minnesota (Roe) and Pennsylvania (Kaufman). It should be noted that not all of the initial descriptions are picturesque, and some of the young women are described as restless with their surroundings, such as in the case of Mary Denbigh. Bored and displeased with her rural, isolated surroundings and her devout Christian family, Mary actively sought out the excitement of the city, becoming prey for a charismatic trafficker who promised to whisk her off to the city. In responding to her restlessness, Mary remains one of the only victims who does not find redemption at the end of her story, instead becoming suicidal and alcoholic, and assumedly achieving her punishment for seeking out this kind of vice-filled lifestyle. There was some deviation from this with the film *Trafficking in Souls* portraying two new migrants from Sweden, but women who have not migrated are almost never portrayed, and some kind of transportation occurs prior to their abduction. Regardless of her origins, in all but one story, there is a distance which seals her fate – where she was once safe, but upon leaving her home, she is simply prey.

In each of the stories, the White Slave also has a pimp or trafficker, as she could have not ended up in prostitution on her own. With the purity of the victim being without question, as

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<sup>49</sup> Clifford Griffith Roe, *Panders and Their White Slaves* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1910) 24-25.

exemplified by her lack of knowledge and cultural awareness, it is important to contrast her against a purely unsympathetic counterpart. In each of the stories, redemption for the victim comes through the prosecution and punishment of her perpetrator. With no question to her culpability, it is easy to place blame squarely on the shoulders of another party, and they must take the blame for the loss of what is essential to her worth as a person. In that relationship structure, the only answer can be their prosecution, and the only solution must be through law enforcement. In the only story which lacked prosecution for her original trafficker, that of Mary Denbigh, she must succumb to a life of alcoholism and voluntary prostitution. In possessing the original sin of dissatisfaction with her life as it was and the agency to seek out something more in the city, she is already impure. As she is culpable in her own corruption, she can never find redemption. In the end she is rejected by her family, society, and ultimately, even the brothel which once used her.

The other half of this portrait is constructed in the racial makeup of the women, which is not simply “white” but ethnically distinguished as well. In most stories, if the ethnicity of the women is not given, it is usually clear from the clearly Irish and English names used. Even in the case of *Trafficking in Souls*, which displayed two young women coming through Ellis Island as the victims, it was important to the film to know that they had just arrived from Sweden, and not from a more Southern or Eastern European country. The whiteness of these women is an important counterpart to their traffickers and clients, whose race is more often noted. In almost all of the stories, the pimp/trafficker is noted to be Jewish, leading one United States Immigration Commission report to describe one perpetrator as a “typical Jew pimp.”<sup>50</sup> Also

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<sup>50</sup> William Paul Dillingham, *Importing Women for Immoral Purposes: A Partial Report from the Immigration Commission on the Importation and Harboring of Women for Immoral Purposes*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1909) 21.

differentiated was the race of the clients, which were often described in terms of their differing ethnicity. As described by Roe, “[e]ach day it is filled with the garlic and tube-rose of the Italians; the mysterious opium scent of the Chinaman.”<sup>51</sup> Additionally, it was important to differentiate white slavery from the typical use of the term “slavery” which obviously still held a great deal of weight at the time. For the purposes of the White Slave, her whiteness was an essential part of her purity, as well as underscored the violation of being forced to service brothel clients of other races or ethnic backgrounds.

In addressing the twin concerns of female purity and migration within a shifting society, we can find ample reason why these two messages resonated so deeply, especially when we take into account the forces which were pushing the White Slavery agenda. One of the most prominent shifts in society at the time was the impact of increased industrialization, which was causing both domestic and international emigration to urban areas. Further, the changing nature of society meant that familial structures, including how young women approached marriage and family were seeing epochal shifts from the established patterns. These changes in marriage, family, and an increasingly feminized migration were highly impactful on the details of the typical White Slave narrative. It was these distinctive details which would resonate with and galvanize a country into enacting laws to protect the world that they were more comfortable with.

These growing cultural fears and struggles manifested in many ways, but took shape and form when they were then exploited by the two major reform factions in the United States. In a move almost identical to the European structure, it was not until social purity reformers of both religious and non-religious stripes and nascent American feminists aligned their work, and

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<sup>51</sup> Roe, *Panders and Their White Slaves*, 41.



focused on White Slavery as a realization of many of their common concerns. Feminists saw the growing population of single, low-income women entering prostitution and aimed to change that previously accepted narrative. Whereas the previous understanding of women engaging in prostitution was symptomatic of a “fallen women,” this new narrative required the women engaged in this lifestyle to be victims of circumstance and coercion, and required the removal of their agency in the decision to engage in this work. In this, the use of the White Slave was ideal, painting a picture of prostitution still as a crime with legal recourse, but as a crime against women.

### **Congress Steps in: The White Slave Traffic Act**

In response to this advocacy work Congress passed the “White Slave Traffic Act” in 1910, which was the first time the federal government had stepped in to address some element of prostitution. Prostitution laws had been solely granted to the states by that point, and the federal government, in a display of sovereignty over the issue, criminalized the transport of women across state lines for “debauchery” or “immoral purposes.” A 1986 amendment removed the “immoral purposes” clause and replaced it with “any sexual activity for which a person could be charged with a criminal offense, which remains the standard law today.”<sup>52</sup> By 1917 this was expanded to include noncommercial sex, radically changing the scope of what was criminalized under the Act.<sup>53</sup> In 1932, the court determined weighed in on the complex subject of consent, determining that the victim giving consent to be transported for such “immoral purposes” does not expose the woman in question to liability.<sup>54</sup> In 1955 the victim became even less important to the case, and the courts noted that moving two women across state borders only counts as a

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<sup>52</sup>“The White Slave Traffic Act” 1910, 18 UCS 2421.

<sup>53</sup> Caminetti v. United States, 242 U.S. 470, 37 S. Ct. 192, 61 L. Ed. 442 (1917)

<sup>54</sup> Gebardi v. United States, 287 U.S. 112 (1932).

single violation – making the crime not against the women but instead against the state.<sup>55</sup> The effect of these two adjustments was to reiterate that the victim, while a catalyst of the crime, was secondary to the prosecution of the crime itself. The law reaffirmed the supremacy of the federal government, and criminalized the movement of free women, as well as men who had immoral sexual purposes.

This law has also been utilized far more in the interests of curbing “immoral sexual behavior” than trafficking since its passage. In the decision of *Cleveland v. United States*, the immoral sex defined by the bill was further enlarged to include polygamy as well.<sup>56</sup> Many of those prosecuted under the law were unmarried, consenting adults traveling together, as well as men who were paying the passage of women to join them. Additionally, “immigrants traveling and seeking to reunite with loved ones were especially vulnerable.”<sup>57</sup> Also charged under the law were a number of individuals who pushed racial or social boundaries, including Jack Johnson, an African-American heavy-weight boxer who was arrested for transporting his white girlfriend, Charlie Chaplin, who paid for the travel of his mistress to join him in Los Angeles, and Chuck Berry, who was travelling with an underage companion of Apache background.<sup>58</sup>

## **The Disappearance of the White Slave**

The end of the White Slavery came in as abruptly as its entry into the American consciousness. In 1913, the panic lost one of its greatest champions when the American Vigilance Association merged with the American Federation of Sex Hygiene, and changed its

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<sup>55</sup> *Bell v. United States*, 349 U.S. 81 (1955).

<sup>56</sup> *Cleveland v. United States*, 329 U.S. 14 (1946).

<sup>57</sup> Alan Kraut, “Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Series A: Subject Correspondence Files, Part 5: Prostitution and ‘White Slavery’.” (Bethesda: University Publications of America, 1997). vi.

<sup>58</sup> Eric Weiner, “The Long, Colorful History of the Mann Act,” NPR.com, March 11, 2008, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=88104308>.

focus from morally-inspired politics on sexuality to health and hygiene-focused education. Roe, one of the lead journalists for these stories, was becoming increasingly isolated from the AVA, who was trying to curb the literary flexibility he had taken in the past.

The relationship with media was also dissolving the years after the White Slave Traffic Act was passed. Compounding these new divisions, reports and articles were exploding which criticized the panic and its reformers. The same magazines which had once been flooded with harrowing accounts were now populated with articles questioning the very basis of the panic, including one entitled, “Is White Slavery Nothing More than a Myth?” Studies were also undermining the fervent need to curb these practices, including an 1913 English study in Teresa Billington-Grieg which could not verify a single documented disappearance as a result of white slavery.<sup>59</sup>

The panic was even losing steam in fictional media, which was seeking to enforce morality through stories which would not titillate viewers’ more prurient interests. In 1921, the National Association of the Motion Picture Industry adopted the “Thirteen Points,” which were rules they expected filmmakers to abide by in order to keep films appropriate for American audiences. The second point on the list expressly prohibited films “based upon white slavery or commercialized vice or scenes showing the procurement of women or any of the activities attendant upon this traffic.”<sup>60</sup> This attempt at self-policing was unsuccessful, but a number of different non-governmental groups, including the Association of Motion Picture Producers, and the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, each signed similar codes in 1927 and 1930, and each specifically listed “white slavery” as a banned topic for films. In 1934, though,

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<sup>59</sup> Grittner, *White Slavery*, 74-75.

<sup>60</sup> Stephen Tropiano, *Obscene, Indecent, Immoral and Offensive* (New York: Limited Editions, 2009) 265.

the studios, in coordination with these organizations created the Production Code

Administration, who was responsible for enforcement, and now required films to be certified before release. From then on, films which did not meet the standards were either denied a certificate or held from release until modifications were made, effectively guaranteeing the disappearance of white slavery from film.<sup>61</sup>

The United States was also re-focusing its international attention elsewhere as 1914 ushered in the First World War as well as an end to the flood of immigrants from Europe

entering the country. Additionally, the countries of origin from 1915 – 1960 were almost exclusively from Europe.<sup>63</sup> As noted in Table 2, the two World Wars kept immigration low and off the minds of Americans for decades. In Europe, this

<b>Immigrant Entry in the Unites States, 1894 – 1960 (table. 2)<sup>62</sup></b>		
<b>Years</b>	<b>Average Year Total on Immigrants into the US</b>	<b>Immigration Rates (Per 1000 Population)</b>
1894 – 1899	276,547	3.9
1900 – 1914	891,806	10.2
1915 – 1919	234,536	2.3
1920 – 1930	412,474	3.6
1931 – 1946	50,507	0.4
1947 – 1960	252,210	1.5

was not the case, and the issue of human trafficking continued to garner attention, securing a number of international treaties. The increasing isolation of the United States from international matters made it even more challenging for the issue to gain attention domestically. It would not be until immigration and advocacy forces merged again that the ghost of the white slave, still alive in her victimization and innocence, would resurface.

In the years after White Slavery had fallen to the wayside, there were multiple trajectories around trafficking and the criminalization of prostitution, which had not been inextricably linked with trafficking and exploitation. Internationally, two protocols were passed, in 1933 and 1949,

<sup>61</sup> Tropiano, *Obscene, Indecent, Immoral and Offensive*, 269-275.

<sup>62</sup> "Immigration to the United States," Economic History Association, February 1, 2010, accessed: April 12, 2012, <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/cohn.immigration.us>.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

which further criminalized the trafficking of persons. In 1933, the League of Nations passed the International Convention for the Suppression of Trafficking in Women, which criminalized the movement of women across borders for the purposes of prostitution.<sup>64</sup> This, again, identified the international dimension of trafficking as the primary issue, and left domestic prostitution laws untouched, reaffirming national borders and the importance of mono-ethnic coupling. In addition, it includes the phrase “even with her consent” in the definition, underscoring that there can be no voluntary movement for the purposes of prostitution. The 1949 protocol, on the other hand, removed the international requirement for trafficking, defining it simply as, “procure, entices or leads away, for the purposes of prostitution, another person, even with the consent of that person.”<sup>65</sup> Neither treaty was signed by the United States.

By 1960, the subject had been dead for some time. While immigration was beginning to once again inch up, the influx of non-European migrants would not occur for another decade, when the percentage of immigrants from Asian countries would spike from 13% to 35%.<sup>66</sup> As, if not more, important was a radical shift in the acceptance of sexual activities and exploration in the 1960s. What would become the second wave of feminism was focused on sexual privacy and reproductive rights. By 1962, 1.187 million women were using the oral contraceptive, the Pill, which had only been introduced two years prior.<sup>67</sup> Additionally, 1965 – 1975 saw a marked increase in the number of unmarried women engaging in pre-marital sex.<sup>68</sup> Books such as Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963, indicated an increasing awareness and liberation of women’s sexuality, and promoted a corporeal autonomy over common social mores

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<sup>64</sup> Doezeema, *Sex Slaves*, 110

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 111

<sup>66</sup> “Immigration to the United States.”

<sup>67</sup> David Allyn, *Make Love, Not War: The Sexual Revolution: An Unfettered History* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>68</sup> David M. Heer; Amyra Grossbard-Shechtman, “The Impact of the Female Marriage Squeeze and the Contraceptive Revolution on Sex Roles and the Women's Liberation Movement in the United States, 1960 to 1975,” *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, Vol. 43, No. 1. (Feb., 1981), pp. 49-65.

as the deciding factor in sexual decisions. Divorce also saw a significant and stark increase from 1960 – 1975, increasing from 9.3 divorces per 1000 in 1960 to 20.3 in 1975.<sup>69</sup>

Complimented by this shift into increasing permissibility at home was an increasingly liberal entertainment industry, as the 1960s saw a rise in pornography, exploitation films, and more sexuality in mainstream films. In the late 1940s, a Supreme Court decision radically changed the Hollywood Studio system, which relied on monopoly-style practices to keep afloat. By the end of the 1950s, financial woes, union strikes, and the rise of television meant that the system, which had been the backbone of the self-regulatory system around enforcing social morality in film, crumbled. With an immediate decrease in the amount of oversight, it took only a few years for previously-taboo subjects to grow in prominence in film. Exploitation films which featured overt sexuality, violence, and socially taboo subjects like cannibalism and Nazi culture exploded in theaters across the country. With the embracing of counter and sub-cultures in exploitation films, the sex industry was not off-limits as a passing mention and one of the most famous exploitation films, *Faster Pussycat! Kill! Kill!* (1965) features three go-go dancers as not victims, but thrill-seeking aggressors. The decline in drive-in films in the 1960s also provided new audiences to an increasing number of store-front theaters in the country. In addition, the increasing acceptance of the 16mm camera, a cheaper camera than the industry standard of 35mm, meant that it took significantly less capital to make films, a nuance which the pornography took to immediately.<sup>70</sup> Even mainstream films saw an increase in sexuality, as the 1960s brought the James Bond series, which began in 1962 with *Dr. No* and featured the curves of Ursula Andress as Honey Ryder, and *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961), with good girl Audrey Hepburn playing a thinly-veiled escort. With the permissibility and newfound freedom of the

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 55.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

1960s, it would have been impossible to promote an advocacy agenda which so readily sought to punish sexuality, especially women's.

In the time between these two waves, journalism also lacked the language to discuss these issues. Between 1913 and 1980, the New York Times did not use the term "sex trafficking," or "sex slave," and used the term "sex slavery" twice in the opinions section entitled "Topic of the Times", once in a 1926 in reference to Africa and Asia and once in 1937 referring to the Soviet Union.<sup>71</sup> Though the use of the term "white slavery" declined, it did not disappear and the phrase appears numerous time in the paper between 1913 and 1980. As time wore on, though, the term became significantly less potent, and was used often in passing reference to a conviction,<sup>72</sup> or as a reference to a historical episode in time.<sup>73</sup> In many of those uses, as well, a judgment is made on the term or the time, such as in the article "Woman Deported Twice on Moral Charges is Held," where the two moral charges were prostitution and white slavery. One of the last uses of the term to discuss domestic migration of women for the purposes of prostitution was in 1947, detailing the federal raid on a brothel in Indiana which result in 47 arrests, though only 11 of those under the Mann Act.<sup>74</sup> The term "human trafficking" was also used twice during the period, both times in reference to the smuggling of refugees out of East Germany.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Search of the New York Times Archives conducted by author, March 30, 2012. The two articles appeared in the section "Topics of the Times," and neither includes an author. The first also lacked a title and appeared on August 31, 1927. The second was entitled "Soviet Facial Decoration," and appeared on November 17, 1937.

<sup>72</sup> "Women Deported Twice on Moral Charges is Held," The New York Times, July 30, 1964.  
<http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive/pdf?res=FA0C1EFF3A5B1B728DDDA90B94DF405B848AF1D3>.

<sup>73</sup> Gilbert Millstein, "Coney Island Forever, Coney Island," The New York Times Magazine, July 18, 1976, p154.  
<http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive/pdf?res=F30D12F9355E1A738DDDA10994DF405B868BF1D3>.

<sup>74</sup> "47 Seized in Raid by FBI on Slavers" The New York Times, November 24, 1947.  
<http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive/pdf?res=F70D1EFE3B58147B93C6AB178AD95F438485F9>.

<sup>75</sup> "East Germany Jails a Refugee Smuggler," The New York Times, January 27, 1976, and Ellen Lentz, "East German who Arranges Human Barter," The New York Times, May 6, 1978.

This was not to say that there was not language to discuss the issue of labor exploitation

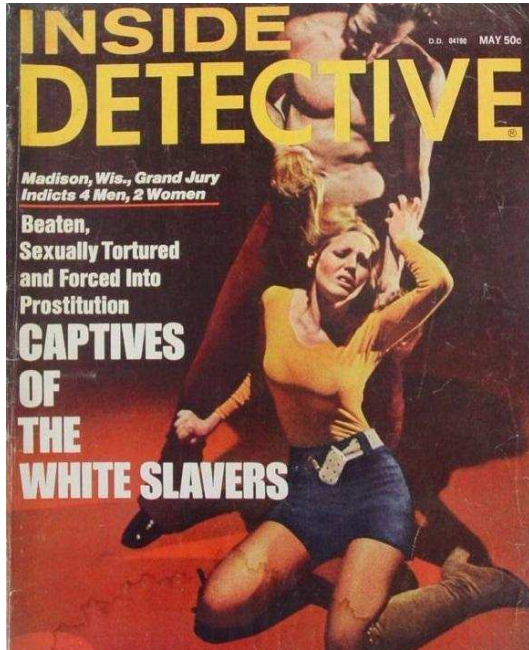


Fig 1. Cover of Inside Detective, May 1972

in other contexts. Organized labor, especially for low-income workers, saw some of its greatest strides from 1920 through the 1990s including the Norris-Laguardia Act of 1932, labor programs under the New Deal, and the passage of the Occupational Health and Safety Act of 1970.<sup>76</sup> In addition, labor was forming a strong relationship with communities of color and becoming important proponents in the Civil Rights movement, seeing their struggles as inherently interconnected. In 1972 – 1974,

specialized groups such as the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, and the Coalition of Labor Union Women formed, cementing the relationship between factions fighting for civil rights and the larger labor movement.

In the years after White Slavery in the United States, prostitution was becoming increasingly divorced from the trafficking in persons language. While the term was still used sporadically in media (See fig 1)<sup>77</sup> prostitution was developing its own unique identity and history. In the early 1970s, sex worker rights were not only forming, but becoming part of law. The decade saw the legalization of brothel-based prostitution in rural counties in Nevada in 1971 and the formation of the first US-based sex worker organization, Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics

<sup>76</sup> “Labor History Timeline,” AFL-CIO, accessed March 30, 2012, <http://www.aflcio.org/About/Our-History/Labor-History-Timeline>.

<sup>77</sup> In May, 1972 the men’s magazine Inside Detective featured a cover article entitled, “Beaten, Sexually Tortured and Forced into Prostitution/Captives of the White Slavers.”



(COYOTE) in 1973. The group targeted decriminalization of prostitution on a state-level, but included workers from numerous erotic professions within their ranks, and also combated neglect in health services and social stigma against the industry. The organization aimed to move sex work from a social ill, as with the connection of prostitution and trafficking, to a legitimate profession.<sup>78</sup> While COYOTE had strong links to the early second wave of the feminist movement, these two elements parted ways as the issue of prostitution became more contentious. Internationally, the sex worker movement was gaining popularity and notoriety as well, including a demonstration in Lyon, France in 1975, the birth of AMEPU in Uruguay in 1982, and the World Whore Congress, held by the International Committee for Prostitutes' Rights in 1985.<sup>79</sup>

In the late 1970s and early 1980s the American Feminist movement was also seeing an evolution and the beginning of the end of its second wave. As the movement sought to take on issues and rights which were more social than civil, including contraceptives and sexuality, a rift began to emerge within the movement itself. The calls for more inclusion of rights for groups such as sex workers co-occurred with the increasing critiques of racial and class bias of the movement in general, which saw a concerted rise in 1975.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> "COYOTE," Prostitutes Education Network, [<http://www.bayswan.org/COYOTE.html>] Accessed: Mar 28 2012.

<sup>79</sup> Dan Gallin, "Note on the International Sex Workers' Movement," Global Labour Institute, September 17, 2007, [http://www.globallabour.info/en/2007/09/note\\_on\\_the\\_international\\_sex.html](http://www.globallabour.info/en/2007/09/note_on_the_international_sex.html).

<sup>80</sup> Lisa Duggan and Nan D. Hunter, *Sex Wars* (New York: Routledge, 2006) 20.

## **Becoming Foreign Cargo, 1976 - 2006**

As stated, the mid-1970s saw the beginning of a rift forming within a previously united women's movement over issues of class, race and sexuality. In 1976 the divisions over sexuality became all the more concrete with the formation of Women Against Pornography (WAP), which focused on combating pornography through a combination of lawsuits and legislative means. The group was founded by leading feminist voices such as Susan Brownmiller, whose work had already been receiving criticism from more marginalized factions of the women's movement, including women of color and economically disempowered women for a lack of consciousness around race and class. WAP debated from the beginning about being inclusive of sex workers and groups like COYOTE, but eventually took a strong stance against prostitution, conflating it with trafficking as a core tenant in their work.<sup>81</sup> In 1983, the anti-pornography movement, led by the WAP and individuals including Andrea Dworkin and Catherine McKinnon, began drafting legislation which would ban pornography on the premise that all pornography was exploitation of women. The focus on anti-pornography work also alienated lesbian separatists, who were frustrated with the narrow focus.<sup>82</sup> The anti-pornography coalition drafted and successfully lobbied the Minneapolis City Council into adopting the law in 1984, sealing the fractioning of second wave feminism and the direction that the abolitionist movement would take in the United States. The ordinance was immediately opposed by a number of feminist groups. In 1985, the Feminist Anti-Censorship Taskforce (FACT), and eighty other self-identified feminists filed an amicus brief in support of repealing the legislation when it finally reached the U.S. Appeals

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<sup>81</sup> Norma Ramos and Nadine Strossen, "A Conversation About Pornography" Interview. Charlie Rose, January 19, 1995.

<sup>82</sup> "Brooke," Off Our Backs, 9:10, (Nov 30, 1979) 24.

Court. A year later the bill was repealed as unconstitutional to the relief of critics speaking to both feminist and First Amendment claims. The same year, lesbian pornography magazines began to be distributed in San Francisco and Boston.<sup>83</sup>

It was this legislative defeat, and the failure of their other legal efforts of suing several pornography publishers which forced the WAP to investigate new directions for both the abolitionist movement and this faction of the feminist movement. This new direction was found through the collaboration of Dorchen Leidholdt, a leader of the WAP at that time, and WHISPER, an anti-prostitution organization and service provider for individuals formerly in the sex trade. In 1988, these two groups, with the philanthropic support of Laura Lederer, put together a conference entitled, “Trafficking in Women” and identified this as the new primary goal of that segment of the movement. Leidholdt described the purpose of the conference as such, “What we hope to accomplish is to get feminists and others to rethink the pornography and prostitution issues from the vantage point of the women who are most victimized by the institutions and simultaneously flaunted and made invisible.”<sup>84</sup> COYOTE, an organization which was built by and for those engaged in prostitution, was not in attendance. It was at this meeting that a new organization was formed, the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), with activists including Leidholdt, Kathleen Barry and Norma Ramos among the leadership, all of which coming out of the WAP.<sup>85</sup> By this point, these defeats had also alienated more marginalized groups from the WAP message, including sex workers and LGBTQ-identified groups. The silencing of these marginalized groups, and the singularity of their work, directly contributed to the abolitionist stance which groups like CATW still promote. By 1990, CATW

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 20 – 22.

<sup>84</sup> Dorchen A. Leidholdt, “Demand and Debate,” Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, 2004, accessed March 18, 2012, <http://action.web.ca/home/catw/readingroom.shtml?x=53793>.

<sup>85</sup> Kevin Bales and Ron Soodalter, *The Slave Next Door: Human Trafficking and Slavery Next Door* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009) 109.

and the new-found movement to abolish prostitution were primed to find its new perfect White Slave.

The rest of the world, though, was focused halfway around the globe on another major re-envisioning. In Eastern Europe, 1989 was a watershed year which saw revolutions in Poland, Hungary, East Germany, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Romania, as well as the rumblings which would signal the collapse of the Soviet Union. A period of economic, social and political liberalization of the 1980s had begun to open up the region to democratic reform and additional political parties. On December 25, 1991 the duality of the international scheme officially collapsed as the Soviet Union dissolved and, in total, sixteen states declared their independence.

	<b>Immigrant Admissions in the United States, 1988 - 1991<sup>86</sup> (table 3)</b>				<b>Percentage Increase, 1988 - 1991</b>
<b>Region</b>	<b>1988</b>	<b>1989</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1991</b>	
<b>Europe</b>	64,797	82,891	112,401	135,234	105.53%
Russia	2,949	11,128	25,524	56,980	1,832.18%
Poland	9,507	15,101	20,537	19,199	101.95%
<b>North America</b> Mexico & Canada	250,009	607,398	957,558	1,210,981	384.37%
<b>Africa</b>	18,882	25,166	35,893	36,179	91.61%
<b>Central America</b>	30,715	101,034	146,202	111,093	261.69%
<b>South America</b>	41,007	58,926	85,819	79,934	94.93%
<b>Asia</b>	264,465	312,149	338,581	358,533	35.57%
<b>Oceania</b>	3,839	4,360	6,182	6,236	62.44%
<b>Caribbean</b>	112,357	88,932	115,351	140,139	24.73%
<b>Total</b>	<b>643,025</b>	<b>1,090,924</b>	<b>1,536,483</b>	<b>1,827,167</b>	<b>184.15%</b>
Source: Department of Homeland Security, Yearbook of Immigrant Statistics, 1998					

The ripple effects of the collapse of the USSR were widespread, impacting every nation and economy in different ways. The dissolution had ruptured a number of economic ties, and the Eastern Bloc saw a decimation of its living standards as each was now forced to re-negotiate

<sup>86</sup> Department of Homeland Security, "Fiscal Year 1998 Immigrant Yearbook, Table 3," Department of Homeland Security, accessed Mar 28, 2012, <http://www.dhs.gov/files/statistics/publications/YrBk98Im.shtm>.

economic relationships without the backing of the super power. Russia itself saw a staggering decline of its GDP after a taking the recommendations of the International Monetary Fund and the United States to institute a policy of “shock therapy.” In 1998, the resulting hyperinflation, government payment defaults, and the concurrent Asian market financial collapsed caused a currency collapse and financial crisis in Russia.<sup>87</sup> Other former Eastern Bloc countries saw major declines as well, including Poland, which saw a 7% decline in GDP in 1991.<sup>88</sup>

This series of collapses had a number of effects for the United States, but one of the most stark and challenging was the influx of immigrants to the United States, which close to doubled between 1988 and 1989, and continued to climb every year after (See table 3). In that year, every region of the world climbed in the number of migrants they were sending into the United States except the Caribbean, in both immigrant and nonimmigrant admissions. Between 1988 and 1991 when the Soviet Union fell, overall numbers of immigrant admissions rose a staggering 184%. Further, 1989 and 1990 posed two of the greatest single-year jumps in immigrant admissions since 1900, and are the only years upon which two consecutive years had increases greater than 40%.<sup>89</sup> It is also important to note that this only accounts for documented migration.

The United States addressed this growing migration with new legislation to update the process which had been established decades early. From 1965 to 1996, five major immigration bills were passed which updated the system, beginning with the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act.<sup>90</sup> The Act created an overhaul of the prior system, which relied on quotas, and

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<sup>87</sup> Robert M. Birkenes and John A. Pennell, “The Russian Financial Crisis: Causes and Effects on ENI Countries,” USAID, June 4, 1999, [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PNACF234.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNACF234.pdf).

<sup>88</sup> “Annual Economic Indicators, Part VI,” Central Statistics Office of Poland/*Główny Urząd Statystyczny*, accessed March 1, 2012 [http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/PUBL\\_annual\\_economic\\_indicators\\_part\\_IV.xls](http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/PUBL_annual_economic_indicators_part_IV.xls).

<sup>89</sup> Department of Homeland Security, “Fiscal Year 1998 Immigrant Yearbook, Table 1,” Department of Homeland Security, accessed Mar 28, 2012, <http://www.dhs.gov/files/statistics/publications/YrBk98Im.shtm>.

<sup>90</sup> Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, Hart-Celler Act, INS, Act of 1965, Pub.L. 89-236.

replaced it with a hierarchy which favored family-sponsored immigration, as well as additional categories, many for economic migration. This was again expanded with the 1990 Immigration Act, which included significantly more opportunities for employment-sponsored migration. In 1996, the process again went through a transition to become much more stringent, when the number of criminal activities for which immigrants could be deported or face mandatory detention for exploded.<sup>91</sup>

American foreign policy shifted as well after the collapse, as the country was no longer being matched by an equal power in polar opposition to its work. As the only major power left, the US took its role as the world's guardian seriously, and pushed to aggressively expand its interests and become an active participant in every corner of world affairs. The collapse of the Soviet Union had unleashed a multitude of centuries-old ethnic and regional struggles which had been held at bay under Soviet rule. The United States sought to take the lead on banding together a disparate Europe for the first time in history, with social and economic powers going to the European Union and defensive strategy collapsed into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. At the same time, the US was attempting to develop a new relationship with Russia, and sought to bring the newly formed state into its vision for Europe.<sup>92</sup>

In the rest of the world, American foreign policy moved towards assertive or aggressive multilateralism with the Clinton administration. The concept, unveiled by then-Governor Clinton in 1991, was a state-building and foreign policy tool which emphasized, “‘enlargement’ of the community of free nations; mutual moral, financial, and political benefits; and the expansion of

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<sup>91</sup> Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, Division C of Pub.L. 104-208, 110 Stat. 3009-546, enacted September 30, 1996.

<sup>92</sup> James M Lindsay, “The Globalization of Politics: American Foreign Policy for a New Century,” Brookings Review Winter: 2003, <http://www.cfr.org/world/globalization-politics-american-foreign-policy-new-century/p6330>.

democracy and economic progress.”<sup>93</sup> This policy, along with the new aggressive stance, had mixed results, as the Clinton Administration faced ethnic strife and warfare in Somalia, the Balkins, Rwanda, Haiti, Israel, Iraq, and the nascent moments of what would become the “War on Terror.” For better and for worse, the Administration chose the places where it felt it could intervene, and spent the most amount of time focusing on the Newly Independent States. The Bosnian War, which was marked by ethnic strife between a number of the ethnic groups in the region, lasted the entire Clinton presidency and demonstrated a number of the challenges and successes throughout its lifecycle. It also underscored public familiarity with the condition in the Newly Independent States, engaging sympathy and concern.

What did not fare as well was involvement in Africa, which the Clinton Administration had a more mixed approach to. After the Battle of Mogadishu had opened the administration to criticism for its involvement in Somalia, Clinton increased and then withdrew troops in the country in 1994. Somalia fell into disarray and the American public severed its interest in the country, if not the continent. The very next month, warfare broke out in Rwanda, and Clinton could not muster the same interest in intervention, opting to only do airdrops of critically needed supplies. This failure to intervene and the atrocities which followed led to an evolution of foreign policy, expanding the importance of the world community, and underscoring the need to intervene in spaces where governments saw fit. With the conclusion of the Balkans in 1999 and the admission of President Clinton in 1998 that the failure to intervene in Rwanda was an unambiguous failure of the world community, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), sponsored by the Canadian government drafted “The Responsibility

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<sup>93</sup> I.A. Mohabier, “Multilateralism: An Approach to Conflict Resolution and Peace Building,” ArticlesBase, Feb. 23, 2010, <http://www.articlesbase.com/politics-articles/multilateralism-an-approach-to-conflict-resolution-and-peace-building-1893822.html>.

to Protect” in 2000. The new doctrine laid out that every state had a responsibility to the world community, and that “where a population is suffering serious harm, as a result of internal war, insurgency, repression or state failure, and the state in question is unwilling or unable to halt or avert it.”<sup>94</sup>

These factors created a perfect storm when it came to not only the implementation of trafficking laws, but the importance of the United States’ perspective in the 2000 United Nations’ Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, which would come to be known as the Palermo Protocols.

In the United States, white slavery had almost entirely fallen off the map. In The New York Times, between 1960 and 1980, the term “white slavery” was only used a handful of times, and neither “sex slavery” nor “sex trafficking” were being used yet.<sup>95</sup> A new parable had to be created, and a new victim resurrected to achieve the same gains which had been seen at the turn of the century. In 1995, CATW co-founder Kathleen Barry wrote *Prostitution of Sexuality*, which became a manifesto for modern abolitionists. The book not only proscribes female sexuality as something to be protected, but attempts to negate that there can be such a thing as voluntary involvement in the trade. “‘Sex work’ language has been adopted out of despair, not because these women promote prostitution but because it seems impossible to conceive of any other way to treat prostitute women with dignity and respect than through normalizing their exploitation. (1995: 296)”<sup>96</sup> By the nineties, prostitution and its connection to trafficking began

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<sup>94</sup> “Core Documents,” International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, accessed Mar. 1, 2012, <http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/index.php/about-rtop/core-documents>.

<sup>95</sup> “Sex Slave” was first used in 1987 by The New York Times in describing a notorious murder case, and “sex trafficking” was first used in 2000 in discussing the International UN Protocols.

<sup>96</sup> Kathleen Barry, *The Prostitution of Sexuality: The Global Exploitation of Women*. (New York: New York University Press 1995) Retrieved from Doezeema, “Now You See Them” p. 326.



to make appearances again in media, and similar exposes and fictional accounts began to create a new version of the ghost of White Slavery.

### **Same White Slave, New Accent**

For this section, the media reviewed involved both narrative films *Lilja 4-Ever* (2002)<sup>97</sup> and the Lifetime-produced, made-for-TV movie *Human Trafficking* (2005), as well as the action-adventure film, *Out of Reach* (2004).<sup>98</sup> In the field of narrative documentaries, Frontline's report on the trade entitled *Sex Slaves* (2006), and the documentary *The Day My God Died* (2003), as well as the 1994 film, *Trafficking Cinderella* were reviewed. In print media, I used the series of four articles by Nicholas Kristof from January of 2004, which detail the "purchasing" of two young women from brothels in Cambodia. Coverage between 1990 and 2000 on the subject of this "new" phenomenon was scattered, and mostly in reports of individual women and incidents in the news. By the end of the decade, though, the topic had taken off in the public understanding, and the marriage of the media, advocacy, and public awareness over the issue of trafficking was about to find a new relationship.

There are a number of major factors which construct the iconic trafficking victim in the same terms and with similar characteristics to the formerly popular White Slave. Primarily, the trafficking victim or sex slave is still female, and still young, though not necessarily a youth. In the stories told, she is often in her late teens, or her age is not mentioned, though she is generally younger than the of-age victims represented in White Slavery. Only one piece of media reviewed, *The Day My God Died* (2003), focused exclusively on youth in the sex trade, and this was acknowledged to be their only focus. The film, though, did not deviate from exclusively

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<sup>97</sup> *Lilja 4-Ever*, directed by Lucas Moodysson (2002: Memphis Film, Denmark).

<sup>98</sup> *Human Trafficking*, directed by Christian Duguay (2005: For Sale Productions).

discussing underage, cis-gendered females. She is still both naïve and pure, though these elements are now constructed through her foreign-born background and her poverty. Similar to the previous White Slave, the victim will also either be rescued, or will find almost inevitable death through HIV/AIDS or suicide.

The major difference is that the construction of her naiveté rests on her foreign-born background, and her removal from abject poverty through migration and fraud into the sex trade. In every piece of media, the victim was described in some sort of poverty, and seeking an escape on her own. As one New York Times article describes,

It happens every single day. Not just in Israel, which has deported nearly 1,500 Russian and Ukrainian women like Irina in the past three years. But throughout the world, where selling naive and desperate young women into sexual bondage has become one of the fastest-growing criminal enterprises in the robust global economy.<sup>99</sup>

Often, media pieces themselves utilize these descriptions when giving broad strokes about their stories, letting the audience know that these are the primary common threads of all of these tales.

Trafficking Cinderella features the gut wrenching testimonies of broken dreams, withered illusions, rape and humiliation from several Eastern European girls sold as prostitutes throughout the world.<sup>100</sup>

Finally, her certain death is also a consistent feature of her story, though this time it is not only through violence, but through the contraction of HIV/AIDS, which had found its own mainstream consciousness only a few years prior. As *The Day My God Died* notes, “ultimately, every girl will break.”<sup>101</sup> In the other alternative, as exemplified by *Lilja 4-Ever*, the victim is unrescued and ultimately must take her own life to escape her situation.

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<sup>99</sup> Michael Specter, “Contraband Women,” *The New York Times*, January 11, 1998, <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/01/11/world/contraband-women-a-special-report-traffickers-new-cargo-naive-slavic-women.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>.

<sup>100</sup> *Trafficking Cinderella*, directed by Mira Nia (2000: Canada).

<sup>101</sup> *The Day My God Died*, directed by Andrew Levine (2003: Andrew Levine Productions).

Additionally, the perfect victim remains unaware of sex work, or her destination into the sex trade, though this was becoming less important. Voluntary entrance into prostitution would uproot the idea of innocence in these narratives. As one research notes “A 'guilty' prostitute cannot be a 'victim of trafficking': as expressed by delegate to recent conference on trafficking: ‘How can I distinguish an innocent victim from a sex worker?’”<sup>102</sup> This noted the dichotomy, reminiscent of the White Slavery rhetoric, of the innocent victim in direct contrast to the “fallen woman” which still lived in the annals of literature. The change in this was notable, as media continued to report on prostitution arrests with the same fervor and excitement of any other sexual scandal, such as when Heidi Fleiss was arrested in 1993. This dichotomy would even be applied to the same people, as details about their situation continued to emerge. As one reporter noted;

The day they were arrested, last fall, they were the darlings of the media and a favourite porn fantasy, all wrapped up in one righteous story of salvation: 22 victims of "sex trafficking" liberated from their debasement in Toronto's suburbs by a carefully planned police raid. Everywhere... they were droolingly described as "sex slaves," conjuring up a vision of exotic but helpless beauties. A day or two later, police revealed that the 22 women, mostly Thai or Malaysian, had willingly come to Canada to ply their trade; wiretaps caught them boasting, long distance, about the amount of money they were earning. Public opinion did an instant about-face. Now the women were hardened delinquents, illegal immigrants, tawdry, dismissable, selling their bodies of their own free will. Phew! No need to fret about their fate (Toronto Star 19-04-98).<sup>103</sup>

This factor, though, was becoming less important, as noted both through media and through international treaties which noted that trafficking was still a crime, even if it occurred with the consent of the trafficked person. In Kristof’s four-part series where he “purchases” two young women from a Cambodian brothel, Srey Neth knows that she will be engaging in sexual exchange to pay off the family debt. “I agreed because I knew my Mom was in debt and I wanted

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<sup>102</sup> Weijers 1998: 11, as quoted by Doezema, *Loose Women*.

<sup>103</sup> Jo Doezema, “Loose Women or Lost Women,” *Gender Issues*, Vol. 18, no. 1, Winter 2000, pp. 23-50.

to help her... I didn't care what kind of job I had to do to help her."<sup>104</sup> Other situations also compel voluntary prostitution, as in *Lilja-4-Ever*, where Lilja is the subject of rumors at her school that she is a prostitute and, abandoned by her family, she has nowhere else to turn but the sex trade.<sup>105</sup>

The clearest difference is that of her ethnic background; while the White slave was not only white, but of Western European descent, the women which are categorized this time are overwhelmingly Eastern European, like the Soviet Union-born Lilja, or Asian, as in the Cambodian *Srey Neth*. While the story has moved from rural Iowa to cities in Eurasia, though, the story remains identical.

She was halfheartedly helping out in her parents' grocery store in Bangkok, daydreaming of an office job that would let her wear pretty clothes, when evil entered her life in the form of a man who made her an irresistible offer: He would arrange her passage to the United States and a job as a bar hostess, he said, and it wouldn't cost her a cent, because her future employer would pay his commission.<sup>106</sup>

Susie is the face of contemporary poverty. That her job as a debt-bonded sex-worker is the best economic option available to her is a metaphor for most of the world's women, whose grinding impoverishment in the Third World is accelerating (Matheson 1994:1).<sup>107</sup>

The country's familiarity with the regions due to the Vietnam and Cold War, as well as the recent influx of immigrants from those regions, laid the ground work for this switch. Especially considering the brutality of what they were seeing on television, beginning with the aggression of the Vietnam War, and now with Bosnia and the crippling of the Eastern Bloc, the

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<sup>104</sup> Nicholas Kristof, "Going Home, With Hope," *The New York Times*, January 24, 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/01/24/opinion/going-home-with-hope.html>.

<sup>105</sup> *Lilja 4-Ever*.

<sup>106</sup> Carey Goldberg, "Sex Slavery: Thailand to New York; thousands of Indentured Asian Prostitutes May be in the U.S." *The New York Times*, Sept. 11, 1995, [http://www.nytimes.com/1995/09/11/nyregion/sex-slavery-thailand-new-york-thousands-indentured-asian-prostitutes-may-beus.html?scp=2&sq=%22forced+prostitution%22+slave\\*&st=nyt](http://www.nytimes.com/1995/09/11/nyregion/sex-slavery-thailand-new-york-thousands-indentured-asian-prostitutes-may-beus.html?scp=2&sq=%22forced+prostitution%22+slave*&st=nyt).

<sup>107</sup> Doezeema, *Loose Women*.

victimization of the Asian or Eastern European woman seemed a natural conclusion. This progression of Asian victims to primarily Eastern European victims was even noted by one reporter, who described,

The international bazaar for women is hardly new, of course. Asians have been its basic commodity for decades. But economic hopelessness in the Slavic world has opened what experts call the most lucrative market of all to criminal gangs that have flourished since the fall of Communism: white women with little to sustain them but their dreams. Pimps, law enforcement officials and relief groups all agree that Ukrainian and Russian women are now the most valuable in the trade.<sup>108</sup>

One news producer commented, “Sex trafficking only started with the fall of the Soviet Union when the borders opened up and it became easier for traffickers to find girls, girls with no education, girls that they could fool.”<sup>109</sup>

In addition to presenting a victim’s story, this has the added element of being able to condemn cultures just born from a legacy of Communism. The immorality of these cultures, where women are constantly subjugated and men are sexually aggressive to the point of violence, is underscored when women become trafficked persons. One article, in summarizing the 1990 Ted Koppel Special, “Sex in the Soviet Union,” described that “[w]holesome sex, like so many other commodities, is in short supply in the Soviet Union, while pornography and prostitution are polluting the environment.”<sup>110</sup> In *Frontline*’s 2005 documentary, “Sex Slaves,” producer Ric Esther Bienstock commented that “we knew that if we wanted to get a story we had to be in place where it was so prevalent that everybody would have an example or know people who are trafficked. And that’s what brought us, ultimately, to Odessa.”<sup>111</sup> This also allows the

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<sup>108</sup> Specter, “Contraband Women.”

<sup>109</sup> “Sex Slaves,” *Frontline*, PBS, (2005).

<sup>110</sup> William Goodman, “Review: Koppel on ‘Sex and the Soviet Union.’” *The New York Times*, Dec 19, 1990, accessed Mar 1 2012, [http://www.nytimes.com/1990/12/19/movies/review-television-koppel-on-sex-in-the-soviet-union.html?scp=15&sq=prostitution+slave\\*&st=nyt](http://www.nytimes.com/1990/12/19/movies/review-television-koppel-on-sex-in-the-soviet-union.html?scp=15&sq=prostitution+slave*&st=nyt).

<sup>111</sup> “Sex Slaves” *Frontline*.

victimization of Asian and Eastern European women as a cultural norm, which leads to an assumption of innocence on her part for engaging in this behavior. This also absolves her of any agency in the process and places the blame squarely on the shoulders of local, foreign men.

“Pictured as poor, naïve, and 'unempowered', third world/non western women are perceived as unable to act as agents in their own lives or to make an uncoerced decision to work in the sex industry (Doezema 1995, Murray 1998).<sup>112</sup>

### **Congress and the Invention of Sex Trafficking**

In 2000 all of this became codified into law, both domestically and internationally. In the United States, Congress passed the 2000 Trafficking Victims’ Protection Act, which was a collaboration of the late Senator Paul Wellstone and Senator Sam Brownback. The project began in 1997 when Wellstone’s wife heard about Maryland police raiding a brothel which housed a number of Russian and Ukrainian women, and the following year Wellstone introduced the first draft of his resolution, the International Women and Children Victim Protection Act of 1999, with a statement which noted that “Upon arrival in countries far from their homes, these women are often stripped of their passports, held against their will in slave-like conditions, and sexually abused... Rape, intimidation, and violence are commonly employed by traffickers to control their victims and to prevent them from seeking help,”<sup>113</sup> and referenced the Maryland bust. The original bill did not have any recommended solutions, but commanded the government to report on the subject of human trafficking to Congress and the public. The bill also had new “provisions

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<sup>112</sup> Jo Doezeema, “Choice in Prostitution,” in Conference Book: Changing Faces of Prostitution, Helsinki 3 - 5 May, 1995. Helsinki: Unioni, The League of Finnish Feminists.

<sup>113</sup> Paul Wellstone, remarks on the floor of the Senate, S. Con. Red. 82, 105<sup>th</sup> Congress 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., March 10, 1998, Congressional Board, S1703-4.

dealing with immigration status, health concerns, and long-term benefits.”<sup>114</sup> The provisions, though, were too much for Congress and the bill was quickly defeated.

Senator Brownback, a Republican from Kansas, was one of the most vocal supporters of the US taking on trafficking and introduced his own in 1999 with a far more aggressive stance. He ordered the government to not only report, but to rank countries on their ability to address trafficking, and order mandatory sanctions of those who were failing to meet standards. What followed was a series of bills, not only from Wellstone, but from Chris Smith of New Jersey, who wanted to focus exclusively on the sex industry, as well as “sex tourism.” Much debate, re-writing, and re-introduction ensued, and Congress held a series of hearings on the issue. While Wellstone openly noted that trafficking occurred in other industries, even he focused on stories out of the sex trade. In a round of hearings held in 2000 it was the testimony of Laura Lederer, funder of the original “Trafficking in Persons” Conference which turned the WAP into CATW. Lederer’s speech was moving, telling the story of Lydia, who would be from “any of the sender countries in Eastern Europe, the Ukraine, Russia, Romania, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Latvia.”<sup>115</sup> The story reflected all of the details of the traditional perfect victim story – Lydia took a drink from a strange and impeccably dressed woman at a bar, loses consciousness and wakes up trapped in a brothel in the United States. How she remained unconscious long enough to be driven through multiple European countries, and then physically smuggled without a passport into the United States in unclear, but she found herself far from home, only to be told she owed \$35,000 in fees to her abductors, smugglers, and captors. Lydia was saved in a police raid on the brothel, but because she did not have legal status, was thrown in prison and deported.

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<sup>114</sup> Anthony M. Stefano, *The War on Human Trafficking*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008) 34.

<sup>115</sup> U.S. committee on Foreign Relations, hearings before the Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, concerning international trafficking in women and children, 106<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2d sess., Feb 22, 2000, p30-31.

Most important but least reported about Lydia's story was that it was a fabrication of Lederer's, who described it as a "composite" of stories which she had heard.<sup>116</sup>

What eventually passed was the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (2000), which defined and found remediation for "severe forms of trafficking," defined as:

(A) Sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age; or

(B) The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.<sup>117</sup>

The proscriptive elements of the act focused on the three ps; prevention, prosecution and protection. Two of its most notable developments were that it established a new category of visa; the T-visa, for those identified as trafficked persons to remain within the country, and created the Global Trafficking in Persons Office (G/TIP), which would produce annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Reports. The new T-visa was a complicated issue which caused strife from the bill in Congress. Many Senators were clear about their fear of having a visa which would not only offer an opportunity to stay in the country, but offer some level of benefit assistance: that undeserving, undocumented migrants might claim they had been victimized in order to take advantage of the new visa category. To address these fears, the solution was not to clarify who would receive the visa, but instead of place a cap of 5,000 visas available annually, despite reports presented in congress which placed the number at closer to 50,000.<sup>118</sup>

The most descriptive part of the bill, and its reflection to the idea of the perfect victim, comes through under the heading of **prevention**, which seeks to identify the push factors of trafficking, and target victims before they become victims. An International Organization of

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<sup>116</sup> Stefano, *The War on Human Trafficking*, 38-39.

<sup>117</sup> Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-386).

<sup>118</sup> Stefano, *The War on Human Trafficking*, 41.



Migration study posited the question in relation to both trafficking into the sex trade and domestic labor, what causes trafficking?<sup>119</sup> The most important factors were clear, and the same, for both industries. Lack of access to resources pushes both domestic and foreign job-seekers, especially women and youth who are in need of services but excluded from more traditional forms of work, into informal labor. A lack of information, informality and isolation increases opportunities for coercion. This, coupled with the complication of immigration status mean that even those facing exploitation often feel unable to find support through law enforcement. This is not to say that there are not instances where trafficked persons in every industry face physical, sexual, and emotional abuse to remain in their coercive situation, and that there are not those who are unknowingly abducted or fraudulently end up in a specific form of labor, in fact these are common tactics utilized by exploiters. This occurs across industries including domestic work, agriculture, pandering, and many other forms of labor. Despite all of these, in addition to poverty and a lack of access to basic resources as the reason for entering an informal profession at all, the TVPA sought to crystallize the perfect victim in the prevention work being done. With the perfect victim in mind, under prevention, the government expressed the need for one thing: public education.

Of the examples of the forms which public education took in first few years after the law, one of the most telling is the work of MTV End Exploitation and Trafficking, or MTV EXIT. The organization produced a series of public service announcements, as well as short films and a long-form documentary, to educate the public. The PSAs were available on the MTV EXIT website and targeted “young women from Eastern Europe vulnerable to trafficking, individuals

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<sup>119</sup> Bridget Anderson and Julia O’Connell Davidson, “Is Trafficking in Human Being Demand Driven?” International Organization of Migration, Switzerland, December 2003, <http://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/fileadmin/files/Publications/Reports/Anderson04.pdf>.

who may be uneducated about the human trafficking industry traveling or residing in Europe, as well as people who may be supporting the industry through purchasing the services of trafficked women.”<sup>120</sup> The PSAs and the short film for which the target audience is young women show a series of short dramatizations where a young woman is either about to migrate or induced to migrate through fraud. Young women are encouraged to educate themselves, in order to make an informed decision about their migration. The short film depicts a dichotomy of two young women, both with job opportunities in Western Europe. In the first story, the young woman waits, asking her friend for advice, and then decides to wait for a better offer, ultimately not migrating within the film. In the opposing story, a young woman takes a job as an au pair and is trafficked into the sex industry. At one point she exclaims, “I will do anything...just stop torturing me.”<sup>121</sup> The intention of this kind of “education” is clear – women who migrate will be harmed.

There has also been much criticism of how the “perfect victim” narrative has been utilized in the implementation of the law. Because the law was written with the perfect victim in mind, enforcement did not deviate from this picture when searching for victims. In the “protection” and “prosecution” sections of the law, victims are offered a T-visa, contingent on a number of factors stemming directly from this story, a visa which may be revoked if the victim is not conforming to the picture of the trafficking victim expected. The primary criticism is of the extreme focus on the sex trade over other forms of forced labor, and in 2004, 90% of investigations into trafficking were for “sex trafficking” over other forms of labor.<sup>122</sup> Beyond an almost requirement that she be involved in the sex trade, the regulations envision four

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<sup>120</sup> Katherine Zapert, “Prevention of What?: An analysis of gender roles and themes of sexual stereotypes and victimization in MTV Europe's Exit Campaign” (MA Thesis, University of Massachusetts, Boston, 2011).

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Srikantiah, “Perfect Victims and Real Survivors” 187.

characteristics for identifying a victim who receive support under the TVPA, all of which fall directly in line with the idea of the “forced slave.” Primarily, law enforcement looks for (1) a cis-gendered female, of any age, (2) who is assessed to be a “good witness,” for the prosecution. She must be (3) entirely cooperative with the investigation, and (4) a preference is given to those victim rescued by law enforcement, as opposed to those who seek out law enforcement on their own.<sup>123</sup> If the victim does escape, “she is expected to leave the United States” of her own volition, or else will face questioning for not doing so.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 177.

## **The Baby Prostitute Next Door, 2006- Present**

The foreign slave appealed to us for over almost thirty years, the longest of the three tropes covered, still garnering attention up into the middle of the 2000s. But a shift began immediately after the passage of the TVPA, and ten years after the fall of the Soviet Union, she began to lose sympathy, attention and funding for her plight. By 2006 the public was looking for something new, something more outrageous, and the TVPA set up a clause which made that possible; also defined as a “severe form of trafficking” was the inclusion of anyone under 18 in the sex trade, which encompassed domestic and foreign-born youth.

The other major shift than the lack of interest in the formerly egregious sending countries was the financial crisis and the turn inward which it caused. Increasing isolation and the movement to protect ourselves from the world was underscored and empowered by the attacks of September 11, 2001. This took years, though, to form in the public consciousness. The interest in domestic trafficking instead of focusing on internationally-born victims was concurrent with a more general shift in foreign policy. By 2004, confidence in the US presence abroad had diminished significantly. In a 2004 report from the Pew Research Center, there had been a stark decline in the amount of support for US presence abroad in a number of different arenas. By 2004, two-thirds of respondents felt that the US was less respected by other countries than it had been in the past.<sup>125</sup> Foreign policy issues still outweighed the economy on the mind of the public, though, as 41% considered war and terrorism the most important issue on approaching the 2004 election. In addition, Americans began underscoring the need for a multi-polar world, and

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<sup>125</sup> “Foreign Policy Attitudes Now Driven by 9/11 and Iraq” Pew Research Center, August 18, 2004, <http://www.people-press.org/2004/08/18/foreign-policy-attitudes-now-driven-by-911-and-iraq/>.

national interest in being the international leader had declined from 2001 to 2004 from 45% to 38%.<sup>126</sup> This sentiment was one of strong values, but not of confidence.

Over the next several years, this trend continued. In 2006, top stories included a continual disappointment in Iraq and a focus on a short-lived wave of tragedies involving, for the first time in years, school shootings. Two important issues which had seen a drastic shift in interest by the public were immigration, foreshadowing a stalling of Comprehensive Immigration Reform, and a lower interest in discussing international terrorism.<sup>127</sup> By 2007, increasing lack of confidence in international policy was complimented by the beginnings of what would become a financial crisis. The top stories centered on dissatisfaction with then-President Bush's performance and an increasing feeling of economic inequity, as well as the increasing confirmation of its persistence as a problem. Additionally, international issues were taking on a new perception, and not only was the US being receiving increasingly poorly internationally, but Chinese and Russian leaders were also facing a lower approval rating internationally. The international issue of global warming was also seeing the least amount of attention in recent memory.<sup>128</sup> By 2009, the sentiment that the US should turn inward had found its peak in public polling, and "for the first time in more than 40 years of polling, a plurality (49%) says the United States should 'mind its own business internationally' and let other countries get along the best they can on their own."<sup>129</sup> With immigration reform dropped, and a national sentiment away from interfering in the affairs of other governments, as well as a feeling that there were other strong governments who were

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<sup>126</sup> "Foreign Policy Attitudes."

<sup>127</sup> Jodie T. Allen and Carroll Doherty, "What Was – And Wasn't On the Public's Mind" Pre Research Center for the People and the Press, December 20, 2006, <http://www.pewresearch.org/pubs/110/what-was-and-wasnt-on-the-publics-mind>.

<sup>128</sup> Andrew Kohut, "What Was – And Wasn't – On the Public's Mind in 2007" Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, December 19, 2007, <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/664/what-was-and-wasnt-on-the-publics-mind-in-2007>.

<sup>129</sup> "US Seen as Less Important, China More Powerful," Pew Research Center for The People and The Press, December 3, 2009, <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1428/america-seen-less-important-china-more-powerful-isolationist-sentiment-surges>.

able to combat international issues, the need to combat trafficking internationally began to falter, and interest in domestic trafficking abuses became significantly more potent.

What had stayed relatively the same was the advocacy work being done on human trafficking. All the groups which had originally begun this work in the 90s, including CATW and Shared Hope International were all still continuing to work on these issues, though they had dislodged themselves from the label of the feminist movement, which was left splintered behind them. Instead, these groups came together with new organizations that had the same mindset and target, such as the Polaris Project, GEMS, and the Chicago Alliance Against Sex Exploitation (CAASE) to form a network which they considered an “anti-trafficking movement,” though the focus remained squarely on abolishing the sex trade. Groups even utilize the voices of traditional feminists to market their cause and reach similar audiences as they had ten and twenty years prior. CAASE, for example, includes a quote from Gloria Steinem on its front page, who says, “I support CAASE and the End Demand Illinois campaign because it focuses on the root of all prostitution: the demand for prostituted people. CAASE's work promotes equality by fighting the pimps, traffickers and johns who normalize the exploitation made possible by inequality.”<sup>130</sup> Dorchen Leidholdt has moved from CATW and WAP to Sanctuary for Families, where she directs their anti-trafficking work as the Director of their Center for Battered Women's Legal Services.<sup>131</sup> Laura Lederer is currently Senior on Human Trafficking for the US State Department, and was formerly the Senior Director of Global Projects in the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.<sup>132</sup> These groups and these leaders remain around and their

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<sup>130</sup> “Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation,” Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, accessed February 28, 2012, <http://caase.org/>.

<sup>131</sup> “Senior Staff,” Sanctuary for Families, accessed February 28, 2012, [http://www.sanctuaryforfamilies.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=19&Itemid=48](http://www.sanctuaryforfamilies.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=19&Itemid=48).

<sup>132</sup> “Laura J Lederer: Biography,” Global Centurion, accessed April 28, 2012, [http://globalcenturion.org/blog/?page\\_id=2](http://globalcenturion.org/blog/?page_id=2).

work continues unchanged since the beginnings of the Foreign Slave era, though it is now guised and purposed with something more palatable to a wider audience – it is not a quest for the rights of women, but a desire to save the perfect victim.

Additionally, the counter movement to this work is no longer inside the feminist movement itself, which had splintered over some of the very same issues brought up by the anti-trafficking shift, including sexual privacy and policing. While the movement had been unified in the 60s and 70s on women's issues, by the 80s and 90s irreparable fractures had formed, and smaller, more unique waves had risen in its place, though none with the unifying force of a singular feminist movement. The rise of the "third wave" had meant the rise of multitudes, all of which were encased in a backlash against the Second Wave. Youth involvement had taken on the form of riot grrrl culture, which had focused a great deal of attention on media and the fluid expression of female experience. Beginning in the mid-1980s, writers such as bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Cherríe Moraga and Gloria E. Anzaldúa had given a voice to feminists of color, publishing books including *This Bridge Called My Back*. Also unsatisfied with the collective feminist movement and inspired by the rise of the queer and trans movements, some rejected the idea of a gender specific movement at all, and embraced fluidity and inclusiveness of all gender experiences. In the end, this fragmenting meant that a collective feminist movement, for better or worse, remains something which may be nothing more than a creation of nostalgia.

In the latter half of the 2000s, there had also been a evolution, and a further breakdown in the line between media and social issues on a number of fronts, which made it that much easier to reach people, but also that much more necessary to find what appealed to media-based viewers. Beyond simply creating fictional movies or documentaries about the subject, anti-trafficking especially created media projects which directly tied into organizations seeking

donations, signatures on petitions, and the creation and proliferation of anti-trafficking media. In projects like Call + Response, what is billed as a documentary includes primarily staged footage, interviews with prominent academics, and assorted celebrity musical numbers to raise awareness about trafficking and incite people to act, often using additional networks of media. The project itself also presents a complication of both functioning an independent NGO, which now partners with the State Department, but as an awareness-and-donation-raising group, as opposed to one which does either direct services or larger-scale advocacy.<sup>133</sup> As noted by the website, “We provide activists with tactile strategic online and mobile tools to fight slavery everyday.”<sup>134</sup> Organizations which simply maintain online-based petitions, such as Change.org regularly promote the work of specific NGOs and push specific legislative agendas, while also presenting themselves as neutral platforms for change which is strictly user-driven, announcing that, “That’s why anyone, anywhere — from Chicago to Cape Town — can start their own grassroots campaign for change using our organizing platform.”<sup>135</sup> What remains unsaid is that each topic-specific department is run by an individual with political and social aims. The Trafficking section, for instance, is monitored by editor Amanda Kloer, who chooses which campaigns to promote and encourages campaigns from like-minded organizations. What remains undisclosed is that Kloer, with her previous employer Shared Hope International, helped produce the report, “Report from the U.S. Mid-term Review on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in America.” SHI, founded by Congresswoman Linda Smith, is a religious organization dedicated to “ending sexual slavery,” of exclusively women and children.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Justin Dillon, “C+R and the State Department Announce Slavery Footprint” Call and Response, accessed March 12, 2012, <http://www.callandresponse.com/blog/?p=1158>.

<sup>134</sup> “Call + Response,” Call + Response, accessed March 12, 2012, <http://www.callandresponse.com/about.php>.

<sup>135</sup> “About Us,” Change.org, accessed March 12, 2012, <http://www.change.org/about>.

<sup>136</sup> Richard J Estes, Neil Alan Weiner in North “Report from the U.S. Mid-term Review on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in America,” 2001, accessed March 2, 2012, [http://www.humantrafficking.org/uploads/publications/Final\\_Report\\_11.6.06.pdf](http://www.humantrafficking.org/uploads/publications/Final_Report_11.6.06.pdf).



A number of advocacy websites also promote specific pieces of media in order to inform readers on these social issues, reinforcing this reciprocal relationship. Change.org promotes films, documentary and fictional, which it recommends its readers watch to get a better grasp on the issue of human trafficking. The list was compiled by Kloer herself and described as “10 of my favorite human trafficking films, a mix of both documentaries and fictional stories based on truth,” and, “excellent suggestions for film viewing parties to raise awareness or funds.”<sup>137</sup> The list included a piece from Shared Hope International. Of the ten, seven focus on the sex trade, two feature it prominently in conjunction with one or two other industries, and the third, *Slumdog Millionaire*, does not use the phrase “trafficking” to describe the situation of a child forced to pander. The Polaris Project, which does a significant amount of legislative advocacy and often partners with law enforcement and government bodies, also maintains a list of films for viewers who want to learn more. Of the 66 listed, including the aforementioned Frontline piece, “Sex Slaves,” 47 are exclusively focused on the sex trade.

### **It Could Be Your Daughter: Media and the Baby Prostitute**

For this section, the construction of the “perfect victim” came from a number of diverse representations, many of which muddle the lines between advocacy organization, news source, and entertainment source. As traditional fictional narrative film, I looked at *Trade* (2007) and *Taken* (2008) which both begins with stories of underage, teenage girls abducted into the sex trade, but both focus on the adult, male family members who seek to rescue them. Also included in fictional media were five episodes of *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit* which covered trafficking in persons as the main episode narrative. As a more traditional, long-form, narrative documentary I reviewed *Very Young Girls* (2007), which is entirely focused on the stories of the

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<sup>137</sup> Amanda Kloer, “10 Human Trafficking Films to Watch,” Change.org, accessed March 1, 2012, <http://news.change.org/stories/10-human-trafficking-films-to-watch>.

underage participants of GEMS, a services organization out of Brooklyn, New York.

Additionally, this work was complimented by a number of news articles including CNN's Freedom Project, a running blog of CNN stories exclusively highlighting stories on trafficking, and Nicholas Kristof's series on pieces targeting online advertisers, and often competing media sources, as profiting from trafficking.

Many things remain the same from the previous two iterations, the white slave and the foreign slave. The perfect victim is still female, as none of the pieces mention either a male or a trans person, regardless of age, in their narratives. While there is now more often mention of other industries which face trafficking abuses, each of the pieces mentioned focus centrally on the sex trade, and purportedly neutral sites also promote the sex trade as the primary destination of trafficked persons. The perfect victim is still often poor, but even this is beginning to fluctuate and the "girl next door" is increasingly targeted – a reminder of the stories of the White Slave. There are a number of major differences between the narratives in the most recent iteration of the story. First, almost all the perfect victims are now underage and more often from the United States than from abroad. Finally, the overarching narrative is beginning to shift in these new stories, and the focus has begun to shift radically from the narrative of the victim to the "rescuer" involved. Finally, in these stories, while there is still often a pimp or a trafficker, his description is beginning to disappear and the vilification of the client is beginning to take his place.

The focus on youth was an important shift which was deeply interconnected with the new focus on a domestic victim. This may be best described by the progression of victims described in Law and Order: SVU. In 2004 and 2007 the two victims reflect "young" Russian women, while in 2009 and 2010, both girls are teenagers, the youngest only 14. In 2005, right between

these two waves, she was not only an immigrant, but a very young child. The website of one advocacy group, Shared Hope International, describes the problem of trafficking as follows;

In the familiar metaphor, we are picnicking beside a swiftly flowing river. Suddenly we look up to see a child struggling in the current, being swept downstream. Even as we mobilize to rescue that one, we see another... and then another, then more... and then dozens of desperate children being swept to their destruction in the torrent right before our eyes. Many of us will swim to the rescue with everything we've got. But some of our strongest and most capable know that it is urgent to go upstream and stop the disaster that is casting so many children to their doom.

We are committed to keeping more innocent victims from being thrown into the torrent. And we are committed to stopping the disaster of demand for more victims.<sup>138</sup>

In both narratives films the victims were 13 and 17 years old, and the stories in *Very Young Girls* were all of underage teens who are now involved in the GEMS program, which services that population. In the news this is no different. In the twenty-two pieces Nicholas Kristof has written on human trafficking or the sex trade from January 2005 through March 2012, only three have not specifically focused on stories of underage trafficking victims in the sex trade, and of those, one exclusively uses the term “girls” to refer to the subjects. This correlates to a clause in the definition of human trafficking within the Federal TVPA. While all other parts of the TVPA definition of human trafficking correlate to coercion and forced labor, there is an additional clause, which vastly expands the definition of trafficking for minors by removing the clause of force, fraud or coercion. The industry-specific conflation laid the legal groundwork for the equation of trafficking and engagement in the sex trade. The effect of focusing the language to specifically reflect children, not teens or adults, is to negate many of the issues around questions of consent or understanding, and underscores the need for an often forceful rescue.

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<sup>138</sup> “Prevent” Shared Hope International, accessed March 12, 2012, <http://www.sharedhope.org/WhatWeDo/Prevent.aspx>.

Another important focus is that the victims have now distributed themselves equally between foreign-born subjects, which still receive some amount of attention through internationally-focused individuals such as Kristof, to domestic youth. Even though most of the op-eds produced by the journalist are exclusively international in scope, in the first three months of 2012, Kristof has written three articles of human trafficking, all of which center on the story of US-born, underage, cis-gendered females in the sex trade. In 2007's *Trade*, the victim was Mexican-born, but is smuggled into the United States by a Russian trafficking ring. In 2008's *Taken*, the 17 year old becomes a blonde American, though, and is abducted by the Albanian Mafia, who run a trafficking ring, and sold into prostitution. All of the stories from *Very Young Girls* were domestically-born, often urban women of color.

There is another trend which surfaced concurrently and not inextricably from the increase in the conflation of media and political advocacy work; the increase in stories which did not center on the story of the victim, but on her rescuer. In both fictional films, the story is only catalyzed by the abduction, but the main narrative centers entirely on the rescuer, Kevin Klein and Liam Neeson. Similarly, in the *Law and Order* episodes the victim is only secondary to the work being done after the crime has been committed. Even Kristof has begun to get into this game, and in 2004 "bought" two young women from a brothel, and has continually presented stories which focused on the "rescuer" or "savior"<sup>139</sup> instead of the persons affected by the work. The more genre-defying work, namely pieces like *Call + Response*, not only focus on the heroes of the story primarily, but encourage all of us to educate ourselves, and contribute in order to become rescuers ourselves. As the line between media and entertainment becomes increasingly blurred, and the line between voyeur and participant ceases to exist in newer media, our reaction

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<sup>139</sup> Nicholas Kristof, "Somaly Mam and Trafficking," *On the Ground*, September 24, 2008. <http://kristof.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/09/24/somaly-mam-and-trafficking/>.

is that we can now become Liam Neeson and save Amanda, or Nicholas Kristof, and live-tweet a brothel raid.<sup>140</sup>

There has been a noted shift in media to reflect a very different, very personal experience with media. What has gone from a removed experience, where there is a medium of television or radio which separates one from the media, the increase of social media, which allows us to engage in a two-way conversation with what was once removed, has changed that barrier. As we increasingly interact with our news, the barrier between the news makers and the news consumers is becoming increasingly challenging to delineate.

The other shift in the narratives is not with the victim, but with her trafficker, who plays an equally, if not more important role. As Diana Tietjens Meyers described the perfect victim, the other half of this equation is the perfect perpetrator. In absolute terms, the victim does not exist without her crime and by extension, her perpetrator. The description of the trafficker or pimp in these stories becomes increasingly diverse and amorphous. They are now urban men who prey on young domestic girls as often as they are foreign-born trafficking rings and Mafioso. This lack of consistent messaging around the “pimp” figure denotes a lack of interest in targeting that figure for prosecution, and the need for a new perpetrator arises to fill his place.

The other push to move from the “pimp” to the client was due to increasing advocacy around a new model which remained prosecution-heavy, and prevention-absent. Despite a major push to arrest and convict traffickers and pimps, the numbers were pathetically low. In 2010, 103 persons were convicted of human trafficking in the United States,<sup>141</sup> despite estimates of

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<sup>140</sup> Laura Agustin, “The Conceit of Nicholas Kristof: Rescuing sex slaves and saintliness,” *The Naked Anthropologist*, November 22, 2011, <http://www.lauraagustin.com/the-conceit-of-nicholas-kristof-rescuing-sex-slaves-as-saintliness>.

<sup>141</sup> “Trafficking in Persons Report, 2011” Office to Combat and Monitor Trafficking in Persons, US Department of State, June 2011, <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2011/164233.htm>.

trafficking into the United States being between 14,000 and 17,500 persons,<sup>142</sup> a number which does not include domestic victims. Part of this problem stems from the narrative itself, and the increased attention paid to domestic youth who have engaged in the sex trade. One recent study of domestic youth in the sex trade found that only 8% of respondents had used a market facilitator to get into the sex trade, and only 10% was currently involved with a market facilitator. Almost all respondents also noted both positive and negative impacts of this relationship.<sup>143</sup> As one respondent described, “He is Jamaican and 40 yrs old. He contacts the clients for me. Sometimes, when I don’t wanna do some kinda things, he understands and just gimme the money. So, it’s like a father to me, just in a different kind of way.”<sup>144</sup>

In line with these changes, new advocacy efforts have increased the amount of attention paid to the clients, instead of the pimps and traffickers of the victims, referred to as the “demand” side, and media has followed suit with this shift. One article begins with the statement, “The word spread that there was a new girl at the brothel in Queens, and the johns began lining up.”<sup>145</sup> Another article entitled, “The John Next Door,” begins, “Men of all ages, races, religions, and backgrounds do it. Rich men do it, and poor men do it, in forms so varied and ubiquitous that they can be summoned at a moment’s notice.”<sup>146</sup> A number of articles point to the demand for underage girls in brothels because of the myth that they can cure HIV/AIDS, noting that this

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<sup>142</sup> “Trafficking in Persons Report, 2007” Office to Combat and Monitor Trafficking in Persons, US Department of State, June 2007, [http://www.humantrafficking.org/uploads/publications/2007\\_TIP\\_Report.pdf](http://www.humantrafficking.org/uploads/publications/2007_TIP_Report.pdf).

<sup>143</sup> Ric Curtis, Karen Terry, Meredith Dank, Kirk Dombrowski, and Bilal Khan, “The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in New York City, Volume One: The CSEC Population in New York City: Size, Characteristics, and Needs,” Center for Court Innovation and John Jay College of Criminal Justice, September 2008. 72-74.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid 73.

<sup>145</sup> Bob Herbert, “Hidden in Brothels: Slavery by another name,” The New York Times, June 1 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/01/opinion/01herbert.html?scp=41&sq=sex+trafficking+demand&st=nyt>.

<sup>146</sup> Leslie Bennetts, “The John Next Door,” Newsweek Magazine, July 18, 2011, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2011/07/17/the-growing-demand-for-prostitution.html>.

increases the push for child trafficking.<sup>147</sup> When describing clients, they are often white, described as middle-aged, and easily can be reflected in people the reader knows, or even the reader themselves, described as “a white man who looked like he could be a doctor, in a white Mercedes.”<sup>148</sup>

These advocacy efforts are also paired with clear legislative aims, as more laws are moving towards the criminalization of clients under the guise of anti-trafficking work. These laws use a combination of methods including increasing criminalization for the purchasing of sexual services, re-education programs known as “Johns Schools,” and often the public humiliation of arrested clients through billboards<sup>149</sup> and other public displays of their mug shots and often, full name and address.<sup>150</sup> In 2006, this work was moved to the federal level with the “End Demand for Sex Trafficking Act,” which created grants for states who wanted to develop their own specific “End Demand”-style legislation. In some states, these deterrence methods have even been averted and the tactics has simply been to include clients within the definition of traffickers.<sup>151</sup>

It is important to note that while anti-trafficking legislation is inclusive of all forms of forced labor on paper, this new form of anti-trafficking work is exclusive to the sex industry. For the first time in almost 100 years, anti-trafficking efforts have been firmly dislocated from the subject of labor, and moved towards abolitionist work around prostitution, once again using the domestic “white slave” as the image of the perfect victim.

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<sup>147</sup> Nicholas Kristof, “Cambodian Girl’s Tragedy: Being Young and Pretty,” New York Times, December 12, 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/12/opinion/12kristof.html>.

<sup>148</sup> Ariel Ramchandani, “New Law Offers Hope to Sex Trafficking Victims,” Austin Weekly News, March 14, 2012, <http://www.austinweeklynews.com/main.asp?SectionID=1&SubSectionID=1&ArticleID=3643>.

<sup>149</sup> Laura Agustin, “Super Bowl Fans Greeted with End Demand (for paid sex) Billboards,” The Naked Anthropologist, January 21, 2011. <http://www.lauraagustin.com/10156>.

<sup>150</sup> End Demand for Sex Trafficking Act of 2005, HR 2012, 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> session.

<sup>151</sup> John Hult, “South Dakota case could change some sex trafficking statutes.” LegalNews.com, January 25, 2012, <http://www.legalnews.com/detroit/1185087>.

## **The Limits of the a Myth**

This would be a much easier argument if this was not an actual crime, and trafficking simply existed in the realm of cultural myth. If the utilization of this language was simply a ploy to keep women from migrating or youth from running away, and it were absolutely their choice without any additional push factors of home life, poverty, or displacement, these would be laudable solutions to terrible problem. The underlying issue is that the cultural myth is simply myth, but the problem is very real. There are many problems with using a cultural myth to represent the reality of a situation, from unintended consequences to systematically ignored victims. To sustain and concretize these failures, the discussion has created and the media elaborated, an entire rhetoric which stems from and promulgates these failures. In a number of ways, the very words we use leave us woefully underserved to discuss this issue wholly.

As noted, the TVPA and the Palermo Protocols bifurcated the term, and its victims, into two categories, one of sex trafficking and one of labor trafficking. This was not a split of experience, created by survivors to identify themselves but of ideologies waging war in rhetoric. The split between abolitionists and regulationists had existed since the origin of the term trafficking, but compromise, not concretization, had always been the aim of resolving this divide. Today, the law presents us with two unflinchingly rigid categories in trafficking. Advocacy organizations also cling to these separate categories to explain trafficking, even in cases where they are likely to co-occur. The Polaris Project's website describes such a dichotomy, noting

Victims of both sex and labor trafficking may be found in hostess clubs and strip clubs in the United States. In situations of sex trafficking, a victim may be forced to provide commercial sex to the club patrons by a pimp, employer, or other controller, in addition



to his or her work as a dancer or hostess. In situations of labor trafficking, the victims are forced to dance, serve as hostesses, or sell drinks and/or food.<sup>152</sup>

Even within the same location with a single staff, these two categories do not share an overlapping population or experience, a false dichotomy which creates two separate streams of the same crime. The main purpose and effect of this definition was to underscore that commercial sex was not, in fact, labor, while other forms of more or less criminalized activities, such as pandering, were considered labor. The experience was unique enough to require its own designation and its own set of remedies. The effect of this delineation in language is multi-layered, and has several effects on the very real problem of trafficking and creates a series of systematic misconceptions of the issue, only a few of which I can describe here.

One of the primary challenges is the arbitrary delineation which puts all sexual trauma in the realm of commercial sex work, a misconception which leads to a misallocation of resources and a misunderstanding of many experiences around trafficking. As the Global Freedom Center notes,

There are numerous examples of traffickers using sexual violence to compel labor – women in domestic servitude who endure intruders in their room every night, farmworkers in the fields or in employer-owned housing, men and women in manufacturing, women in entertainment clubs, and men at sea for months on fishing vessels.<sup>153</sup>

One article on exploitation on a trawler off the coast of New Zealand, “The Fishing Industry’s Cruellest Catch,” reported that the men aboard faced eight months of physical and sexual abuse.<sup>154</sup> Domestic workers, a predominantly female and isolated workforce, are particularly vulnerable to patterns of sexual abuse by their employers. But due to these delineations between

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<sup>152</sup> “Hostess/Strip Clubs – Labor Trafficking,” The Polaris Project, accessed April 21, 2012, <http://www.polarisproject.org/human-trafficking/labor-trafficking-in-the-us/hostess-a-strip-clubs>.

<sup>153</sup> “Overlooked: Sexual Violence in Labor Trafficking,” Global Freedom Center, accessed April 21, 2012, <http://globalfreedomcenter.org/SexualViolenceinLaborTrafficking.pdf>.

<sup>154</sup> E. Benjamin Skinner, “The Fishing Industry’s Cruellest Catch,” Bloomberg Businessweek, February 23, 2012, <http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2012-02-23/the-fishing-industrys-cruellest-catch>.

sex and labor trafficking, it is not uncommon for questions about sexual violence to be avoided during inquiries about labor circumstances, making identifying this trauma, and its necessary support that much less likely to be provided. Additionally, if sexual assault counselors may be able to identify coercive labor situations outside the commercial sex trade, they may be a valuable conduit to proper survivor identification.

The delineation between the two has also led to an inappropriate focus on the sex trade to the detriment of other forms of labor. The largest population left out of this are those who have been trafficked into industries outside the sex trade. One of the most vulnerable professions to trafficking is domestic work, which faces a number of the same problems around informality of labor, isolation, and dependency on a one-on-one relationship with an employer as those who end up in the sex trade. Additionally, the population ending up in domestic labor is overwhelming female. Even the United States anti-trafficking czar, Luis CdeBaca, has said that all of kinds of modern-day slavery, domestic work is “perhaps most vulnerable” for traffickers to exploit.<sup>155</sup> Despite this, Change.org, which hand-picks and cultivates petitions to promote and push to its readers has almost exclusively focused on promotion of anti-trafficking efforts in the sex trade. One petition which urges the closing of Backpage.org’s adult services section launched with a full promotion, including multiple email blasts to its members, has received, as of April 4, 2012, over 244,000 signatures.<sup>156</sup> In another petition on the anti-trafficking section the focus is not sex but domestic work, and urges passage of the Domestic Workers’ Bill of Rights, which has been lauded by advocates as a major step in ending abuse of domestic labor. The

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<sup>155</sup> Anne Kheen, “Domestic Workers ‘Most Vulnerable’ to Slavery,” Free the Slaves Blog, October 1, 2010, Accessed: April 14, 2012. <http://ftsblog.net/2010/10/01/ambassador-cdebaca-domestic-workers-perhaps-most-vulnerable-to-slavery/>.

<sup>156</sup> “Tell Village Voice Media to Stop Child Sex Trafficking on Backpage,” Change.org, accessed April 4, 2012, [http://www.change.org/petitions/tell-village-voice-media-to-stop-child-sex-trafficking-on-backpage-com?utm\\_campaign=QMEUOiBijS&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=action\\_alert](http://www.change.org/petitions/tell-village-voice-media-to-stop-child-sex-trafficking-on-backpage-com?utm_campaign=QMEUOiBijS&utm_medium=email&utm_source=action_alert).

exploitation of domestic labor is tied not to demand, but instead to the fact that there are no legal protections for domestic workers, who were specifically excluded from the National Labor Relations Act and the Fair Labor Standards Act. The petition was accompanied by a short article by Kloer and almost no fanfare. There are no first person stories, no portraits of young women, and no email blasts to members. As of April 4, 2012, the petition had received 244 signatures.<sup>157</sup>

The term “traffic” is also one which must be questioned, as it is an inherently passive word. An individual can traffic in multiple things, be they drugs, arms, or human beings, and a person can be trafficked, setting up an exclusively perpetrator/victim relationship. Even the language with which they are described employs a passive state, such as the use of “prostituted” or “used as prostitutes,” over “engaging in prostitution.” The implication is that the person trafficked lacks action and agency and was simply a passive victim similar to other inanimate objects. The need for a lack of agency, or innocence, among the victims is an essential part of the cultural myth, and leads to two important conclusions. First, at the time when irregular migration was becoming increasingly discussed, the lack of agency in the movement was essential to the narrative. Had she simply been a smuggled migrant, her culpability would have flown in the face of her victimization. In 1996, the United States had just passed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, which increased penalties for those within the United States without documentation, as well as vastly increased the crimes for which a person could be deported.<sup>158</sup> Had she entered or remained in the country without papers, she would have been subjected to the increasingly tense situation for migrants. Secondly, had she known she was engaging in illegal activity, she would have also been at fault in the crimes against her. From the

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<sup>157</sup> Amanda Kloer, “Domestic Workers Most Vulnerable to Trafficking,” Change.org, accessed April 4, 2012, <http://news.change.org/stories/domestic-workers-most-vulnerable-to-trafficking>.

<sup>158</sup> “Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act,” 549-550.

White Slave panic where naïve women are promised marriage to Eastern European women being promised jobs as waitresses or au pairs, one of the most important elements underscoring her story is that she had no idea of what she was about to encounter, and certainly had no prior experience in the sex trade.

This question of naiveté is essentially a question of consent – both its role and importance. In practice, the subject of consent within trafficking discourse still leaves more questions than answers. While often the question of consent is brought up in the crossing of borders, nowhere is trafficking simply considered the non-consensual crossing of borders, but requires further exploitation. As one study described,

Theoretically, the law presumes that an adult person who consents to be trafficked rationally knows what she wants and does not deserve any further protection unless the consent that she gave to traffickers was not informed. However, the major limitation of this presumption is that it prevents the international community from inquiring into what happens after the woman's consent has been obtained by traffickers.<sup>159</sup>

The governmental response to the challenges in this passive nature, and in the debates around consent is to simply leave the concept out. This may seem like a forward-thinking way to address the issue, requiring force, fraud or coercion to define trafficking, but it is woefully inadequate to provide support for consensual migration into non-consensual labor exploitation.<sup>160</sup> Domestic survivors also face the same assumption of passivity, especially when they are youth. In a recent John Jay study of underage engagement in the sex industry 68% of respondents had “sought assistance at a youth-service agency at least once,” and remained in sex work even after

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<sup>159</sup> Victor Nnamdi Opara, “Consent Dilemmas - Contextualizing the Trafficking of African, Asian and Eastern European Women for Prostitution,” Migration Online.cz, October 11, 2006, accessed April 21, 2012, <http://www.migrationonline.cz/e-library/?x=1963582>.

<sup>160</sup> Jo Doezenia, “Who gets to choose? Coercion, consent and the UN Trafficking Protocol,” Gender and Development, Volume 10 Number 1, March 2002, <http://www.walnet.org/csis/papers/doezenia-choose.html>.

this original outreach for help.<sup>161</sup> Despite this, the thrust of the narrative remains one of isolation and passivity.

The final challenge of all of this is the trafficking is that the issue of trafficking is essentially couched in a language of criminal justice, which means the central focus of anti-trafficking work is prosecution, and economic push-factors which cause trafficking are almost summarily ignored. In his book on the subject, journalist E. Benjamin Skinner discusses these factors, contesting that “the end of slavery cannot wait for the end of poverty, but any realistic strategy of global abolition must involve some elements of targeted poverty alleviation.” He further goes on to point out that the cause of debt bondage, the framework in which much of trafficking arrangements occur, is not ill morals or even a Soviet-inspired view of sex but, tragically, a health crisis.<sup>162</sup> Despite this, awareness-raising is still “by far the most common instrument of prevention in both the United States and Europe.”<sup>163</sup> This inappropriate focus on the criminal aspect is also evident in how the TVPA allocates funding for anti-trafficking work in the local context, as TVPA grants fund “state and local law enforcement to investigate and prosecute buyers of commercial sex.”<sup>164</sup> This is inherently a criminal justice, and not a rights-based, approach to trafficking which considers the prosecution tantamount to the prevention or protection of the survivor.

No matter her construction, there is a central, unchanging part of her identity, which lives in the other half of her title. In this language, she will forever remain a victim, regardless of the

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<sup>161</sup> Kristen Hinmen, “Lost Boys,” Village Voice, November 2, 2011, <http://www.villagevoice.com/2011-11-02/news/lost-boys/2/>.

<sup>162</sup> E. Benjamin Skinner, *A Crime So Monstrous* (New York: Free Press, 2008) 291.

<sup>163</sup> Whitney Shinkle, “Preventing Human Trafficking: An Evaluation of Current Efforts,” *Transatlantic Perspectives on Migration: Policy Brief #3*, August 2007, <http://www12.georgetown.edu/sfs/isim/Publications/GMF%20Materials/PreventionofHumanTrafficking.pdf>.

<sup>164</sup> As quoted by Melissa Ditmore, *Prostitution and Sex Work* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010) 158.

details. As a victim, the trafficked girl only exists in relation to her crime and to her perpetrator. Without her crime, she ceases to exist at all. She is uniformly innocent, young, female, and naïve and she is uniformly taken advantage of. The details of her story do not reflect untruths, but cultural fears and manifestations of cultural myths of evil. If what we fear lives in the body of a Jewish, urban immigrant, our White Slave must be lured to the city, trapped, and kept. If our manifestation is a Soviet brute, she must be his weakened, unschooled villager. If our newly-found criminals are patriarchs and men who hide among us in suits, the client of a prostitute, and not the exploiter himself, becomes the new “trafficker.” Had we a victim-centered model of justice, our solutions would look entirely different. Even the stories we are told underscore the avenues through which she found her new role in the world; she is the rural poor, she is the destitute foreign girl, she is the poverty-stricken urban youth. While all of these stories stem from poverty and the need for independence from a system or a culture which disempowers her, none of the proposed solutions address these needs. She must either migrate, and will deserve her fate, or she will stay in her place and not make waves. Instead of focusing on the needs of those who had enough agency to engage in informal labor in the first place, we focus on the perpetrator, and his characteristics lead us to our solution: prosecution as protection, fear as prevention.

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