

SLAVERY NO MORE 2012 GLOBAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING CONFERENCE
August 10-11 ~ LOS ANGELES, CA

Human Trafficking Abroad: Why it Affects Every American

Jocelyn White: So many times we hear stories of human trafficking abroad, and we don't know possibly what could we do here? Why does it have anything to do with us? Here to share how human trafficking abroad affects us as Americans is my colleague and the Vice President of Government Relations for International Justice Mission. She came all the way from Washington D.C. Please welcome my colleague Holly Burkhalter.

Holly Burkhalter: Good morning everybody. It's almost invariably my bad luck to follow a sensationally good speakers, so if you could just wipe the previous remarks off your brain for a few minutes and give me a small chance following Ima I'll attempt to add just a few words to the beginning of our Saturday session, so we can get to our breakout sessions.

I'll give you a little bit of perspective from my own experience in the international human rights field. I've been a policy advocate and lobbyist in Washington on behalf of human rights causes for about 30 years. I was young when I began my work, but I have been at it a long time. Interestingly I was on the Hill for about five years and then I was at Human Rights Watch for another 14 and then at Physicians for Human Rights for nine before I came to International Justice Mission. During almost all of that long career in international human rights where I was a Washington representative, I didn't think about trafficking, and I didn't think about slavery. It was not on our agendas.

Human Rights Watch wrote a couple of superb reports about trafficking in Southeast Asia back in the early 1990's, but it was not on anybody's policy agenda. I don't think it was on the agenda here in states and cities, and it definitely was not on our agenda in Congress in Washington. A lot of other things. We were working on genocide and rape as a war crime and torture and back in the 1980's the heinous crime if disappearance. The world was awash in suffering, and there was plenty to do. Trafficking I'm certain existed. I'm certain it existed here at home, and I'm certain that it existed in all the countries that my organizations worked on. It was not visible to us, and it certainly was not part of the policy agenda.

Somehow that changed. I wish I could identify the tipping points, because those things interest me. What happens when to make up an issue, reach public relevance, and then become relevant to policy makers. What happened that made HIV access to treatment for the poorest people in the world? What was the tipping point that had the Bush Administration front up a huge amount of money to break the back of the pandemic and the Democratic Congress go along with 100%. I'm fascinated, and I think we want to unpack those things so that we can do it again, so we can figure it out and figure out what that alchemy was and apply it to other enormously important issues such as slavery and trafficking.

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Whatever combination of exposure, I know that National Geographic did a big, big expose back in the late 1990's. I think church groups actually were involved and organizations. People who work with street kids were starting to see what was happening, and the more you know the more you see. The information started bubbling up and out. Exploitation of workers and of women, girls, and boys in the sex industry, at home, and around the world. Congress responded in frankly the year 2000 in a way I have seldom seen. I've never seen it do better than when it passed the *Trafficking Victims Protection Act* which Ima mentioned in her remarks which made trafficking a federal crime here at home for the first time, laid the ground work for now the burgeoning state laws and municipal laws of which we heard about from the city attorney. It just created a groundswell of movement here at home.

It also created some institutions and gave us some diplomatic tools and some foreign aid tools to start addressing trafficking abroad. Among those tools was the *Annual State Department Trafficking and Persons Report* which you can find online at the U.S. State Department website. Last year for the first time that report included the United States which is as it should be. We do not have a clean slate, but we have lots of things that are done well. You've heard from some of those practitioners at this conference, but we have a ways to go. For the State Department to put the United States right on in the same volume of the 170 or so other countries that are being evaluated is a great diplomatic tool. It says we have a problem, and we want to help you with your problem. We're going to start by naming it for what it is.

In terms of the value of plain speaking of what's going on around the world, I cannot tell how vital that is or how rare. For us at *International Justice Mission*, we have three countries where we have anti-trafficking offices. We have offices in the Philippines, India, and Cambodia and have been in the field for a long time working on both labor trafficking and sex trafficking. I'll tell you what. When our State Department and diplomats and the ambassadors speak plainly about the issues that need to be confronted by national governments, offer them assistance, speak the truth, embarrass them a little bit. We can feel it on the ground. We find police officers and interior ministers and mayors much more eager to work with us, because they're being pushed to do so. That's a great use of American diplomacy in power, and we're not imposing the American standards on these countries. We're basically asking them to honor their own national laws and international standards such as *the Palermo Protocol* to which we ourselves are bound as a nation.

We did have this marvelous kind of gigantic first step in the year 2000 with the passage of the *Victims Protection Act* which was an important tipping point or even maybe not a tipping point but a beginning point of really ramping up in American response both at home and abroad. That was the genius of that act. It included resources for international trafficking and at home, and I think that's quite marvelous. Americans, citizens of any country, but Americans are naturally going to be interested in their own country. I think knowledge of and increasing awareness of the exploitation of men, women, and child in our own communities makes us much more sensitive to the reality in other countries. I don't know why that is, but it is. That's why International Justice Mission is teaming up with

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Polaris Project and others who are very enthusiastic about your ballot initiative coming up. We offer you all the best. We hope you will vote often and ask your friends to do so to. That increasing awareness in California helps us in Cambodia, because people become aware that this is a worldwide problem. They know what it looks like at home, and they say nobody should be subjected to that.

I'll tell you in terms of how I got involved in trafficking and slavery and why I think it sort of matters uniquely. I've been in the field, like I mentioned, a really long time, and I'd worked from the policy side some of the worst crimes. I think the issue I cared about the most and still do is genocide. Any of us who was alive and breathing in the year 1994 when almost a million Rwandans lost their lives in a hundred days while the United States and other governments sat back and picked their noses knows that we had seen the worst, and it happened on our watch. It was a second Holocaust. The United States held back from using its authority to save a single life, and it was the most appalling experience I had in my personal or professional life to have just worked very hard and noticed that it had no relevance or value whatsoever. Nothing we did changed that picture.

I'll return to that story in a minute, but it wasn't until I saw some undercover film footage from International Justice Mission that had taken our investigators posing as customers went into Svay Pak this Vietnamese neighborhood outside of Napan Cambodia, posing as customers, and collected information through hidden cameras of very, very young children available for sexual exploitation. As a matter of fact, it wasn't even remotely a secret at the time, 2002, when our people first went out. We didn't even have an office there, but we'd heard about child prostitution. We sent investigators there to see what they could learn.

Any Western man who goes to Svay Pak neighborhood, they only go there for one thing and will quickly be met by a bunch of teenage boys on motorcycles and motor scooters saying "Do you want small, small?" Then you are just invited into some vile little shack and presented with girls who can age from five to 15, and our people were looking for the youngest of the kids and took undercover film footage of children the youngest of whom was five. One girl was seven and had been in prostitution for three years.

I saw this undercover film footage while the girls were still in the brothels back in 2003, and I was working at another organization at the time. International Justice Mission brought it to me. It was a friend of *International Justice Mission*, and I gathered some policy wonks around to say how can we help International Justice Mission, because the Cambodian government was not doing anything about this. They'd taken the undercover film footage and their information where the kids were, where the brothels were, pictures of the people that were pimping the kids. I mean all of the evidence you needed to put together to prosecute. We were very sympathetic to the prosecutors on the panel yesterday who said, "You can't prosecute if you don't have the evidence of the crime."

Our investigators are really trained to capture on film the essential elements of the crime. A child is being offered for money. Money changes hands. You capture them on film, and you

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can go to court. It doesn't matter what the child says, because sexual exploitation of a minor is a crime whether there's any semblance of consent or not. No such thing exists for children. It is important to get the people that are selling the child to catch them in the act which our guys did, and the government of Cambodia said thanks but no thanks.

We went to the U.S. government and asked them to press the Cambodians which they did, and Cambodia learning that they had some foreign assistance on the line they were going to lose if they didn't start dealing with their problem saluted smartly and said yes we will work with International Justice Mission which they have done ever since I might add and with increasingly professionalism. I'm happy to tell you that there was a huge raid of the neighborhood back in 2003 where International Justice Mission and the police went in, and they found 35 minors ten of them under the age of ten. The youngest was five and brought them out and also apprehended 11 perpetrators who were later convicted to serious jail time.

That was the beginning of the turning point in Cambodia, but it was also a turning point for me. I've told this story a number of times, but it's quite dear to my heart. It's my tipping point. I have a Vietnamese daughter who John and I adopted when she was five months old, and she's very dear to us as you can imagine. She was five at the time. She's almost 15 now, and I knew when I saw that film footage which included a five year old being held up in another girls arms to be offered for sale to this American who was one of our guys who would of course never touch her but who was posing in order to try to capture the elements of the crime. I knew exactly how little that child was, because that child was Vietnamese. My child is Vietnamese. My kid weighed about 35 pounds at the time and was such a little monkey I loved to carry around my hip. She was little enough for me to be able to do that. That's the kid somebody is going to be purchasing for oral sex and someday will purchase for a very large prize her virginity. Then her life will be brutal and ugly and short.

It really got under my skin in a way that nothing else had in the human rights field, and I really had been hip deep in some of the worst stuff seeing what human beings can do to one another, but this was what absolutely cracked my heart. I said that's it. I'm not having this, and I better go work for *International Justice Mission*, and three years later I did. In the meantime, I became much more interested and aware. I do think that my story it might be a little unusual, because I'm an adoptive mom of two Asian girls one of whom is Vietnamese, but I don't think it's all that unusual.

There are some things for all of us, parents, nonparents, straight, gay, married, unmarried. The sale of another human being is something that is obscene to us as Americans whether we are newly American or whether we're descendants of the founding fathers because of the freedom we enjoy here and because of our own experience as being a nation of slave owners and slaves that is not in our distant past and the remnants of our long and hideous and appalling experience with slavery lingers to this day in many ways, particularly for African American brothers and sisters.

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I think because of that toxic strand in our historic DNA, we are in a good way quick to see that and say oh no. No, no, no, no. We're not having any more of that. Maybe that's a fanciful notion, but I do think there's a reason by about 200 of you are here at 8:00AM, way too early, on a Saturday morning. I've never seen that response to another human rights abuse. I wish we had it. I wish we had a national movement like this against genocide and rape and sexual assault of children and the other issues we work on, but I'm very happy we have it on this issue.

I think as my third and final reason that I think we have such an interest in slavery and trafficking among the American public is because there is this sense that this can be stopped. That is a correct. When you look at crimes of absolute and horrible brokenness, people who rape children or beat up domestic partners, etcetera, you sort of think wow. How's that ever going to be stopped? How many of those cases are you going to have to take to trial? How many people are you going to have to put in jail to create a deterrent for that? You need to, but it just seems to be so deeply rooted in human brokenness that it is...I have to struggle not to be discouraged, but trafficking is different.

Trafficking while just as violent as any of the other human rights abuses I've mentioned and indeed more so. Hard to imagine anything worse than a young child or domestic servitude, beaten, starved, made to serve the owners children, or the crimes of forced sex act time after time, hour after hour or 12 hour days and seven days a week in a brick kiln or rice mill in India. Hard to imagine anything more violent, but it is at its core an economic crime. It is a crime of greed, and it is a crime of profit.

This is why I think it's quite uniquely vulnerable to a law enforcement response. If the greed and the money train is interrupted, like oops we've just closed down your building as the city attorney was just describing. We've just closed down your building. You have no access to those assets and a \$25,000 fine, and we're going to give our information to the people who are going to prosecute. You do enough of that and people who want to make money off of this crime are just going to get out of the business. If there is a real and tangible prospect of doing jail time for this crime, they can go do something else. As my boss likes to say, *"They can go steal cars or radios or some other crime but not this crime,"* creating zero tolerance in all of the ways that are needed, help for and restoration for victims, prosecution of perpetrators. Zero tolerance in our communities, watchfulness, use of the hotline, and posting it everywhere. Always we can be a part of that solution.

Finally I would say just harking back to the panel yesterday, I think it's another way Americans are becoming increasingly aware of their own unwitting role in the perpetuation of modern day slavery and that is what we eat and consume and buy and drive and talk to. That is slavery in our supply chain. There is no one I have ever talked to whether they are rich or poor or young or old who feels good about that and who would if given a choice would not say heck yes I'll pay an extra couple of bucks for a phone. I'll pay more for my tomatoes if I know that the Coalition of Immokalee Workers is getting an extra penny per pound. Once those solutions and alternatives are offered, I think Americans are going to

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vote with their dollars. We're really in the beginning of that process as we discussed yesterday that's quite thrilling, because public poles have shown that Americans would be happy to pay more for the goods and services they consume to be assured that they were not unwittingly subsidizing slavery.

I think with that way of sort of starting us off today, I would just end with an anecdote about the importance of public demand and how vital it is. *"Freedom isn't free"* as our armed forces sometimes say in terms of what it costs, but in our world as well freedom is not free. If anyone can find a way to rescue children and adults from labor and sexual slavery and restore them and prosecute the perpetrators for free. I wish you would step forward quickly, because we need you. God would love for you to give your wisdom to Congress who seems to think that it doesn't cost very much to rid the world of slavery.

There are some things that the richest nation in the world can afford to do, and let me tell you we spend billions for things that are of much less value to Americans than this cause. I actually think that a kind of national effort to really seriously take a run at eradication and put together the resources for states and best practices and collect data and do that overseas as well is the response we should be asking for. It's a good time to be ramping up that kind of demand. We'll have either the first couple of days of President Obama's second term or we'll have a new president. In either case, it's a time to take a real fresh start at the national level to put slavers out of business once and for all. Thank you very much.

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