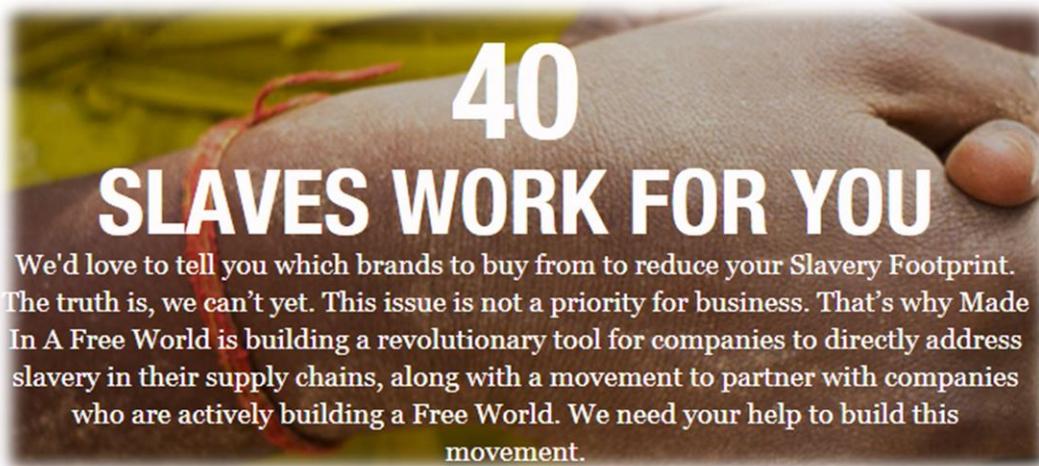


While I try to keep most of these columns fairly upbeat, from time to time there are things that need to be addressed that aren't so "feel good."

This week, several things have come together to cause me to write once more about the scourge of human trafficking in our day, in our land, and in our town. For starters, I invite you to go to this website to discover how many slaves probably work for you:

http://slaveryfootprint.org/survey/#where_do_you_live

Here's my number:



Did I get your attention yet? The sad truth is that slavery never ended. Modern-day slavery looks like the seven year-old boy in Ghana whose mother can't afford school fees. In her desperation, she allowed a stranger to take him far away in order to attend school, only to later learn that her son was sold into slavery on a fishing boat. Modern-day slavery looks like the girl in a remote village in India who swings a pickaxe larger than she is in order to mine the mineral that makes our cosmetics sparkle. Modern-day slavery looks like the poor Cambodian man who tried to provide for his family by taking a job on a fishing boat only to be forced to work for 20 hours a day with no pay and doesn't return for seven years.

Slavery doesn't just happen "over there" or "back then." Maryland is considered to be a "gold mine" for human trafficking. Maryland's central location has facilitated its development as both a pass-through state and a destination for human traffickers. Traffickers utilize many of our highways—especially Interstate 95—to connect victims to major east coast cities such as New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C.

With major highways come numerous rest stops, truck stops, and bus stations, all of which have proven to be a primary location for traffickers to exploit their victims. The Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force has identified incidents of sex trafficking

at Maryland truck stops and data from the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) suggests that approximately **70 percent of human trafficking incidents occur in truck stops**. Similarly, there are three major bus terminals in the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area. Surveillance and contacts have exposed significant indicia of human trafficking incidents at these terminals.

Victims commonly arrive from all over the country and the world through airports like the Thurgood Marshall Baltimore Washington International Airport (BWI). Airports also are a breeding ground for human trafficking because traffickers know that “Johns” who travel to Maryland for brief meetings or conferences will engage in illicit sexual activities more willingly because of the anonymity they experience in a new location. Law enforcement has investigated numerous cases of human trafficking that have taken place at hotels around BWI.

According to the government’s www.polarisproject.org, the average age of sex-trafficked girls in the U.S. is 12-14, and the average pimp’s income is \$632,000. *Victims are as close as the schools across the street from The Meeting House.*

Happily, much is being done to combat this terrible trafficking, both around the world and in our own county. Congress has just passed the 2015 “Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act,” which is now on the President’s desk to be signed.¹ This bill augments and strengthens laws already enacted to combat human trafficking in the United States.

These websites will introduce you to some of the responses being made at a national, state, and county level. Our own Vernon Gray is the chair of the Howard County Human Trafficking Task Force, and their recent report is attached to this *Laptop*.

- www.justice.gov/usao-md/human-trafficking
- www.mdhumantrafficking.org/maryland/
- <http://cc.howardcountymd.gov/About-Us/Task-Forces/Human-Trafficking-Task-Force>

There are many ways to become personally involved in ending modern-day slavery. One response to “how many slaves work for you” is to become involved in lobbying merchants to pay attention to their supply chains. GMOs are nothing at all compared to this. Money talks, and yours can talk at: <https://madeinafreeworld.com>.

A local (Baltimore) organization working to rid our local area of human trafficking is: <http://aramintafreedom.org>.

You can watch a sobering 12-minute film on the subject at: www.inplainsightfilm.com/bonus, and a list of other possible responses follows.

We can end slavery. We can.

Dave



¹ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/senate-bill/178>

31 WAYS TO TAKE ACTION against HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Knowledge without action is of little help to those who are suffering in your city. While not everyone will take up the issue of sex trafficking in America as his or her “cause,” we know that many will want (and need) to respond in practical ways. That’s why we’ve assembled a list of possible action steps for individuals, groups, or entire churches/organizations.

PROMOTE AWARENESS & AID PREVENTION

1. **Host a screening of IN PLAIN SIGHT** at your home, school, workplace, or church, and use the [31 Day Group Study Guide](#).
2. **Educate yourself, friends, and family** about sex trafficking in the United States by visiting the Polaris Project website for information on how it’s playing out in our nation – <http://bit.ly/USsextrafficking>.
3. **Host an information session** and invite a qualified speaker.
4. **Post news stories** about sex trafficking on social media.
5. **Hang posters** with the National Human Trafficking Hotline number (888-3737-888) at motels, restaurants, and restroom stalls. Download the poster at <http://bit.ly/sextraffickinghotline>.
6. **Form a neighborhood watch group** or educate your homeowners association on what indicators neighbors should be looking for and how to report.
7. **Speak out to local retailers** when they offer products or advertising that glamorize pimping or sexualize children.

END DEMAND

8. **Affirm upstanding men in your community** who exemplify moral conduct and honor women and children with their words and actions.
9. **Discontinue using porn.** If you view pornography, there is a high probability that you will eventually seek to purchase sex. We would encourage you take steps to develop healthy relationships and seek help to recover from this habit / addiction. More info: <http://www.xxxchurch.com>
10. **Stop purchasing sex.** If you are buying sex, please know that women or children don’t enjoy being with you. They fake the experience, because they’ll be beaten if they don’t bring back enough money or accumulate enough money to support their drug addiction. Please consider getting support and developing healthy relationships through programs like Celebrate Recovery or Sexaholics Anonymous. To find a group in your area, visit <http://www.celebraterecovery.com> or <http://www.sa.org>.
11. **Mentor young men.** Introduce the “Empowering Young Men to End Sexual Exploitation” curriculum for high school boys at your local schools in order to educate young men about the harms of prostitution and to enlist them as allies in the movement to end violence against women and girls. More info: <http://caase.org/prevention>

12. Attend local zoning hearings, and speak up when someone wants to bring questionable businesses into your community.

ADVOCATE FOR LEGISLATIVE CHANGE

13. Learn what laws exist at the city, county, and state levels, and start to understand any deficiencies. Make your voice known to lawmakers, and vote accordingly.

14. Write or call your local judges and county officials to encourage them to educate themselves on the issues of sex trafficking, and send them a copy of the IN PLAIN SIGHT documentary.

MAKE A PERSONAL IMPACT

15. Recognize the signs that someone may be a victim of sex trafficking – <http://bit.ly/signsoftrafficking>.

16. Report suspicious activity to 911 or the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 888-373-7888.

17. Invest in the lives of your children and teaching them that all human beings are to be loved and valued.

18. Treat women as equal members of society, and avoid turning women into objects (objectifying) through your thoughts, words, and actions.

19. Discontinue using the term “prostitute” or “ho” – understanding that a woman is being prostituted or is prostituting herself. Her identity and value are so much greater than being sold for sex.

20. Discontinue using the term “pimp” or “pimpin” in a positive light – understanding that there is nothing glamorous or honorable about coercing, manipulating, or forcing a woman to have sex for money.

21. Give generously to one of the six non-profits featured in the film that run aftercare homes and fight against sex trafficking – www.inplainsightfilm.com/donate

22. Dedicate your gift giving to include products made by survivors or benefitting organizations that are fighting against sex trafficking in the United States. Examples include: www.isanctuary.org
www.thistlefarms.org
<http://store.nightlightinternational.com>

23. Become a foster parent, and provide a loving foster home for a child.

HELP YOUR CHURCH MAKE AN IMPACT

24. Host a prayer event using an existing prayer guide specifically focused on trafficking. Resources: <http://bit.ly/guidetoprayer>

25. Host a fundraiser or benefit concert for a non-profit that runs an aftercare home and fights against sex trafficking. Recommended organizations: <http://www.hopeforjustice.org>

26. Support educational and vocational programs in your area for at-risk girls.

27. Approach your local juvenile justice system about presenting “Traps of a Trafficker” to female minors on a regular basis. More Info: <http://bit.ly/trapsfatrafficker>

28. Start a Celebrate Recovery or support group for men and women struggling with porn or sex addiction. More info: <http://www.celebraterecovery.com>

29. Compile a list of counselors in your area that specialize helping men and women with porn or sex addiction, and have it ready to refer to people as needed.

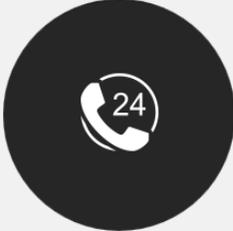
30. Host a “Porn and Pancakes” men’s event – a morning filled with straight talk about porn and the issues surrounding porn, from the people who get it. More Info: <http://bit.ly/pornandpancakes>

31. Prayerfully consider opening a licensed aftercare home for survivors of sex trafficking.

<http://www.inplainsightfilm.com/takeaction/>

WHERE IT'S HAPPENING

Did you know that women and children are being forced, frauded, and coerced into what amounts to sexual slavery?

			
ESCORT SERVICES	MASSAGE PARLORS	TRUCK STOPS	STREETS, MOTELS, RESIDENTIAL
Whether a “date” is acquired on Craigslist.com or Backpage.com or by calling a number on a newspaper ad, escort services are nothing more than thinly-veiled prostitution.	There are over 4,000 brothels disguised as fake massage businesses in the United States according to online lists meticulously updated by “johns” on a daily basis.	Often insulated from local communities, truck stops and welcome centers are convenient places for transient customers to purchase sex with minimal concerns of detection.	While you may think of a prostitute walking down the street, it's more likely that she's living and working out of a motel or local residence and setting up “dates” via phone.

And if you’ve read this far, here’s a **BONUS** ☺. Thanks to Elaine Johnson, who put me onto First Lady Michelle Obama’s recent commencement address at Tuskegee University:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/05/09/remarks-first-lady-tuskegee-university-commencement-address>