Human Trafficking Case Studies

This document contains a selection of narratives procured from endslaverynow.org. These narratives are all true stories given by people who have fallen victim to various forms of human trafficking. We at Guria hope that these stories will help the reader understand the prevalence, complexity, and concrete reality of human trafficking.

Contents

Ravi Shanker Kumar

JANUARY 04, 2016

The following case study is taken from End Slavery Now (http://www.endslaverynow.org) and has been modified to fit this print publication. Guria holds no rights on the following content. See the orignal article at http://www.endslaverynow.org/blog/articles/ravi-shanker-kumar.

More than 300,000 children are estimated to be trapped in India's carpet industry. Most of India's carpets are woven in Uttar Pradesh, where the majority of workers are low-caste Hindu boys. Ravi Shanker Kumar was one of them. His parents were succumbed to agree to receive a sum of money in exchange for Kumar to work at the loom. There, he worked for no pay, for twelve to fifteen hours a day, seven days a week. He was beaten, tortured and kept in half-fed and half-clad. Kumar and other lucky child slaves were liberated in 2004 and 2005 by activists from Bal Vikas Ashram (BVA)

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"My name is Ravi Shanker Kumar. I think I am between 12 and 13 years old. My cousin was working in the loom and it was he, in fact, who told my uncle to go back to the village and talk to my parents so they could send me there. My parents came up to me and asked me if I wanted to go. I refused. The loom owner refused to take no for an answer, however. He paid them a sum of 500 rupees [$10] and then, they asked me to leave. Once he had paid the 500, the loom owner and I took off from the village.

The very first day I was made to sit at a loom. The loom owner made a little mark on the loom and gave me clear instructions to weave a carpet up to that mark itself. If I was unable to do so, I had to work under candlelight to reach that particular mark. Because I was made to work late

night hours, I would never be able to sleep adequately in the night. The whole morning I would be weaving and I would only get some basic and half-cooked food at about 12:30 p.m. every day. I had to force myself to eat it.

In fact, things were so bad that once in a while, while I was working in the loom, my fingers would get cut and they would get nipped. Each time I got cut on my finger, I would go up to my boss' wife and say, "Look, I've got a wound on my finger. Can you give me some medicine, some ointment you can give to me?" The boss' wife would not put any ointment for my wound. In fact, she would take a little bit of kerosene and put it in my wound and strike a match to it. That would hurt terribly. The wound would not heal, and we were made to go back and resume weaving again. Very often, because the wound was in raw condition, the blood would start oozing out of my finger. But we could not stop. With the blood running down my finger I was made to weave. Only when it became so bad that I could not possibly weave anymore, would I stop. And the moment I did stop, I was beaten up. There were two ways the loom owner would beat me up. With the stick of the loom, he would lift it up and beat me up with it. Or, there was a sharp instrument called a *punja.* He would use the wooden portion of that and beat me with it.

We were confined in one room and made to work for a period of 12 hours. Once in a day we could go and maybe use the bathroom, but the bathroom stops were limited in number. My father came to visit me once, he asked the loom owner to release me, but he refused: "until such time as the carpet is completed, I can't let him leave because he's the only one who knows the pattern." My father went away. That was it. That was the only time I spoke to my father.

I would think to myself, "There has to be something better." I would think of running away. But the thought of running away would always be followed with the fear of getting caught. If I did get caught I would be beaten up mercilessly. Therefore I never ran away. I was rescued in a raid operation conducted by Dajna Kurooji, a person who works in the Bal Vikas Ashram (BVA). He came in a raid and picked me up from there and took me to the ashram. I was very scared during the raid. I thought I was going to get beaten up again and get thrown away. I was terrified. The loom owner used to tell us, "If and when the police come, run, run away because they are going to be mean to you." The police official was smart enough to park the vehicle about three kilometers away from the loom and made his way in slowly. We were surprised because the crept up on us slowly. The kids were working on the loom. We didn't have an option to run away.

The first day I came to the ashram, the other kids showed me around the place, where the bathing area was, where the bathroom was. I was fed a good meal and I went to sleep."

Kumar was taken and given medical care at Bal Vikas Ashram. He was given counseling, literacy training and basic rights education. There, he discovered his love for electricity, which he is learning a little bit about at BVA. He wishes to teach his brothers and sisters when he goes back home.

Source: Bales, Kevin, and Zoe Trodd. "Child Slavery." *To Plead Our Own Cause: Personal Stories by Today's Slaves*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2008. 74-77. Print.

Shamere McKenzie

JANUARY 03, 2015

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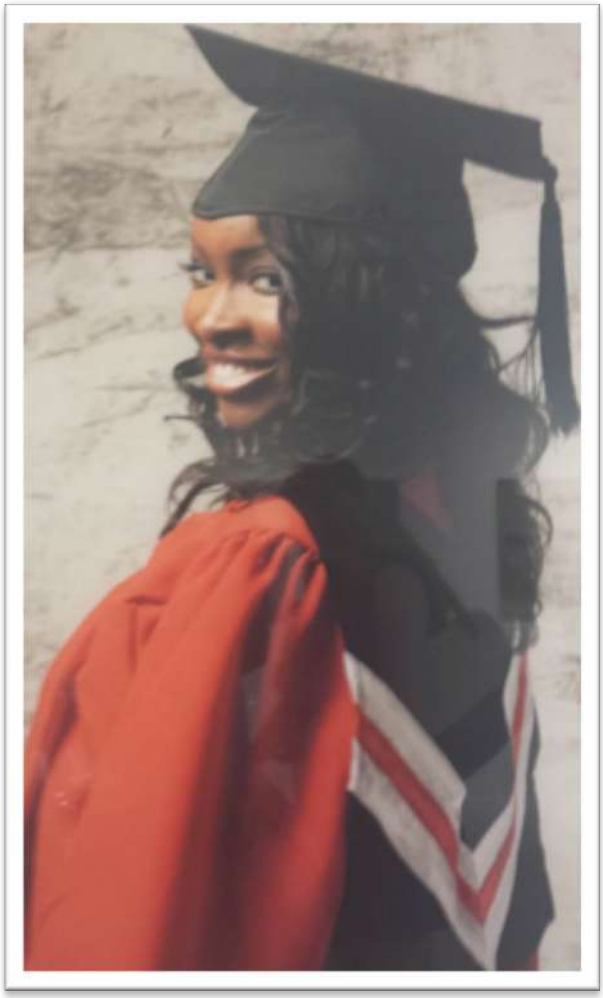

Shamere McKenzie was a college student struggling to pay her tuition when she met her trafficker in 2005. He was a charismatic man who lured McKenzie into a relationship, promising to help and give her an opportunity to safely and quickly earn money by dancing for clients. Instead, he forced her into prostitution for two years.

McKenzie's story began in Manhattan, New York where she encountered her trafficker (and pimp). His politeness and ability to initiate stimulating conversations drew McKenzie's attention, and they met frequently. Soon thereafter, McKenzie became attracted to him and started to trust him with more personal information about herself and her financial struggles. At the time, McKenzie was on a student athlete scholarship at St. Johns University but due to an injury, had to find another way to pay off her remaining tuition balance.

The trafficker swiftly offered her a way: dance for clients and move into his apartment to save rent money. Seeing no other alternative and knowing that other girls danced to finance their education, McKenzie agreed. The trafficker bought a dress and shoes for McKenzie and took her to a New Jersey strip club. At the club, the trafficker assured McKenzie that she only had to dance and would have no physical contact with the customers. Within a couple of hours dancing, McKenzie made $300. Excited that she'd be able to stop dancing as soon as she made the $3,000 she needed, McKenzie went with her trafficker to a house in Brooklyn, New York. At the house, McKenzie offered dances to the men but was taken aback when one of the men demanded oral sex. McKenzie began yelling at the man, and the trafficker immediately pulled her aside and began choking her.

McKenzie argued that she was prepared to dance, not engage in sex, and she tried to leave. The trafficker punched her in the face, kicked her and threatened to kill her family if she left. McKenzie blacked out and woke up the next day lying in a puddle of urine on her trafficker's kitchen floor. She began to cry, and her trafficker came in to console her and apologize. He promised that he would never hurt her again. The next day, the trafficker beat McKenzie when she tried to intervene in the beating of one of the other girls in the house.

Looking for a way out of the abuse, McKenzie ran away the next month and stayed with her uncle. Though she physically escaped, McKenzie was still trapped by fear. She remained in contact with her trafficker, and he threatened to hurt her family if she called the police or refused to come back. Within two weeks of escaping, McKenzie returned to her trafficker; upon return, she was brutally raped and sodomized. These abuses convinced McKenzie that she had no choice but to comply.

McKenzie recounts, "From the very first beating when I was choked to the point of unconsciousness until the day he pulled the trigger on the miraculously unloaded gun in my mouth, I knew obedience meant survival. When he placed the gun in my mouth and asked me if I wanted to die, I shrugged. I thought, 'Finally, this pain and this life would be over and the only one hurt is the one who was responsible for me being in the situation - me!' The trigger was pulled but I was still alive. For a few moments, I thought I was experiencing death with the ability to still see life, until I felt the blows to my head by the gun."

"This was when I realized there was no hope. I had to continue this life of being obedient to him so my family wouldn't get hurt, as he reminded me each day. I was alive, but was not living. I was a slave.""

Because McKenzie was afraid of her trafficker, she fulfilled all of his demands. Eventually, he came to trust her and use her for other purposes. For example, she drove girls across state lines. These trips, in turn, gave McKenzie opportunities to flee. When they were in Dallas, Texas McKenzie ran away for the second time but returned shortly thereafter. While they were in Miami, Florida, McKenzie turned to members of a Jamaican gang. The gang members agreed to help McKenzie escape from and kill her trafficker. However, when it came time to attack her trafficker, McKenzie had a change of heart. Furious that she'd changed her mind, one of the gang members raped her and dropped her off at a hotel.

After that incident, McKenzie desperately tried to think of ways to leave her trafficker. Thinking that the trafficker would let her go if she didn't meet her quota, McKenzie began to see fewer clients. The decrease in profits caught the trafficker's attention, and one day he confronted McKenzie. McKenzie told him that she wanted to leave, and he replied that he would give her $5,000 and that she was free to leave. After that conversation, the trafficker moved to retrieve his gun, and fortunately, McKenzie was able to run away. They were living in a gated community, and one of their neighbors saw her frantically running in the street. After telling her neighbor that she was trying to escape an ex-boyfriend who was trying to kill her, the neighbor put McKenzie in a hotel, fed her and helped her contact her mom.

Still, McKenzie refused to stay with her family for fear that her trafficker would target them. So, back in New York, McKenzie stayed with a friend and faced prostitution charges. She was also arrested by the FBI for transporting minors across state lines for illegal purposes. She spent three weeks in prison but was later sent to a program for victims of sex trafficking where she received counseling and housing. She pleaded guilty to the Mann Act, was sentenced to five years' probation, performed two hundred hours of community service and became a registered sex offender.

Once the cases were finished, McKenzie was able to start anew. Kevin Bales, co-founder of Free the Slaves, helped her start a career in public speaking. She worked for Tina Fundt at Courtney's House and began mentoring other trafficking survivors. Today, she is the Protected Innocence Initiative policy assistant at Shared Hope International.

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Vannak Prum

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In 2006, Cambodian Vannak Prum arrived in Malai, a city located in northwestern Cambodia along the Thai border, with the promise of a job. Prum left his pregnant wife in the hopes of returning home in a few months with the money to support his growing family. Instead, he was forced into slavery on a Thai fishing boat where he endured torture, starvation and the constant threat of death. Prum, a victim of deception and forced labor, would not see his family for four years.

Prum's story began in his native Cambodian village where he supported his pregnant wife and searched for a job that would cover the expected medical bill of her delivery. One day, a man on a motorbike taxi approached him and informed him that the only available jobs were across the border in Thailand. The man claimed he could get Prum a job drying fish. Naturally, Prum was suspicious and even initially refused the offer, but unable to find any work, he changed his mind and soon traveled with the man to Malai. Prum joined 30 other men and women in Malai, and together they traveled across the border into Thailand where a truck waited to pick them up. Prum and his companions crammed into the bed of the truck, stacked side by side and one on top of the other. They were covered with a tarp.

Unbeknownst to them, the group's destination was a small, windowless, cement room that remained locked from the outside. After arriving at the room, Prum, using a small hole in the wall, saw the ocean and several fishing boats. At that moment he realized he had been sold to work on a boat. In the morning Prum and the other captives were given clothing and taken to the boat where they were held below deck until the ship traveled far out to sea.

Prum spent three years trapped on that fishing boat, enduring dangerous and grueling work for up to 20 hours a day with little to no sleep. In addition to difficult working conditions, Prum and the other workers were subjected to beatings and torture from their traffickers for slacking off or acting out. Prum endured a vicious beating with the tail of a stingray. Others suffered even harsher punishments; one man was beheaded by the captain right in front of Prum.

Prum made his daring escape one night when the boat was on its way to acquire a Malaysian fishing license. It was the first time in three years that Prum saw land, and he knew that he must take advantage of the opportunity. Prum was well aware of the consequences of being caught trying to escape; if a man was seen jumping ship, the traffickers would turn around and retrieve their property. Earlier Prum witnessed a 50-year-old man leap overboard only to be pulled back on to the ship minutes later. The crew gathered and found the man lying on the deck of the ship, choking on sea water; the captain took one look at him and ordered that he be thrown back into the sea. Despite the risks, Prum and another man dove overboard around midnight and swam several miles to shore using emptied fish sauce containers as buoys. After spending the night in the forest, Prum made his way to a police station where he pleaded with the authorities to send him back to Cambodia. The officers picked up a phone, placed a call and soon a red car arrived to pick him up. Prum watched as the driver and the officials exchanged money. He had been sold to work on a palm oil plantation where he would be kept for four more months.

One night while on the plantation, Prum and the others gathered to celebrate their new situation. Although they were still enslaved, the men were much happier to be on the plantation rather than trapped on a fishing boat. The celebration took an unfortunate turn, and a fight broke out. In an attempt to break up the quarrel and help his friend, Prum was slashed across the collarbone with a knife and wounded. He was taken to a hospital to have his injuries treated and, for the first time, was able to access a phone to contact officials in Cambodia. After hospitalization Prum was jailed, but it wasn't long before Manfred Hornung, a man working for a Cambodian human rights organization, contacted Prum to document his story and help him get back to Cambodia. Unfortunately, Prum's journey was far from over. From the hospital, Prum was brought before a judge where at the suggestion of local authorities, he confessed to being an illegal immigrant instead of explaining he was trafficked. The police, aware of the dangers of having their activities exposed, had coached Prum to lie to the judge about his situation under the guise that he would be sent home sooner. Although Prum was sentenced to three months in jail, he spent an additional seven months locked up in institutions before he was finally released on May 15, 2010.

After four years, Prum was finally able to return home to Cambodia. He made it his mission to educate the people of Cambodia on the dangers of human trafficking through rich illustrations of his personal experience. On June 19, 2012, Prum was named a Trafficking in Persons Hero, an extraordinary honor from the Department of State, for his work in combating modern-day slavery.

Ishmael Beah

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Ishmael Beah was only 12 years old when a government army pulled him into the Sierra Leone armed conflict in 1993. Confused and afraid, Beah witnessed and participated in the atrocities of the civil war until he was rescued by UNICEF in 1996.

According to Beah, his life before the war was very simple but very happy. Life was peaceful, beautiful, and the people in his village were kind, trusting and amicable. They felt far from the rage and spread of the war's turmoil. Beah was a growing boy, interested in American hip-hop, and lived a normal life with his family.

Ishmael Beah with former children associated to armed groups in Central African Republic for UNICEF, 2012. © UNICEF/Brian Sokol.

When he was just 12 years old, he and his friends left home to perform in a talent contest in a town a few miles away. While on the road, they found out that their village was attacked, so Beah and his friends ran back home only to face a horrific scene.

"We encountered people running," he describes. "We saw men carrying their dead children in their arms. I saw a man cry for the first time in my life, so this really disturbed me quite a bit. So

we decided that, you know, we can't go back home anymore and decided to wait. Hopefully to see our families come through, but they didn't come."

With their homes destroyed and with their safety at risk, Beah and his friends roamed from village to village scrounging for food and water. After a year of wandering the countryside, Beah received news that his family was at a nearby village. As he approached the village, however, Beah only came upon gunfire, smoke and ashes. The whole village was burned down, and his family members were incinerated along with it.

Without a family to reconcile with, Beah lost hope and found no reason to keep running. Beah went to a village run by government soldiers. There was food, soccer games and places to sleep, and Beah though it was a good place to stay. Staying at the soldiers' village came with a price.

> *"One day they just said, you know if you're in this village, you're gonna have to fight, otherwise you can leave... Some people tried to leave, but they were shot."*

He continues, "First, you know, you get your own weapon and everything and the magazines and the bullets, and then they give you drugs. I was descending into this hell so quickly, and I just started shooting, and that's what I did for over two years basically. Whoever the commander said, 'This guy is the enemy,' there were no questions asked. There was no second guessing because when you ask a question and you say 'Why,' they'll shoot you right away."

Using fear, indoctrination, cocaine, marijuana and brown-brown (cocaine mixed with gun powder), the government army turned Beah and other children into killing machines.

Beah explains, "What happens in the context of war is that, in order for you to make a child into a killer, you destroy everything that they know, which is what happened to me and my town. My family was killed, all of my family, so I had nothing. We had come to believe whatever our commanders were saying about how these other guys didn't deserve to live, that we were doing the right thing and this group was the only thing that was slightly organized; and so, they become like a surrogate family in a weird way."

Beah says his lieutenant became his father figure, and it was that bond that helped United Nations (UN) workers rescue Beah from the armed group.

"The lieutenant went around and selected a few of us and said, 'This man will take you and give you another life.' And they took our weapons from us, and we actually felt that we were being pulled from family again."

The UN workers brought Beah and other child soldiers to a rehabilitation center in Freetown. A year later, Beah spoke at the UN presentation of the Machel Report on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children.

Today, Beah advocates for war affected youth. He's a member of the Human Rights Watch Children's Rights Division Advisory Committee and a UNICEF Advocate for Children Affected by

War. He co-founded the Network of Young People Affected by War and started the Ishmael Beah Foundation which assists in the reintegration of war affected youth.

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James Annan

JANUARY 05, 2015

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As the youngest child of an illiterate family, being enslaved was not uncommon in Ghana when James Kofi Annan was growing up. He had not begun primary school when he was sent away by his father to work in a fishing village nine hours away from his home in Winneba. He worked as a child fisherman in more than 20 villages between the ages of six and thirteen. He opened up a school where he lives now in Ghana and empowers children at risk through educational efforts.

© James Kofi Annan

"I started my working life early. My parents had 12 children, none of whom were educated. By the time I was six years old, I was the only person my father could control. All the others were older and most of them had already been given away to work. As the youngest, I was the only one still available. My father saw the opportunity and gave me away for fishing work. The way it works is that the person who takes charge of you now has control over you. I was first trafficked with five other children. Out of the six of us, three lived, and three did not. I saw many children die from either abuse or the rigorous work they were obliged to do.

There, I was forced to work excruciating hours catching fish on Lake Volta. On a daily basis, my day started at 3 a.m., and ended at 8 p.m. It was full of physically demanding work. I was usually

fed once a day and would regularly contract painful diseases which were never treated as I was denied access to medical care. If I asked for even the smallest concession from my boss, I was beaten. Despite all my hard work, I was often not allowed to sleep because I had to take care of all the other tasks, such as mending nets and cleaning fish.

Once in a while I would see my mother because she was always trying to get me back. But once I left the first fishing community where I worked, there wasn't a way for her to see me. I saw my father once in a while whenever he would collect money. But as far as my welfare goes, he didn't really bother. Even though he would visit, he would just come and talk to the people who were holding me.

The main reason I tried to escape was my passion to get educated. One day I heard someone speaking English and I knew it was something I wanted to learn. I tried to escape that same day. I had tried several times before, but I was always caught and beaten. It had been ten years suffering from this treatment, but there came a time when the person I was named after died.

It was decreed that all those who were named after this man must attend his funeral. There was no choice but for me to attend and I used that opportunity to escape. I ran away from my master, sneaked onto a bus, and headed home. I was 13 years old when I went back home to my parents.

I enrolled myself in school. I was surprised to see that my mother was actually happy to see me, but my father, on the other hand, was so angry. It was hell. They ended up getting divorced over it. I just wanted to go to school, so I started to take care of myself from that stage on. When I started school, everyone laughed and mocked me, but there was a deep motivation inside of me to learn more. I faced some challenges because I did not know how to write. I was hugely disadvantaged compared to my peers. Trying to put aside all the pain I had felt during those years, and catch up with school work while not having the basic needs made things extremely difficult. I didn't mind what they had to say about how I looked or how poor I was. I just concentrated on getting my education and learning to speak English no matter the cost.

I did extremely well in school. I was one of the few students who were chosen to attend college; I went to the University of Ghana. And then took a job as a banker at Barclay's."

In 2003, Annan started the program Challenging Heights to empower children through education. Today, his program rescues children who have been enslaved, protects children who are vulnerable, educates children who are rescued and at-risk, supports community child protection groups and connects mothers to microcredit and job skills. He has received eight international prizes for his dedication and commitment for the education and protection of children and is very active both in his home country, working full time at Challenging Heights, and abroad where he participates in conferences.

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Flor Molina

JANUARY 01, 2015

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This article originally appeared on CNN. View the original article here.

In 2001, Flor Molina became a victim of slavery in the garment industry in Los Angeles. She was an easy target: a desperate mother who had just lost her baby because she didn't have the money to hospitalize her sick child.

With the hope of starting her own business to support her three other children, Molina began taking sewing classes. It was Molina's sewing teacher that would eventually facilitate her 40 days of enslavement in the U.S.

“My sewing teacher was approached by a trafficker because she knew a lot of women who knew how to sew and would be desperate to come to the United States to make money. There were no opportunities in my town, so when my sewing teacher told me about the opportunity to go to the U.S., I was definitely interested.

I had to leave my mom and my children behind. I was told that when I got to the U.S. I will have a job so I could send money home, food and a place to stay.

“When I arrived in Los Angeles, I quickly realized it had all been a lie. My trafficker told me that now I owe her almost $3,000 for bringing me to the U.S. and that I had to work for her in order to pay her back.”

I was forced to work 18 hours a day making dresses that were being sold for $200 department stores. When all the workers in the factory got to go home, I had to clean the factory. I was forced to sleep at the factory in a storage room, and I had to share a single mattress with another victim. The other workers in the factory were able to come and go at the end of their shift. I was forbidden to talk to anyone or from putting one step outside of the factory. I worked hard, and I was always hungry. I was given only one meal a day, and I had 10 minutes to eat. If I took longer, I was punished. After only a few weeks of being there, one of my co-workers started suspecting that something was not right. She had realized that I was always there in the morning when she got there and was working at night after everybody left. She gave me her phone number on a piece of paper and told me that if I needed help, I could call her.

I was so afraid, I didn't really trust anybody. My trafficker told me that if I ever go to the police, they wouldn't believe me. She said that she knew where my children and my mother lived and that I wouldn't want them to pay the consequences. This went on for 40 days, but I tell you it felt like 40 years. I thought I was going to die. I thought I would never see my children again. I was sick with worry about how my children were in Mexico and how they didn't know what happened to me.

After weeks of begging my trafficker to let me go to church, she finally let me go. The moment I set foot outside the factory, I decided not to go back. I went to a pay phone to call my co-worker, but I didn't know how the pay phone worked. After a while, someone walked by, and I asked him if he spoke Spanish, and he did. He helped me dial the phone number, and my co-worker came and picked me up and took me to a restaurant.

I was found by FBI agents who were already investigating my trafficker. They connect[ed] me with CAST (Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking), a non-profit group. CAST found me shelter and helped me with all my basic necessities because I had nothing when I escaped. Ultimately, my trafficker was charged with labor abuse and got a light sentence - only six months of house arrest.

Even though my enslavement doesn't define me as a person, it makes me who I am today. I am an advocate against slavery. I am a survivor of a crime so monstrous that the only way to move forward is by fighting back. I am not the only one. There are other survivors that are fighting back with me. We are part of a group called the survivors caucus at CAST, and we are working to educate people, law enforcement and communities using our stories. The caucus is a network of survivors where we feel safe and supported, and we have advocacy to end slavery for good. Even though we were once victims, we are now able to impact social change."

Beatrice Fernando

FEBRUARY 20, 2014

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A divorcee at age 23, Sri Lankan Beatrice Fernando answered an ad from a local agency looking to employ housemaids. Desperate to support her three-year-old son on her own, Fernando agreed to travel and work as a maid in Lebanon. Unbeknownst to her, the employment agency was running a scheme to lure and trap young Sri Lankans into domestic servitude.

In 2005, Fernando gave her testimony to the International Relations Committee of the House of Representatives Sub-committee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations:

© Beatrice Fernando

“I am at the airport in Columbo, Sri Lanka, saying good-bye to my three-year-old son. With his eyes filled with tears, he asks, ‘Can’t I come with you, Mom? When you make a lot of money will

you buy me a car to play with?' I take him in my arms, my heart breaking, and tell him, 'If I have the money, I will buy you the world.' My desperation to give him a better life has driven me to leave him with my parents, to go to Lebanon and be a maid.

"At the job agent's office in Beirut, my passport is taken away. The agency staff makes me stand in line with a group of women in the same predicament as me. Lebanese men and women pace in front of us, examining our bodies as if we were vacuum cleaners. I am sold to a wealthy woman, who takes me home to her mansion up on the fourth floor of a condo building."

My chores seem unending. I wash the windows, walls and bathrooms. I shampoo carpets, polish floors and clean furniture. After 20 hours I am still not done. There's no food on my plate for dinner, so I scavenge through the trash. I try to call the job agency, but the woman who now owns me has locked the telephone. I try to flee the apartment, but she has locked the door.

I can feel the burning on my cheeks as she slaps me. It is night and her kids have gone to sleep. Grasping me by the hair, she bangs my head into the wall and throws me to the floor. She kicks me and hits me with a broom. If I scream or fight back, she will kill me. So I bite my lips to bare the pain and then I pass out. This is my daily routine, the life of a slave.

But now I am standing on the balcony of her condo, four floors up. I am holding onto the railing, staring down at the ground far below. I feel my heart rising. I miss my family, and I know my son is waiting for me. There is no other way to get home. I grasp the railing, close my eyes and ask God for his forgiveness if I die now. This is no suicide attempt. I am desperate for freedom, not death. With the tiny hope that I might survive, I let go of the railing. I dive backwards into the night air. And I scream."

Fernando survived the fall and recovered at a hospital. Today, she lives in Massachusetts and continues to spread the word about modern-day slavery. She is the founder of the Nivasa Foundation, an organization that provides financial assistance for the education of trafficked women's children.

Source:

Fernando, Beatrice. *In Contempt of Fate: The Tale of a Sri Lankan Sold into Servitude Who Survived to Tell It, a Memoir*. Merrimac, MA: BeaRo Pub., 2004. Print.

Ramesh

"Ramesh" is a changed name, but this story is a real Guria case from 2014.

In 2014, Ramesh, a member of a Scheduled Tribe* community, came to Guria with the information that his uncle, aunt and two other relatives have been kept in slavery for the last eight years by brick kiln owners in Mirzapur, U.P. (India). All of them were paid 12000 Rupees* per person as an advance and were promised a wage* of 300 Rupees per thousand bricks, and 500 Rupees for food expenses per week per person. Believing the promises made by brick kiln owners, Ramesh's uncle, aunt, and these two relatives went to the brick kiln. But, after going to brick kiln, they didn't return. Ramesh couldn't succeed in meeting them even though he tried his best. One day, Ramesh went to the brick kiln where he could meet his uncle who snuck out for a bathroom break. His uncle told him the whole story how they have been kept enslaved and are supposed to work hard. They are not allowed to go anywhere other than brick kiln. If they ask about their wages or settling down their accounts, they are severely beaten. All the bonded laborers are closely guarded by the brick kiln owners and their colleagues.

After verifying the facts about the bonded laborers in the brick kiln, in December of 2014, Guria sent an application to the District Magistrate* of Mirzapur requesting the rescue of these enslaved laborers. After receiving the application, the District Magistrate told the Labour Department and Sub District Magistrate* to take corrective action. However, the Sub District Magistrate refused to rescue the enslaved laborers because he wasn't told the *exact* location of the brick kiln—even though it is usual practice for rescue operations to keep the location a secret until the day of the rescue (because otherwise someone might leak information to the brick kiln owner!) But, the Sub District Magistrate stubbornly refused to cooperate. Later, Guria spoke to the District Magistrate, Sub District Magistrate, and the National Human Rights Commission* on the phone, and agreed to reveal the location even though it might compromise the rescue mission. Even still, the rescue was not done! Finally, the National Human Rights Commission intervened and rescued 24 bonded labours including Ramesh's uncle, aunt and two other relatives and 11 bonded child labours from the location on 30.12.2014 and were sent back to their homes after 8 long and dark years of bonded labor.

After the rescue operation, cases were being filed against the brick kiln owner. The brick kiln owner threatened Ramesh's uncle and family that if they didn't withdraw the cases against him, their whole family would be killed. The police and administration were informed about these threats, but no action was taken by the authorities. Now, in 2015, the family is still living constantly under fear.

***Vocabulary List:**

Schedule Tribe = The lowest caste in the Indian caste system. (Caste is an Indian social hierarchy)
Rupees = Indian currency. (1 US Dollar = 69 Rupees)
District Magistrate = A government official in charge of a certain large district
Sub District magistrate = A government official in charge of a smaller portion of an entire district
Wage = Money paid to a worker for doing their job. Salary.