

GREAT DECISIONS

1918 • FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION

HIGH SCHOOL

FEBRUARY 2021

TEACHERS:
CHECK OUT
THE BACK PAGE

MODERN ENSLAVEMENT

A six-year-old boy in Bangladesh works in a recycling facility, where he is paid about two dollars for 8 to 10 hours of labor.

Millions around the world are forced to work dangerous jobs for little or no pay. Many of them are children. And it might be happening closer to home than you expect.

BY MICHAEL BURGAN

WARNING: THIS ISSUE CONTAINS DESCRIPTIONS OF SITUATIONS THAT COULD BE UPSETTING TO SOME READERS.

FREEDOM DENIED



To harvest cocoa, workers must split open the fruit of the cacao tree and scoop out the valuable seeds inside. In countries such as Ivory Coast, pictured here, this difficult labor is often performed by children.

Benjamin Lowy/Getty Images Reportage

When you unwrap a candy bar, you'd probably rather think about how good it will taste than wonder who picked the cocoa beans used to make the chocolate. But you might be surprised to find out that in African nations such as Ghana and the Ivory Coast, where cocoa is a major crop, farmworkers are often teens under the age of 16. In some cases, kids as young as five have been found working on the farms.

Many of these children live in impoverished areas, and some willingly take the jobs to provide

money for their families. But other young people are forced to work on the farms for little or no pay. They fall prey to **human traffickers**—people who seek to make money off the forced labor of others. In the cocoa industry, some traffickers convince parents to let their children go to work at a young age. The parents often don't realize that their children will face long work hours and potential injuries, with no time to pursue an education. In other cases, traffickers simply kidnap children and sell them to the farms.

In 2020, as many as 1.6 million children were involved in producing the world's cocoa supply. And that's just one industry. Around the world, more than 4 million children are currently being forced to take on dangerous jobs, such as working in mines or factories. The goods they help make include clothing, toys, foods, furniture, and leather products. Like chocolate, some of those goods end up on the shelves of U.S.

stores, where your family might purchase them without ever knowing how they were made.

A GLOBAL ISSUE

Forced child labor is just one part of a much larger issue. Human trafficking and what is called modern enslavement occur in rich and poor countries alike. The word "trafficking" usually means that something is being moved from one place to another. [But human traffickers often find victims in their own towns, and relatives might even take advantage of family members](#). It can happen to anyone, anywhere, from any walk of life.

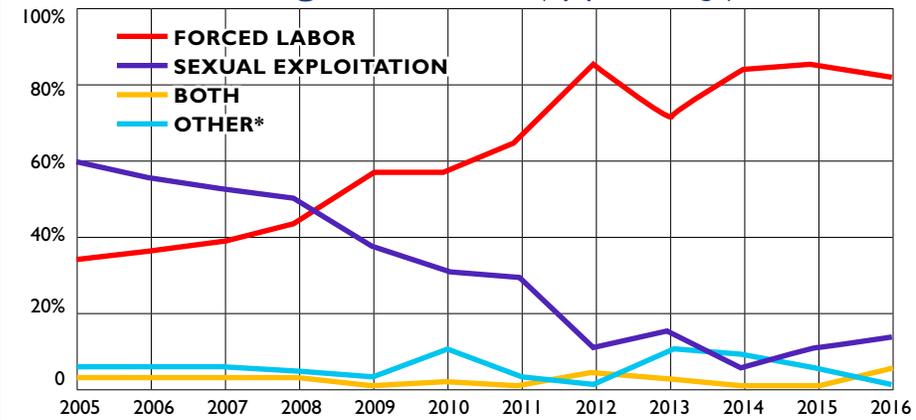
Human trafficking includes several categories. One set of definitions for this crime comes from the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, which became a U.S. law in 2000. Trafficking can involve using "force, fraud, or **coercion**" to recruit an adult or minor for labor. Under U.S. law, any situation involving a



Some chocolate products are certified to meet "fair trade" standards. These standards aim to encourage better conditions and pay for workers.

Realimage/Alamy

Exploitation Types Among Identified Victims of Trafficking, 2005–2016 (by percentage)



* NOTE: "Other" includes forced marriage, military service, low-level criminal activity, and trafficking for blood, organs or other body parts
Source: IOM Human Trafficking Global database, 2017.

In recent years, forced labor has overtaken sex trafficking as the most common form of modern enslavement.

minor in paid sexual activity is also considered trafficking. Additionally, because minors cannot legally consent to sex, it is considered rape.

Some people assume human trafficking is always about forcing someone to have sex for money, but trafficking can occur in almost any industry. For example, the U.S. has seen a number of legal cases involving nail salons, where immigrant workers—mostly from Asia—are forced to work long hours and to pay debts they supposedly owe their employers. Worldwide, other forms of forced labor are much more common than sexual trafficking.

Modern slavery is not defined by law, but it usually includes total control over the working and living conditions of those who are enslaved. The victims are not necessarily considered someone else's property, as enslaved people once were in the United States and other countries. But people held under modern slavery can't leave their jobs or travel freely, and their employers control all aspects of their lives.

PRISONERS IN THE HOME

Some 21 million adults around the world perform forced labor. Most of those workers are employed in four major job sectors: domestic work, construction, manufacturing, and agriculture. Almost 25% of the workers are in the first category—they work in people's homes as maids, nannies, or other household help, often for wealthy families. This is called **domestic servitude**.

Neighbors passing by a home where domestic servitude takes place might never think anything strange is going on inside. After all, many families with money pay full-time housekeepers or nannies to live with them. But under domestic servitude, workers are virtual prisoners in the homes.

As a teenager growing up in Brazil, all Natálicia Tracy wanted was to get a good education. When a family she nannied for offered to take her with them to live in the United States, she jumped at the chance. There, she thought, she would have better opportunities than in Brazil. Instead, Natálicia found herself a victim of domestic servitude.

Natálicia's employers said she would be like a member of the family. Instead, they slowly curtailed her freedoms and cut off her contact with the outside world. She couldn't receive mail or make phone calls, and on many days the family forced her to work up to 15 hours straight. She cooked the family's meals, but they would sometimes eat all the food and leave

THE DEBATE

WOULD YOU PAY A HIGHER PRICE FOR PRODUCTS MADE USING FAIR LABOR PRACTICES?

YES

- ✓ Goods created by skilled, well-compensated workers are often of higher quality.
- ✓ Supporting companies with fair labor practices will encourage other companies to follow suit.
- ✓ Inexpensive goods should not come at the expense of others' freedom.

NO

- ✗ Many peoples' budgets are already too tight.
- ✗ Consumers should not have to research every product they buy.
- ✗ In a capitalist economy, companies should be allowed to compete by keeping their prices low.

nothing for her. For all her work, Natalicia was paid just \$25 per week, and she slept on the concrete floor of the family’s porch. She put cardboard on the floor and slept on a futon, but the porch was not suited for winter weather in Boston, where the family lived. “For many months each year, the floor was frigid,” Natalicia later recalled.

Natalicia felt trapped. Her work visa only allowed her to work for her traffickers, and she didn’t speak English. She also felt she could not challenge the authority of the educated people she worked for. If she did question her situation, the family berated her. “People don’t understand that you can’t just walk out,” she said. “There are constraints—economic, emotional, social—that keep women like me in place.”

Natalicia was luckier than many victims of domestic servitude. Her traffickers returned to

Brazil and did not force her to go with them. She found work with another family who treated her well. They bought her a winter coat, which she had never had before. They also encouraged her studies. Years later, Natalicia earned a PhD at Boston University.

At age 21, Erwiana Sulistyaningsih left her native Indonesia to work as a maid for a family in Hong Kong. She thought it would be a great opportunity to earn money and save up to pay for college. Instead, her employer beat her and refused to let her see a doctor for the resulting injuries. After months of this treatment, the family abandoned her at the airport with nothing but a few dollars and a ticket home. Erwiana pursued legal action, drawing worldwide attention to her story and ensuring that her abuser would be punished with prison time.

Other victims are less lucky.

The subtle signs of abuse often go unnoticed in cases of domestic servitude. As a result, it continues to be a major problem around the world.

ENSLAVED AT SEA

Adults and children alike are often trafficked into agricultural and manufacturing jobs, including in the commercial fishing industry. Many of the worst abuses take place aboard fishing vessels in Southeast Asia or at the plants where seafood is processed before being shipped around the world. As with chocolate, some of the fish caught using forced labor ends up in U.S. grocery stores.

Like many traffickers, those in the fishing industry often lure or kidnap desperate and impoverished people by promising them jobs with good wages. In exchange for these jobs, victims agree to pay a fee. Once at work, this fee turns into a debt, and the workers’ wages are withheld as payment. Employers also charge the workers for such things as food and housing, so the debt grows. Workers are stuck in their jobs, unable to pay off what they owe and start making money for themselves. This situation is called **bonded labor** or **debt bondage**.

People enslaved on fishing boats often face horrifying circumstances. Victims remain at sea for months or even years at a time, and they are at the mercy of the captains that control the boats. They might work up to 20 hours a day, seven days a week, without receiving enough food and water. Some workers have even been killed by their captors, their bodies tossed overboard.



While working as a maid in Hong Kong, Erwiana Sulistyaningsih (center) was imprisoned and abused by her employers for several months before she was able to escape.



cindygoiff/Getty Images

A 2017 study found that almost 20% of homeless teens in the U.S. and Canada were victims of sex trafficking.

Sex trafficking takes place in wealthy countries, too. Between 2015 and 2019, the annual number of sex trafficking cases reported to the National Human Trafficking Hotline almost doubled, reaching more than 8,000 cases. Thousands more people are likely victims of sex trafficking. Large events such as the Super Bowl are often settings for sex trafficking. Traffickers collect victims in the cities that host these events or bring them there. At these events, they find plenty of people who are willing to pay for sex. Traffickers in the U.S. often target runaways or homeless people. Many of them are victims of sexual or physical abuse before turning to the streets.

*Being forced into sex work is a traumatic experience that can inflict lifelong mental scars upon victims. **If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health, talk to a trusted adult or [seek help from an organization.](#)***

FORCED TO SELL THEIR BODIES

People have long paid others for sex. In some cases, people choose to perform sex acts in exchange for money, becoming **prostitutes**. But not all sex workers are willing participants. Around the world, almost 5 million people are forced to engage in sex work, including prostitution and appearing in pornographic films. Because these people are not consenting to have sex, this is a form of rape.

Most victims of sex trafficking are teenage girls. Traffickers promise money or other benefits, and many victims don't learn that they will be forced to have sex until it is too late. Once they are forced into prostitution, victims often have little control over their lives. They may never be allowed to leave their homes. If they are, a handler called a pimp goes with them. Pimps

sometimes sexually assault or beat the victims under their control to maintain dominance. At times, just the threat of that kind of abuse paralyzes the victims, keeping them [too afraid to go to the police](#) 🚒 or try to run away.

THE DEBATE

SHOULD FORCED SEX WORKERS BE SEEN AS CRIMINALS UNDER THE LAW?

YES

- ✓ Breaking the law is never OK, and prostitution is illegal in most of the world.
- ✓ All sex workers could claim to be victims of trafficking if they are arrested.
- ✓ Arresting people prevents them from continuing to perform sex work, whether it is forced or not.

NO

- ✗ Traffickers and paying customers should be the ones held accountable for these crimes.
- ✗ A criminal record could make it harder for victims to move on with their lives.
- ✗ Governments should focus more on the economic conditions that make many women potential victims.



The Women's Fund Miami-Dade

During the 2020 Super Bowl in Miami awareness campaigns aimed to combat the predicted spike in human trafficking that typically accompanies celebrations surrounding the big game.

Others have mental health issues or face extreme poverty. This leaves them highly vulnerable to traffickers' promises of a better life.

FIGHTING BACK

There is a lot of debate over the best ways to fight trafficking and modern enslavement. Some people believe that the key lies in encouraging governments to enact stronger labor regulations. In many countries, including the U.S., there are already laws meant to keep employers from [treating employees unfairly](#). But companies can get around these rules by operating in countries with less strict labor laws. For example, a U.S. technology company might work with a Chinese factory to produce phones using workers who earn less than the American minimum wage.

In 2019, the U.S. government issued a National Action Plan

to Combat Human Trafficking. The plan noted that people in the U.S. who are particularly at risk of becoming victims include runaway children, undocumented immigrants, Indigenous Americans, and LGBTQ people. And Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) statistics show that unlike most of the world, the U.S. has a bigger problem with sex trafficking than other forms

of forced labor. The action plan said the U.S. government would work to prevent trafficking from occurring, support survivors, and **prosecute** traffickers.

Governments aren't the only ones fighting back. Countless independent organizations have formed to combat trafficking, each with its own perspective about the right way to address the situation. Many of these groups are led by former trafficking victims, who know just how widespread trafficking is and how serious its consequences can be. Activist Jennelle Gordon, a former victim of sex trafficking, says that abusers are "hiding in plain sight . . . kids are being targeted and even **groomed** by pimps, at schools, online, in their favorite parent-approved games, by their peers, on social media and the list goes on."

The global human trafficking industry generates profits of about \$150 billion per year.

THE DEBATE

SHOULD KIDS UNDER 16 BE ALLOWED TO HOLD JOBS IN THE U.S.?

YES

- ✓ Many younger teens are responsible enough to work.
- ✓ A job can be a valuable learning experience.
- ✓ The working age is already lower in some parts of the world.

NO

- ✗ It would be hard to keep employers from exploiting such young workers.
- ✗ Kids should be allowed to focus on learning and having fun, not working.
- ✗ Families might force kids to work to earn more money.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Battling human trafficking and modern enslavement is not just something for governments to tackle. Anyone can get involved, either by educating themselves or taking concrete action. Here some of the things you can do to help.

- Purchase goods made with [fair labor](#) practices. You can learn which goods might have been made using forced or child labor by checking a list the [U.S. Labor Department](#) keeps.
- Be careful when interacting with people online. Traffickers might pose as recruiters for modeling or acting jobs, or try to convince victims to send photos or meet in person.
- Learn some of the signs that might indicate someone is a trafficking victim. These can include such things as untreated injuries or illnesses, signs of emotional abuse, or a lack of freedom of movement.
- If you think someone may be a victim of domestic servitude or other forms of trafficking, call the 24-hour National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888 or tell a trusted adult.
- Volunteer for local anti-trafficking organizations or bigger groups such as Amnesty International.
- Hold a fundraiser for groups fighting trafficking.
- [Let your elected officials](#) know how important this issue is.
- [And as soon as you're old enough, VOTE!](#) With few exceptions, you can't vote until you're 18, but in many states you can register at 16 or 17, and you'll be all set when 18 rolls around.

PEOPLE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Anuradha Koirala



Dinesh Gole/AP Images

Anuradha Koirala

In Nepal, thousands of women and girls are trafficked every year across the border into neighboring India and forced into sex work. Anuradha Koirala decided to do something about it. In 1993, she founded the nonprofit organization [Maiti Nepal](#), which works with law enforcement to monitor the Nepal-India border for trafficking, provides resources and education for former victims, and works to spread awareness of trafficking. Sometimes called Nepal's Mother Teresa, Koirala has won worldwide recognition for helping to rescue more than 12,000 victims of trafficking and catch more than 700 traffickers.

Patricia Ho

Lawyer Patricia Ho has worked for several years to address human trafficking and modern slavery in her home city of Hong Kong. She became interested in the topic when she represented a victim of human trafficking who claimed the government of Hong Kong was not taking strong enough legal steps to stop it. In 2017, Ho helped write a bill to make human trafficking

and modern slavery crimes. The proposed law would also let victims sue traffickers or others who knew trafficking was taking place. Writing in support of the bill, which has not yet become law, Ho said, "The protection of victims and the prosecution of those who seek to enslave and exploit the vulnerable is at its foundation an integral part of the 'rule of law' in Hong Kong."

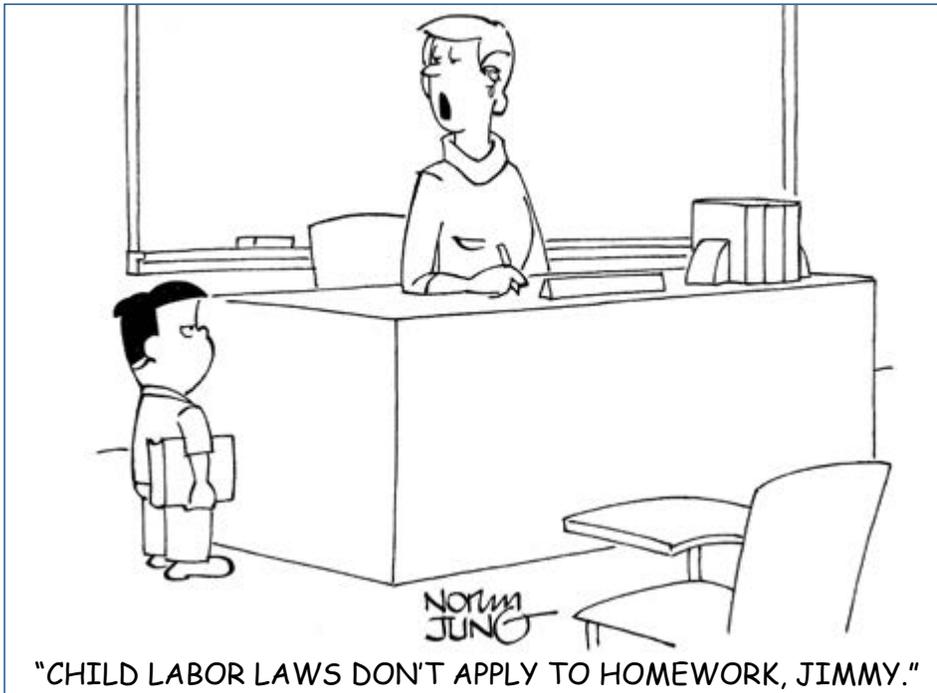
Bhanuja Sharan Lal

Though parts of India's economy are booming, millions of the country's people still live in poverty. Those conditions make the nation ripe for human trafficking, and bonded labor in particular. As the head of [Manav Sansadhan Evam Mahila Vikas Sansthan \(MSEMVS\)](#), Bhanuja Sharan Lal is trying to do something about trafficking in his homeland. MSEMVS is a nonprofit group that has helped end modern slavery in more than 100 villages since 1996. It has also worked with survivors to educate people about slavery and to call on local police to crack down on it. Today, Lal and his organization focus on ending forced child labor and helping its survivors. MSEMVS runs schools for the young victims so they can catch up in the education they missed while working.

Patricia Ho



Courtesy Patricia Ho



Norman Jung/Cartoon Stock

Dear Students & Teachers,

Welcome back to Great Decisions High School! If you missed our first issue on Climate Change, check it out [here](#).

Modern enslavement is an important topic to make young people aware of, and while we hope this issue helps students grapple with some challenging realities we realize it may also be upsetting. We have included resources, and we would love to hear about how your classes engaged with the material. Please write to us at teachers@fpa.org. We'll feature student responses to the discussion questions at left on our blog. Students can submit their own comments and questions, along with their work for the blog, to students@fpa.org.

Please feel free to share this issue with other teachers and students. You can also watch our free Public Television Great Decisions series on [human trafficking](#) and other [topics](#).

We look forward to hearing how Great Decisions High School both informs and challenges your classrooms. Upcoming topics include Artificial Intelligence, immigration, and Covid-19. Click [here](#) for alerts about upcoming high school briefings.

Thank you for bringing us into your classroom this year, whether you're in school or working remotely.

Eliza Edel McClelland
Education Director

Special thanks to: William Dratch, MacDara King, Cole Kitchen, Tonya Leigh, Brandon Ramirez, Elliott Rebhun

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CARTOON?

1. Why do you think Jimmy says that homework is a form of child labor? Is it possible for people with different backgrounds to have different perspectives on what counts as forced labor?
2. In what situations, if any, should young children be allowed to hold jobs? How young is too young to work?
3. What makes regular, everyday work different from forced labor? Is there a clear line that can be crossed? Who should determine where that line is?

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN TO MAKE GREAT DECISIONS

1. Should governments make it more of a priority to fight human trafficking? Which kinds of regulations would be the best way to fight forced labor and modern enslavement?
2. What would make you change your mind about buying something if you knew it was made using forced labor? What if it was something you really wanted, such as a new phone?
3. **YOUR STORY:** Have you ever been treated unfairly at a job? Were you able to resolve the issue? What made the situation different from forced labor or modern slavery?

KEY WORDS & TERMS

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| bonded labor | groomed |
| coercion | human traffickers |
| debt bondage | prosecute |
| domestic servitude | prostitutes |
| fair trade | visa |

GREAT DECISIONS MODERN ENSLAVEMENT

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