In November of 1999, two teenage student journalists from Berkeley High School followed up on a story from the Bay Area Police Department regarding a suspicious death. California real estate tycoon, Lakireddy Bali Reddy, had been brought in for questioning days before after being seen putting a 17-year-old unconscious girl into a van at one of his apartment complexes. A bystander, suspecting kidnappers, reported the incident to the police. Reddy convinced officers that the eventual death of the young girl was due to a faulty carbon monoxide detector in one of his buildings. He was released, the same day, with only a property fine. Following Reddy’s release, the student journalists ran a short article in the school newspaper asking why this young girl (and others from Reddy’s complexes) had never been seen at Berkeley High School. Within only a few months, these probing questions by high school students led authorities to expose a criminal network that involved dozens of girls from Asia, multiple countries and cities and a track record more than 13 years long. America had its first reported case of human trafficking.

Reddy was released on April 15, 2008 after serving only 8 years of a 38 year sentence. He still owns and operates housing complexes in California’s Bay Area.

What is Human Trafficking?

Human trafficking is modern-day slavery. It happens in every city, state or province, and country, regardless of financial situation or social reality. "Human trafficking, as defined in the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, is 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, debt bondage, or slavery. Human trafficking is not smuggling or forced movement. Trafficking does not require transportation or border crossing, and does not only happen to immigrants or foreign nationals. Trafficking does not require physical force, physical abuse, or physical restraint. The consent of the victim is considered irrelevant, as is payment."1 Victims of human trafficking can be children, teenagers, men or women.

1The Polaris Project

The Church and Trafficking

In recent years, churches have shown increased concern over the growing number of human trafficking cases around the globe. Religious institutions like ABC/USA2 and the United Church of Christ3 are becoming powerful forces in combating trafficking and establishing support services to assist victims. A number of unique characteristics about churches make them effective change agents.

1.Churches have a unique disposition towards the poor and neglected.
2.Churches are formed with a social justice orientation.
3.The Bible offers a call to action on behalf of the vulnerable.
4.Churches have strength in numbers.
5.The Bible's core teaching of hope is a message for all.

Scripture offers numerous examples of God’s concern for the vulnerable and neglected. Isaiah 1:15-17 speaks of defending the fatherless and pleading for the widow. Deuteronomy 10:18-19 reminds us we were all once strangers in a distant land, so we must care for the strangers in our midst. Deuteronomy 24:14-15 commands us not to oppress those in need. Most profound, however, might be Jesus’ re-affirmation of the same in Matthew 25: 31-46, to care for the vulnerable, advocate for those in need and welcome those ostracized by society. Jesus’ earthly example continues to serve as a teaching manual on how we are to encounter and care for those around us.
Who are the vulnerable?

*The majority of trafficking victims are between 18 and 24 years of age.  

*An estimated 1.2 million children are trafficked each year. 

*95% of victims experienced physical or sexual violence during trafficking (according to data gathered by select European countries). 

*43% of victims are used for forced commercial sexual exploitation, of whom 98% are women and girls. 

*32% of victims are used for forced economic exploitation, of whom 56% are women and girls. 

*Many trafficking victims have at least middle-level education. 

A large percentage of children are victims of human trafficking. Often times, children are mistaken for prostitutes, runaways, migrant workers, domestic helpers or troubled teens. By paying special attention to clues and asking the right questions, you can determine if a child is being exploited: 

*Children exploited for labor are often hungry or malnourished to the extent they may never reach their full height or they may have poorly formed or rotting teeth. 

*Children exploited for sexual purposes may show evidence of untreated sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, urinary tract infections, and kidney problems. 

*Children who are victims of trafficking can also be identified by environmental factors, including whether the child is living at the workplace or with an employer, living with multiple people in a cramped space. They may not be in school, attend school sporadically or have a significant gap of schooling in the U.S. 

*Forced labor may expose children to physical abuse or leave signs such as scars, headaches, hearing loss, or cardiovascular/respiratory problems from working in agriculture, construction or manufacturing. 

*The psychological effects of exploitation include helplessness, shame and humiliation, shock, denial and disbelief, disorientation and confusion, and anxiety disorders including post-traumatic stress disorder, phobias, panic attacks and depression.

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4 International Organization of Migration (1999) 
5 UNICEF (2003) 
6 The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (2006) 
7 International Organization of Migration (2007) 
8 International Organization of Migration (2007) 
9 International Organization of Migration (1999)
Where Can Trafficking Victims Be Found?10
*Commercial Sex Industry
*Domestic Services
*Sweatshops and Factories
*Construction Sites
*Farming or Landscaping
*Tourist Industry
*Panhandling
*Janitorial Services
*Restaurant Services

The Traffickers:
*52% of those recruiting victims are men, 42% are women and 6% of cases involve both men and women.11
*In 54% of cases the recruiter was a stranger to the victim, in 46% of cases the recruiter was known to the victim.12
*The majority of suspects involved in the trafficking process are nationals of the country where the trafficking process is occurring.13

The Profits:14
*Estimated global annual profits made from the exploitation of all trafficked forced labor are US $31.6 billion.
*US $15.5 billion - 49% is generated in industrialized economies.
*US $9.7 billion - 30.6% is generated in Asia and the Pacific.
*US $1.3 billion - 4.1% is generated in Latin America and the Caribbean.
*US $1.6 billion - 5% is generated in Sub-Saharan Africa.
*US$ 1.5 billion - 4.7% is generated in the Middle East and North Africa
*In 2006 there were only 5,808 prosecutions and 3,160 convictions throughout the world. Thus, for every 800 people trafficked, only one person was convicted in 2006.15

What Can Churches Do to Help?
Involvement in anti-trafficking efforts is complex. Much like drug trafficking, human trafficking is a well-organized highly dangerous criminal enterprise. The elaborate methods of manipulation, the mafia-like criminal networking and the enormous amount of money involved in human trafficking around the world mean that knowledge is key.

Take for example a trafficking case near Washington, D.C. A young troubled teen runs away from home after her parents announce their plans to divorce. Her emotional vulnerability, need for money and lack of knowledge about human trafficking meant that this young girl trusted friends and acquaintances she might not otherwise have relied on. In turn, the young girl believed her boyfriend’s distant cousin when he stated he might have work for her. She boarded a Greyhound bus to meet him. Upon arriving, this young girl was picked up in an 18-wheeler and pulled into a sex-trafficking ring among truckers in D.C. Because this young girl went willingly, she was confused for a prostitute and placed in a juvenile detention center. Months later, the young girl was cleared of any crimes but had to undergo years of medical care for depression, PTSD and sexually transmitted diseases.

Due to the danger involved with trafficking rings, direct involvement with traffickers should only be dealt with by skillfully trained law enforcement officers. Law enforcement officials not only ensure the safety of all those involved but they are trained on human trafficking law and abreast of proper legal procedure. If you suspect a possible human trafficking case, you are advised to contact the Department of Justice - Trafficking in Persons and Worker Exploitation Task Force at 1-888-428-7581. For those in Canada, www.humantrafficking.ca offers a database of shelters, community organizations, translators, legal aid and government agencies concerned with trafficking. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police have the following hotline number: 1-866-227-2124. Please be advised that there are new laws in place that provide various options for trafficking victims regardless of immigration status.16

By far, the most effective means of combating human trafficking are education and awareness. Below are 10 safe educational steps that you and your church can take to begin making an impact against human trafficking in your area:
1. Educate yourself on human trafficking & buy fair-trade.
2. Educate your children and youth, in age-appropriate ways, on sex and sexuality.
3. Adopt a Safe Church Policy and do proper background checks on individuals working with children and youth.

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10 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
11 International Organization of Migration (1999)
12 International Organization of Migration (1999)
14 Patrick Besler, Forced Labour and Human Trafficking (2005)
15 U.S. State Department (2007)
4. Find out about local resources (shelters, centers, organizations) in your area caring for human trafficking victims and volunteer your time.

5. Work with area schools on anti-bullying, self esteem and girls’ empowerment programs to reduce the number of cases of desperate young people.

6. Start a small group interested in this issue and have them keep the congregation informed about changing trends in trafficking and ways people can continue to stay vigilant.

7. Advocate for law enforcement, medical professionals and airport employees to be trained on identifying human trafficking in your area.

8. Pay attention, follow your instincts and speak up!

9. Talk to your children and youth about the dangers of human trafficking.

10. Host a fundraiser or awareness campaign at your church.

What is Fair Trade? Why buy it?

We have many options when we shop. Organic. Pesticide-free. Grass-fed. Free-range. One option that is often misunderstood is fair-trade. Fair-trade items are often thought to be items that are purchased from growers or producers at a “fair price.” While this may be true, the fair-trade concept is much more far-reaching in nature.

“Fair Trade is a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers; especially in the [Southern hemisphere]."

Three of the Top 10 industries where victims of human trafficking can be found are: 1) Sweatshops  2) Factories, and 3) Farming. By buying fair-trade items, you are ensuring that your coffee, clothes, or fruits and vegetables were grown and/or produced by workers who live in sufficient housing conditions, receive fair wages, and are of legal working age.

Organizations such as:
Equal Exchange: equalexchange.coop/fair-trade.com
Fair Trade USA: fairtradeusa.org
Fair Trade Federation: fairtradefederation.org
FairTrade International: fairtrade.net

offer a variety of fair-trade items with more information on how they achieved their fair-trade rating and how you can spread the word about equity among buyers and sellers.

What Can The Church DO About Human Trafficking?
Rev. Dr. Lauran D. Bethell

Do you feel like throwing up your hands and saying “Impossible! We can have NO impact on this overwhelming and dangerous issue”? Many of us have felt that way! But once we have become aware of this evil in our midst, we are compelled to respond. And we can have confidence that even as we are doing some little thing, God is multiplying our efforts far beyond what we can imagine!

When God called me to minister with victims of human trafficking nearly 3 decades ago, I was clueless about “what to DO”. All I knew was that it was God’s call and would be God’s work, and I was simply to “show up” and listen for God’s leading every step of the way. “Showing up”—taking that first step is the most difficult. Here are some suggestions that might help you to “Show Up” in the fight against human trafficking: 1. Order my favorite book which helps churches to know “what to do”. In Our Backyard by Nita Belles is written as a study-guide for individuals and church groups to understand the multi-faceted dimensions of human trafficking. Get some friends together or encourage your Sunday School class to “show up” for a several-week awareness-raising session.

2. Do the research in your community. Almost all cities have projects addressing the issues of human trafficking. Find out who is doing what through internet research or from your local police. Interview the leaders of organizations and ask what help they might need—volunteers, resources, materials-in-kind…. Discern whether or not you or your group can or should “show up” and assist in some way. Invite local leaders to speak in your church.

3. “Show Up” in prayer: Whenever you see articles about human trafficking in the newspaper or hear reports on the TV or radio—pray for those situations. Whenever you pass a “Gentleman’s Club” (read: strip-club) or see women “on the streets”, pray into those situations—that God’s Love would pierce through the darkness and sadness of all the lives involved—victims AND victimizers, alike.

4. Find out which people are addressing human trafficking issues in your churches’ missions organizations (both international AND North American...
based)—and invite them to “show up” in your church. Consider becoming involved in their ministries through prayer and resource support.

5. “Show up” at the “International Christian Alliance on Prostitution” (ICAP) Global Conference at the Green Lake Conference Center, Wisconsin to be held May 18-22, 2014. Be prepared to learn about the issues from founders and leaders of grass-roots organizations addressing human trafficking issues from more than 40 countries. See the ICAP web-site (click on “events”) for more information: www.icapglobal.org

Those many years ago, when I was first “showing up”, I had no idea that God was beginning a movement which would spread across the globe, bringing the Light of Love into the darkest of dark corners. There are still many dark corners where victims of human trafficking are waiting for Light—some, very close to your homes and churches. I pray that as you become aware, you too, will be one who is “showing up” and helping to dispel the darkness of human trafficking.

**Heading Upstream to Deal with the Downstream Dangers of Human Trafficking**

**Mylinda Baits**

In the past year I have had the opportunity to travel throughout Latin America visiting Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Chile, and Mexico. On those trips, I witnessed and heard first hand accounts about the situations many vulnerable people, especially women and children, face on a daily basis. In my work promoting the prevention of human trafficking in the region, I am trying to approach the issue as a public health professional would by "moving upstream."

For example, someone on a river shore becomes aware that many people are drowning in a dangerous part of a river and she keeps saving as many as she can, but not everyone can be saved. After a while, she leaves that part and moves upstream to start to warn people of the downstream dangers, thereby saving many more lives than she could by rescuing them. Some of the dangers that fuel the trafficking of persons include issues of inequality, lack of fair access to educational, economic and health resources, degradation of and violence against women, demand for cheap goods and labor, demand for commercial sex and pornography, and silence from the church when it comes to healthy sexuality and power.

In order to deal with the scourge of human trafficking we must look into the roots of culture and society and our own social behaviors that promote it. It is not just about giving money or going to awareness-raising concerts, which are all very good things; it’s about addressing the underlying risk factors and the relationships that increase them. It is about encouraging and empowering the equal access to all of the resources available for all people, not just the privileged few. It is as simple as encouraging parents throughout the world to send their girls to school, challenging and changing societal norms that continue to treat one gender as less valuable than the other. I am saddened by the numerous stories I hear of violence, putdowns and degradation of my Latin American friends. I haven’t confronted family members telling sexist and racist jokes. I admit that I am guilty and complicit in this.

Human trafficking has been widely described as only a sex crime that seems distant from our everyday experiences. It’s easy to embrace a definition of a crime that invokes the guttural emotion of a young child being taken advantage of for sex, especially when a more nuanced alternative is looking at ourselves and the labels we wear and the costs of our goods. We like our shrimp cheap. We reach for the lower priced cocoa. There’s often a cost for cheap goods, and to truly get to the heart of human trafficking we must look at our own love of bargain shopping. This involves looking at ourselves -- not just some imagined bearded man in a hotel room in Guatemala or Costa Rica-- as possible participants in a crime. I admit that I am guilty and complicit in this crime.

A fear of talking about healthy sexuality and power in the church, especially in Latin America, has left many without the tools they need to discern how to express one of God’s gifts to humankind. Instead of finding a safe place to discuss normal and healthy sexual development that honors and uplifts the person, many explore their curiosity in unhealthy and disrespectful ways. While in Nicaragua, the health organization I worked with was having trouble convincing the faith communities with whom they worked that talking about sexual health with their young people in the church would actually help curb the rising early pregnancy rates. The church was convinced that it would be promoting pornography if they talked about sex in church. While in Chile, after having an excellent conversation with a number of women about the situation of girls and their challenges to be seen not as sexual objects, I asked them if that kind of conversation could ever take place in any of their churches, and they just looked at me and said it would be next to impossible.
If we are to make any kind of impact on preventing the dangers of human trafficking, then we have to start dealing with the stuff that really matters and break the silence to warn of impending danger. Our churches, schools and communities are the first place to start, not the last. I am guilty, but I commit to change.

**Education as a Hedge to Trafficking**

Cindy Ruble

Desperation and a mother’s heart propelled Mariana* to leave her home country and venture to Malaysia on the promise of good work with a good salary. She was determined to put her eight children through school. Hope soon turned back to desperation as Mariana found herself trapped in exploitive working conditions as a Domestic Worker: 16 hour work days; no day off; wages never paid; emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, all at the hands of her employer.

Yet, even as her case was drawing to an end in Malaysia, Mariana was already looking towards working again in another country where conditions were even more oppressive. “Why?,” you might ask. Why would she run the risk of ending up a slave again just as she was getting out? Why indeed? She put herself at risk because she was determined to put her children through school so they would not ever be in the situation she was in, or in her own words, “I don’t want them to be like me.” Imagine leaving eight children for two years in order to take care of them. Mariana knew that education was a way out, a launching pad to a better future.

Education empowers. It is a door to a future that just does not exist for the women I meet who have become trafficking victims. In tight job markets, a good education can be the difference in a door opening and a door closing. Closed doors leave desperate people vulnerable to the lures of traffickers.

Desperate people do not ask a lot of questions. They do not know their rights so they hand over their passports, and without realizing it, their freedom. They submit to strip searches by agents upon arrival and hand over their cell phones and possessions because they fear that if they do not, they will lose the jobs they came for, and they desperately want to work. Without their cell phones, many find all communication to their families back home cut off.

They do as they are told until they cannot take it any more and then they run -- if they can get out. Most who run have not been paid. Some eventually return home to find that their children thought they were dead and their husbands remarried. The impact of no communication with their families can be absolutely devastating. Many trafficking victims find themselves traumatized by their experiences in their destination country, and upon their return, if they return, they find their families traumatized by their unexpected and complete disappearance from the life of the family over an extended period of time. What happened to them was not what they signed up for.

Traffickers make many promises designed to lure vulnerable people into their web -- good work and a good salary, training in a skill, a specific type of work, even love. They lure and then they trap. Many of the traffickers are women who go into economically poor villages armed with promises and smiles and soon come out with somebody’s daughter, somebody’s sister, somebody’s mother. The one thing every single trafficking victim I have helped had in common was poverty. Each one of them migrated from a poorer country to Malaysia to earn money to help her family. According to Steve Chalke, author of *Stop the Traffik: People Shouldn’t Be Bought & Sold*, “Girls find it harder to break the cycle of poverty” and “overall women are less well-educated, have fewer job opportunities, and less control over their own bodies.”

A rapporteur from the Asian Development Bank said, “Traffickers fish in the stream of migration.” They fish and they catch because the lures work. So how do we safeguard vulnerable girls from these lures? Chalke says, “Education opens up vistas of possibility” and it “can help people escape trafficking. A well-informed girl is better positioned to detect the inconsistencies in the traffickers' stories.

So how can education stop Human Trafficking? It can stop trafficking at the point of contact because the traffickers’ stories are not believed. It can stop trafficking at the point of need because an educated person is more likely to get a decent job and no longer need to migrate for work. It can stop trafficking because an informed worker knows his rights and does not hand them over upon arrival in a foreign land. It can stop trafficking as an informed public no longer turns a blind eye to the trafficking around them. An informed populace recognizes that trafficking victims are human beings with the same needs and rights as themselves and they say, “No more. Not one more victim. This ends now.”

*Name changed to protect the identity of the victim*
Ministerio frente a la trata de personas: Observar, investigar, invitar, empoderar, prevenir

From an interview with Pastor Xinia Porras
Lee McKenna; Translated by Amaury Tañón-Santos

Me llamo Xinia Porras. He sido la pastora de la iglesia bautista de mi comunidad durante los últimos 14 años. Estamos ubicados en una comunidad pobre de unas 5,000 personas, en el país centroamericano de Costa Rica. A través de mi ministerio pastoral he podido ver de primera mano cómo la pobreza puede llevar a personas al borde de la desesperación. Hace unos años nos dimos cuenta de unas jóvenes, muchas de ellas inmigrantes, eran compradas y vendidas – para la trata de personas y para la prostitución.

Esto ocurría frente con frente a la misma puerta de nuestra iglesia. Esta situación fue de mucho impacto para nosotros, y de inmediato nos dimos a la tarea de averiguar más sobre el asunto, particularmente sobre la situación de las víctimas. Obteníamos información de manera cuidadosa, haciendo preguntas. Y nos fuimos dando cuenta de lo que estaba sucediendo a nuestro alrededor.

La manera más efectiva de conseguir información fue desarrollando relaciones con las víctimas, procurando esos momentos en los que ellas nos pudieran contar su historia. También nos dimos a la tarea de proveerles asesoramiento y orientación. Quisimos demostrar el amor de Dios para ellas, sin ser sentenciosos, afirmando la dignidad propia de ellas de ser seres humanas. No fue fácil. Al darse cuenta que teníamos interés sobre lo que ocurría en sus casas y familias, cortaban la comunicación.

Entre las familias con las cuales interactuamos estaba una compuesta de una madre, tres hijas, y dos hijos. Esta familia estaba atrapada en un ciclo de abuso. El ciclo comenzó con la madre, la cual había sido abusada cuando era niña. Teníamos la intención y el deseo de que este ciclo terminara con la vida de las nietas y nietos de esta señora. Estábamos cada vez más impactados con lo que descubríamos estaba sucediendo justo frente a nuestra iglesia, en nuestro barrio, pero comenzamos a ver estas situaciones desde una perspectiva diferente. Al damos cuenta de lo que causaba lo que sucedía a nuestro alrededor tuvimos que actuar, e informar a los miembros de la iglesia y a nuestros vecinos y vecinas en la comunidad.

En nuestras investigaciones percibimos un patrón. Una persona se acercaba a una de las jovencitas y le preguntaba si tenía interés en estudiar o trabajar en el extranjero, prometiéndole dinero y buenas condiciones de vida. Si nos enterábamos de una de estas propuestas, buscábamos el momento para acercarnos a la joven para invitarla a una conversación para otrar por ella y para preguntarle:

- ¿A qué país iba?
- ¿Qué tipo de visa se le pidió solicitar?
- ¿Con quién iba a llegar?
- ¿Dónde y con quién se iba a alojar?
- ¿Qué tipo de trabajo estaría realizando?

Le compartíamos a la joven que nosotros tenemos una red de amistades y otros contactos en EE.UU., y así la forma de investigar si la oferta de trabajo o la institución académica que le habían ofrecido eran legítimas, o si era el hacer de personas reclutando para el tráfico de personas. Uno de los resultados de nuestras intervenciones fue alertar a los jóvenes sobre la trata de personas, asegurando que cuando alguien se les acercara ofreciendo estudio o trabajo en el extranjero, estos estuviesen debidamente preparados.

Muchos de los inmigrantes a nuestra comunidad llegan desde Nicaraagua. Estos inmigrantes tienden a vivir situaciones precarias, con familias de siete o más hijas e hijos. Las oportunidades de empleo son muy escasas y muchas veces han llegado sin documentos, lo que aumenta su vulnerabilidad a la gente que ofrece una salida rápida de su vida precaria.

Con nuestras capacidades de observación refinada, notamos que cuando una familia llega a la comunidad, los hombres empiezan a pasar el rato en la esquina. De nuevo sospechamos de un problema de prostitución. En una de estas familias había una niña de edad de estar en la secundaria, y todas las tardes y en la noche, veíamos hombres ir por la casa, despertando nuestras sospechas y preocupaciones.

Debido a la situación económica de estas familias, empezamos a salir e invitarles deliberadamente a diversas actividades en la iglesia. En Costa Rica, cada vez que celebremos ocasiones especiales – Días de Acción de Gracia, de la Madre o del Padre, Día de Todo Santo, etc. -siempre servimos comida! Sus estómago llenos no son soborno, sino una invitación a sentarse, a conversar, y a ser solidarios unos con otras, sin discriminación de ningún tipo, con el deseo de construir junto a estas familias una comunidad segura y próspera. También invitamos a las jóvenes a asistir a las reuniones con sus pares con el mismo objetivo en mente. Poco a poco se involucran en las actividades de nuestra iglesia y de la comunidad, compartiendo lo que tenemos, y también nuestra fe y esperanza en Dios, la luz de Cristo. Muchas de estas familias respondieron sorprendidas: nunca habían experimentado nada como esto antes - y el impacto sobre ellas y sobre todos nosotros, fue poderosa.
Expanding our work with women includes including the formation in skills such as tailoring and other circumstances acaecidas por la maternidad temprana. It is for this that we have the intention of founding a nursery for the community in the church. A dozen girls and boys participate daily in the ‘Comedor Infantil’ where they receive nutritious food. They participate equally in a program much more ample of activities, special events, and can – sharing with regularity the cantos aprendidos in the services of adoration the mornings. Abandoned to su suerte in the casas, the niñas and los niños no tienen la oportunidad de aprender los principios básicos de la moralidad o cómo jugar with seguridad en las calles of the barrios. But with a nursery, their mothers will be able to work with the confianza de que se atienden to their children in a secure environment and agogedor. Theirpadres son a menudo ausentes de sus vidas, muchos of them encarcelados. Las mujeres trabajan largas horas in fábricas during some epochs del año with poco empleo in otras épocas del año – esclavas of the calendario of the mercado del primer mundo. Cómo hacer el dinero suficiente para alimentar to their familias es una lucha constante.

Junto a mi hijo desarrollamos a laboratorio de computación para ofrecer más herramientas a la juventud of the comunidad. Nuestra idea fue conseguir voluntarios que enseñaran hasta el nivel de certificación en tecnología of the information básica provisto por le Ministerio de Educación. Una vez certificados, estos jóvenes podrán enseñar to los miembros más jóvenes of the familia, of the iglesia and of the comunidad. Es tan maravilloso ver to esta juventud that antes tenían tan poca esperanza, eran tan vulnerables a the expropiación, and tenían with pocos incentivos para ir to the escuela soñando ahora with una vida diferente. Algunas of estas jóvenes continuaron to estudiar inglés or cualquier otro idioma, mejorando así sus oportunidades of trabajos bien remunerados. Algun día esperamos contratar to uno or dos profesores for that podemos mejorar and ampliar la calidad and cantidad of the educación and the formación. Mientras tanto, el Comedor infantil atrea to las madres and the padres in the comunidad. Ellas and ellos to menudo se quedan for charlar, and compartir sus historias with the presentes. Otros adults se quedan for the capacitación gratuita in costura or in informática. Es como una mariposa, abriéndose la posibilidad of transformation in todos los sentidos. A través of the niñez se atraen to las madres, dándoles esperanza, ayudándoles to satisfacer the necesidades básicas of their familias, dejando of ser víctimas and convirtiéndose a agents of their bienestar personal, familiar and comunitario.

Dios nos ha llevado by a camino that no había previsto, and creo that claramente se ve para mi una vocación pastoral and trabajo with mujeres. No es fácil para the mujeres and the madres in this ciudad ni en este país el desafiar the cultura machista that nos rodea. Cuando fui al seminario the gente se escandalizó of que iba a ir to a escuela of teología. Sin embargo, muchas mujeres han sido lo suficientemente inspiradas by lo que hice to seguir mis pasos, seguir sus estudios and regresar to their barrios and comunidades determinadas to lograr cambios.

Ministry In The Face Of Human Trafficking: Observe, Investigate, Invite, Empower, Prevent
From an interview with Pastor Xinia Porras
Lee McKenna

My name is Xinia Porras. I have been the pastor of the Baptist church in my community for the past 14 years. We are located in a poor community of about 5,000 people in the Central American country of Costa Rica. I have been the pastor of the Baptist church in my community for the past 14 years. We are located in a poor community of about 5,000 people in the Central American country of Costa Rica. During my pastoral work here, I have seen firsthand how poverty can drive one to extremes of desperation. A few years ago, we realized that young girls, many of them immigrants, were bought and sold – through trafficking and prostitution – on the very doorstep of our church. This came as a deep shock to us and we immediately started to find out as much as we could, particularly about the victims. As we gathered information, quietly asking questions, we began to see with our own eyes what was happening around us.

The best way to find out what was going on was to develop relationships with some of the victims, providing opportunities for them to tell their stories. We provide advice and counselling. We demostrate God’s love for them – and without judgement. We respond to them in ways that affirm their own dignity as human beings.
It was not easy. In one place, when they realized that we were interested in knowing more about what was going on in the house, they would no longer allow us inside.

We could see that this one family - a mother, her three daughters and a son - was caught in a cycle of abuse. She herself had been abused as a child. We wanted to help ensure that the cycle did not continue in the lives of her grandchildren. While we were shocked to discover what was happening right in front of our church, in our own neighborhood, we began to see everything from a changed perspective. Beforehand, we had been taken in by the camouflage; now that we knew what was happening we had to act, to inform church members and the community.

We begin to discern a pattern. A young woman would be approached and asked if she were interested in studying or working in a foreign country - and promised money and good living conditions. If we got word of such an approach, we would find a way to approach the young woman, inviting her into a conversation, to pray with her and to ask her questions: to which country was she being invited to go? what kind of visa was she being asked to get? with whom would she be staying? what kind of work would she be doing? Because we have a network of contacts and friends in the United States, we have ways of investigating the claims of the person attempting to lure the young woman into the arms of human traffickers. We could find out if the institution where she was to study or the family with whom she would be living were, in fact, legitimate. One of the results of our interventions has been to alert young people, ensuring that, when they are approached by a person suggesting foreign study or work, that they are suitably prepared and suspicious.

Many of the immigrants in our community have come from Nicaragua. They tend to live in primitive housing in precarious situations with large families of seven or more children. Employment opportunities are very scarce and often they have arrived without documents, increasing their vulnerability to people offering a quick way out.

With our refined powers of observation, we began to notice that, when a large family came to the church or moved into the community, men would begin to hang around, we suspected for the purposes of prostitution. One such family included a high school-aged girl; every afternoon and evening, men would come by the house, arousing our suspicions and concern.

Because of these families' economic situation, we began to go out and intentionally invite them to various activities in the church. In my country, every time we celebrate special occasions - Thanksgiving, Mothers’ or Fathers’ Day, All Saints, etc. – we serve food! Their full stomachs are not bribery but an invitation to sit and talk and to see us as committed together, without discrimination of any sort, to building with them a safe and prosperous community. We also invited the youth to come to meetings with their peers with the same end in mind. We gradually weave them into the fabric of our church and community, sharing what we have, sharing our faith and hope in God, the light of Christ.

Many were so surprised: they had never experienced anything like this before – and the impact on them, on all of us, was powerful. Our work with the women grew to include training in skills such as sewing and candle-making, giving them economic hope as well, an alternative to the desperation that drives so many into selling themselves or their daughters. We provided sewing machines, teaching them how to operate the machines, enabling them to create garments for sale as well as maternity clothes for themselves. In some cases, they helped the women to find employment in the community.

We are seeing the next generation of girls and young women becoming mothers, repeating patterns of exploitation and early motherhood. Someday, we intend to establish a community day-care centre at the church. Already 20 children come every day to ‘Children’s Kitchen’ where they receive nutritious food. We dream of a much larger program, that will offer games, different activities, instruction in music and singing - sometimes performing these songs for the congregation on Sundays. Left on their own in the house, children have no opportunity to learn the basic morals or how to play safely in the streets of the barrios. But with daycare for their children, mothers will be able to go out to work with confidence that their children are being cared for in a safe and nurturing environment. Their fathers are often absent from their lives, many of them in prison. The women work long hours in a factory during some times of the year with little employment in other times of the year – captive to the calendar of first-world markets. Making enough money to feed their families is a constant struggle.

I nourish a vision, with my son, of developing a computer lab that will offer additional vocational tools to young people in their community. Volunteers will teach the youth to the point of certification by the Ministry of Education in basic information technology.

The youth can then, in turn, teach the younger members of the family, church or community. It is so wonderful to imagine these young people who have had little hope for, so vulnerable to exploitation and little incentive to go to school, able to dream of a
different life. Some have continued to study English or other languages, improving their opportunities for work that is well-paid.

Someday we hope to hire one or two teachers so that we can improve and expand the quality and quantity of education and training. In the meantime, the Children’s Diner brings the parents into the church community. They often stay to chat, share their stories with staff and other adults; some stay for free training in sewing or computer skills. It’s like a butterfly, opening the possibility of transformation in every way. Through their children the parents are drawn in, giving them hope, helping them to meet the basic needs of their families, no longer victims, but agents of well-being – personal, familial and communal.

Though God has taken us down a path I did not foresee, it follows clearly from my own calling to the pastorate and work focussed on women. It is not easy in this town, this country, for women and mothers to defy the machistic culture that circumscribes our lives. When I went to seminary, people were scandalised – that I would go to school to study theology! Yet many women have been sufficiently inspired by what I did to follow in my footsteps, pursuing their studies and returning to their neighbourhoods and communities determined to bring about change.

**Human Trafficking Class Outline**

**Week 1:** Intergenerational Ice-breaker, Introduction to Human Trafficking, Human Trafficking Quiz

**Week 2:** Check in, Intergenerational Ice-breaker, Human Trafficking Fact Sheet, Factors that make victims susceptible to trafficking.

**Week 3:** Film: “Not My Life” (1st half)

**Week 4:** Film “Not My Life” (2nd half)

**Week 5:** Small and larger group discussion of “Not My Life”. Local Speaker: general overview of local problems contributing to Human Trafficking

**Week 6:** Interactive activity: Role play activity, case studies (small groups), review risk factors

**Week 7:** Exploring Stereotypes (What does a trafficker look like?). Local Speakers from the Transitional Learning Center and Jail

**Week 8:** Review/discussion of last week’s presentation. Film: “Caressa”, who might be at risk in our community, buying into stereotypes, victims’ needs which aren’t being met.

**Week 9:** Local Speaker. Use of language, respect of persons.

**Week 10:** Short video: “Read the Signs-Do Nothing”, Global/local solutions

**Week 11:** Speakers: Amy Noble (social worker-Madison schools) and Tyler Schueffer (Project Respect) Film: “Make Room for Youth (local film)”. Small/large group activity: What do we need to live a happy life?

**Week 12:** Films: “Partners in Action” and “Friends of Orphans”. Biblical/moral principles, music by Brother Sun “What Shall I Do with These Hands?”

**Week 13:** Film: “The Silent Revolution”. Interactive activity

**Week 14:** Small and larger group discussion: What have we learned? How might we respond, individually or as a community (church, school, neighborhood, book club, etc.). WWJD? Class evaluation.
Where Can I Find More Information?

The Road of Lost Innocence: The True Story of a Cambodian Heroine -by Somaly Mam

A Crime So Monstrous: Face-to-Face with Modern-Day Slavery -by E. Benjamin Skinner

Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy, Revised Edition -by Kevin Bales

Sold -by Patricia McCormick

Ending Slavery: How We Free Today’s Slaves -by Kevin Bales

Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide -by Nicholas D. Kristof

The Natashas: Inside the New Global Sex Trade -by Victor Malarek

Girls Like Us -by Rachel Lloyd

From Scars to Stilettos -by Harmony Dust

In Our Backyard -by Nital Belles


http://www.internationalministries.org/teams/109-bethell


http://www.humantrafficking.org


http://www.joysmith.ca

http://www.polarisproject.org/human-trafficking/overview

http://www.notforsalecampaign.org

http://www.hks.harvard.edu/research/centers/carr/programs/human-trafficking-and-modern-slavery

http://www.humantraffickinged.com

http://www.weaveinc.org/post/human-trafficking-information

http://vimeo.com/40774737

About the Authors

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Mylinda Baits is a regional missionary with particular focus on issues of human trafficking in the Iberoamerica-Caribbean region. For over 12 years Mylinda and her husband Gary served in Costa Rica focusing on leadership development, theological training and networking for social change. Having witnessed firsthand the sexual tourism industry and hearing the stories of its impact on the lives of countless women and children in the region, Mylinda’s focus is to promote regional collaboration for the prevention and eradication of this slave trade and coordinate efforts to address the exploitation and trafficking of Latin American women and children. Find out more about Mylinda at www.internationalministries.org/teams/45.

Rev. Dr. Lauran Bethell is a Global Consultant on the issues of human trafficking/prostitution, supported by ABC/USA International Ministries. Find out more about Lauran at www.internationalministries.org/teams/109-bethell.

Rev. Lindsay C. Comstock serves as the Executive Director of National Farm Worker Ministry (nfwm.org). Lindsay served approximately four years in Southeast Asia as a human trafficking specialist and has also worked in refugee resettlement with congregations in Virginia and Massachusetts.

Lee McKenna is a trainer, teacher, writer, facilitator, musician and storyteller. She has had articles published in dozens of newspapers, magazines and journals; her areas of expertise include non-violence, economics, human rights, ethics, public policy, anthropology and theology. Find out more about Lee and her work at www.partera.ca.

Cindy Ruble Along with her husband Eddy, Cindy Ring Ruble is a Cooperative Baptist Fellowship missionary living in Penang, Malaysia. Educating for human trafficking prevention and assisting trafficking victims are focus areas for her work. She is the head of CBF’s Justice & Peacemaking Mission Community. Read Cindy’s blog at cbfblog.com/author/cindyringruble.
The following is a prayer from the Intercommunity Peace and Justice Center (IPJC), an organization sponsored by sixteen religious communities that acts for justice in the church and in the world. For more information about the IPJC, please visit www.ipjc.org.

Prayer for an end to human trafficking

Reader: God, you do see; you see every trouble, every cause for grief; you will hear the desire of the meek; you will strengthen their heart, you will incline your ear to do justice for the orphan and the oppressed, so that those from earth may strike terror no more. ~ Psalm 10

Leader: God of life, truth and freedom, we come into your presence and ask you to hear us as we pray...

Our response is: Liberate them from oppression

- For child laborers, child soldiers and children exploited in pornography, we pray: R.
- For young girls and women exploited on the streets: R.
- For all men, women and children enslaved, betrayed and abandoned: R.

Our Response is: May justice reign in our day

- That the perpetrators and organizers of human trafficking turn away from their unjust ways, we pray: R.
- That the millions of people trafficked will experience freedom: R.
- That government leaders, corporate directors and all that serve the public will address the systems that make human trafficking possible: R.

Our response is: We come as a people of hope

- We believe in hope that working together as a community we can Stop the Demand for human trafficking: R.
- We are strengthened by what we have learned and commit to act on behalf of justice: R.
- We are chosen, we are called and we are committed to Stop the Demand and end human trafficking: R.

All: God, give us the wisdom and courage to stand in solidarity, so that together we will find ways to the freedom that is your gift to all of us. Amen.