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**HUMAN TRAFFICKING: THE MODERN DAY SLAVERY OF THE 21ST
CENTURY**

By

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Abstract

The transatlantic slave trade (ancient slavery) in which Africans were captured, chained and transported to Latin America, the Caribbean and the United States to work as slaves was officially abolished around 1807. Unfortunately, human trafficking appears to have replaced this abhorrent activity as the modern day slavery of the 21st century. This research discusses the similarities and differences between these two faces of slavery, differentiates human trafficking from human smuggling, outlines many dimensions of human trafficking, discusses the scope of the problem in several countries using the United States and Nigeria as prime examples, and identifies some of the factors that may foster human trafficking worldwide. This paper concludes that human trafficking constitutes a gross violation of human rights and a global threat to democracy and peace.

Introduction:

Human trafficking is one of the fastest growing and serious forms of transnational crime in the world today. It is estimated that between 800,000 and 4,000,000 people, mostly women and children are trafficked across international borders annually. However, recent indicators show that the trafficking of adult males is underreported and that there has been an increase in the trafficking of adult males for forced labor. One major problem of human trafficking is that it constitutes a gross violation of human rights. Some of the victims of human trafficking are used for sexual exploitation, domestic labor, forced labor or debt bondage, hence many view trafficking in persons as another form of modern day slavery. Most victims of human trafficking are recruited from the developing countries. It is widespread in countries undergoing civil war, or afflicted by political or economic instability. The popular destinations of most victims of human trafficking are the rich countries of Western Europe and North America. Asia is both a destination and the origin of victims of human trafficking.

Human trafficking is a very lucrative business. The annual revenue returns from human trafficking is estimated to be between \$9 billion and \$32 billion (Bales, 2005; Craig, et al, 2007). It is believed that the volume of human trafficking is likely to surpass that of drug and arms trafficking within the next ten years unless something urgently is done to arrest the situation. Many, including world leaders are, increasingly perceiving transnational crime as a major threat to global peace and security and one that is capable of undermining the economic, social, political and cultural development of the international community. Kofi Annan, the immediate past Secretary General of the United Nations has observed that we are all vulnerable to transnational crime. According to him:

No nation can defend itself against these threats entirely on its own. Dealing with today's challenges – from ensuring that deadly weapons do not fall into dangerous hands to combating global climate change, from preventing the trafficking of sex slaves by organized criminal gangs to holding war criminals to account before competent courts – requires broad, deep, and sustained global cooperation. States working together can achieve things that are beyond what even the most powerful state can accomplish by itself (Annan, 2005 p.2).

The re-emergence of the slave trade that was officially banned in the 1880s is bothersome, and is viewed as one of the major challenges confronting many governments in the 21st century. Other types of transnational crime include, drug trafficking, trafficking in firearms, trafficking in stolen vehicles, trafficking of human body parts, smuggling of migrants, kidnapping for purposes of extortion and a variety of crimes against the environment, cyber-crime, money laundering and terrorism. The enormous profits these criminal acts generate are the main driving motives for engaging in transnational crime. Human trafficking alone generates more than \$11 billion annually according to Bales (2000) as cited in

Wheaton/Schauer (unpublished manuscript). Most transnational crimes are carried out by organized criminal groups. The transnational criminals take advantage of the expansion of global trade, and improved communication and transportation technology to carry out their nefarious businesses.

Most organized criminal groups operate in poor countries with little or no economic opportunities. They also find fertile grounds in countries with weak and corrupt governments and where the rule of law is lacking and possibly going through war or experiencing other social and political conflicts. There is a strong relationship between organized crime and political corruption. According to the 2005 Thailand Country Report, “evidence shows that human smuggling and trafficking are closely linked to other criminal networks, be they illicit drug trafficking, arms trafficking, money laundering, document forging, or bribing of government officials (p.101)”. Other major characteristics of organized criminal groups are their extensive use of violence, employment of bribery and corruption of government officials, especially the law enforcement agents and judicial officials in their operations. Again, many organized criminal entities are able to penetrate and corrupt legitimate businesses. Public outcry against transnational crime spurred the United Nations to create the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in September 2003. The goal of this instrument is to empower nations and enhance international collaboration in dealing with transnational crime. It is also working to raise global awareness and develop preventive measures against human trafficking and other transnational organized crimes. This research reviews these issues and presents the different dimensions of human trafficking in the world today.

Defining the Problem:

Lee (2007) argues that human trafficking is not a precise term. This definitional quagmire has been one of the challenges with the enforcement of human trafficking laws and related policies. Notwithstanding this definitional dilemma, many are in agreement that human trafficking is a modern practice of slavery. Human trafficking is slavery because it describes the situation where one individual exploits the labor of another individual. Unlike the ancient form of slavery where one individual owned the other, today’s slave owners do not have legal ownership rights over their slaves. However, they are able to control and determine the fate literally of their slaves. Bales and Cornell (2008) note that people in a slave like situation “cannot walk away, cannot make any choices about anything in their lives, because they are held under complete control that is backed by violence (p.8)”. Further, according to Bales & Cornell (2008), people held as slaves lose their ability to exercise their free will. Bales & Cornell (2008) define slavery as a “social and economic relationship in which a person is controlled through violence or the threat of violence, is paid nothing, and is economically exploited (p.9)”. Based on the foregoing, there are essentially three aspects of modern slavery according to Craig, et al, (2007), namely, that they

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involve (1) severe economic exploitation; (2) the absence of any framework of human rights; and (3) the maintenance of control of one person over another by the prospect or reality of violence” (p.12).

Craig, et al (2007) argue that physical violence does not necessarily have to be present for it to constitute slavery. It is the nature of the relationship that determines whether it is slavery or not. For example, Craig, et al (2007) note that where the housing or working condition for the victims of human trafficking is deplorable and not fit for a human-being, then it is a slave-like condition. It also constitutes modern slavery when the liberty and movement of the individuals are overly restricted through either the withholding or confiscation of travel documents such as passports or ID documents. Intimidation, deceit or other forms of abuse of power could be employed to control the individuals note Craig, et al (2007). To avoid the confusion with the definition of modern slavery, the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2004) has listed six conditions of forced labor, namely:

- “threat or actual physical harm to the worker;
- Restriction of movement and confinement, to the workplace or to a limited area;
- Debt bondage, where the worker works to pay off a debt or loan, and is not paid for his or her services. The employer may provide food and accommodation at such inflated prices that the worker cannot escape debt;
- Withholding of wages or excessive wage reductions that violate previously made agreements;
- Retention of passports and identity documents, so that the worker cannot leave, or prove his/her identity and status;
- Threat of denunciation to the authorities, where the worker is an irregular immigration status” as cited in Craig, et al (2007, p18).

Modern day slavery differs remarkably from ancient slavery in several ways according to Bales and Cornell (2008). One way contemporary slavery differs from ancient slavery is that it costs much less to acquire slaves today. Some slaves according to Bales and Cornell (2008) can be purchased for as little as ten US dollars. Secondly, slaves today are not owned for life like in the past. Slaves are owned for a limited duration, some lasting for a few years or even months. However, this puts the slave in a more precarious situation because the slave owner has no incentive to look after the slave and prolong his or her life and wellbeing to keep him or her productive for a longer period of time. Again, with slaves being inexpensive, those causing the owners undue expenses are discarded and replaced. The third major difference between today’s slavery and the ancient slavery is that modern slavery is globalized. This is because, as noted by Bales and Cornell (2008), the roles slaves play and their contribution to the local economy are increasingly similar. Bales (2000) summarized the major differences between old slavery and new slavery as follows:

“Old Slavery	New Slavery
Legal ownership asserted	Legal ownership avoided
High purchase cost	Very low purchase cost
Low profits	Very high profits
Shortage of potential slaves	Surplus of potential slaves
Long-term relationship	Short term relationship
Slaves maintained	Slaves disposable
Ethnic differences important	Ethnic differences not important

(p.15)”.

Bales & Cornell (2008) argue that the transformation from the slavery that existed in the past and the slavery that is taking place now could be traced to the changes in the world economy after the Second World War. Wheaton and Schauer (2008) note that to appreciate these differences, one has to examine the economic agents making economic choices in the global market, such as migrants, traffickers, employers and users of slave-produced products or services. Human traffickers, according to these researchers, enjoy a certain level of monopoly in an otherwise very competitive industry. Traffickers act as intermediaries between migrants and employers of labor in the trafficking market. The products these traffickers supply are human beings, while the consumers of these products are the employers of labor, note Wheaton & Schauer (2008).

There is also the problem with differentiating between smuggling and trafficking. To provide clarity to the situation, the United Nations Protocol against smuggling in Migrant states has provided the following definition according to Craig, et al (2007). Human smuggling according to the UN definition is the “procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a state party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident (cited in Craig, et al, 2007 p.19)”. The definition of trafficking as provided by the UN Protocol, Article 3A, 2000, states that:

Trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

- 3B. “the consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used” (ibid).

Smuggling involves the active collaboration and consent of the smuggled person. The smuggling contract basically ends when the individual arrives at the destination. On the other hand, the relationship between the trafficked person and the trafficker is prolonged. It is often an exploitative relationship. It is carried out through some form of coercion or deception. In addition, trafficking can always be undertaken within the country. There is, however, great overlap between smuggling and trafficking, even if sometimes the difference between the two may be a bit blurred.

Factors that Foster Modern Slavery:

There are many factors that have contributed to the growth in modern slavery. One factor, according to Bales & Cornell (2008) is the rapid increase in the world population after the Second World War. This population increase occurred mostly in the developing nations. With the massive population explosion, the already fragile economy and infrastructure in the poorer countries were further stretched. The ensuing economic and social condition rendered many of the people vulnerable to trafficking. This explains why modern slavery is more prevalent in the developing countries (Bales and Cornell, 2008). Records show most of the victims of human trafficking are from Asia, Central and Eastern Europe and Africa. The destinations of most victims of human trafficking are the rich countries of Western Europe and North America.

As noted by Bales and Cornell (2008), in addition to the population explosion, another factor that has contributed to the growth in modern slavery is the rapid change in the global economy. The transatlantic slave trade took a massive toll on the economy of sub-Saharan Africa. Slavery carted away the able bodied men and women, and those who were in a position to contribute to the economic and political growth of the continent. Besides, the fact that the slave trade pitted ethnic groups against each other, and that tilted the focus of the people from economic activities and nation building to unnecessary war efforts.

Colonialism further destabilized the economy by changing the economic activities focus from food for sustenance to agricultural products for export to meet the needs of the industries in the colonial masters' countries. Further hampering the economies of the developing countries of Africa, Asia and South America were the wars for independence from colonial masters. Colonialism precipitated other internal conflicts that took a major toll on the economic and political development of the colonized countries. The new economic order introduced by the colonial regime changed land ownership patterns and displaced many people from the rural areas to urban areas. High unemployment in the cities rendered many citizens of the developing countries vulnerable to trafficking. Again, the national economic policies of the developed countries put the economies of the developing countries at a disadvantage. For example, the economic principle that promotes the free exchange of goods, but limits the free movement of labor works against the economic interests of the developing worlds. Again, the subsidies the

farmers in the developed countries receive from their governments put them at a more competitive position against their counterparts from the developing countries. Bales and Cornell (2008) illustrated this economic relationship between the developing countries and the developed countries thus:

The United States government pays \$19 billion a year to subsidize American farmers. For example, the US gives \$4 billion a year to cotton farmers to help them grow a crop that is valued at only \$3 billion. The cotton farmers in India, Benin, Mali, Burkina Faso and Togo (all countries with high levels of slavery) cannot compete with this subsidy. Though they actually raise cotton at a lower cost than American farmers, the American farmers can beat them in the marketplace because they receive money from both the sale of the crop and from the US government (p. 13)

Again, while the developed countries profess and promote free trade, they have adamantly refused to allow for the free movement of labor as a necessary follow up of the free economic ideology. The free trade makes it possible for the developing countries to export the raw materials the industrialized countries need, but does not afford them the opportunity to export their surplus labor too. The inefficient economy created by the forgoing conditions breeds corruption in the governments of the developing countries. Corruption undermines government policies and above all affects the morale of the people because it contributes to the widening of the gap between the rich and the poor. Democracy and the rule of law are also not compatible with massive poverty, illiteracy, and general discontent. To maintain order, the elite who dominate the government with the monopoly over the use of instrument of violence unleash that to maintain order. As Bales and Cornell (2008) note, “slavery grows quickly when the rule of law breaks down. Conflict and disaster open the door to criminals who use violence and trickery to enslave people (p.14)”. The global economic inequality further raises the stakes for people from the developing worlds who are made to believe that their chances of economic survival is higher in the developed economies of America and Europe. Furthermore, colonialism imposed foreign languages, religion, law, values, educational and political systems on the colonized countries. This has further added to the trauma and challenges of development and administration of the places. Again, colonialism was autocratic, and those who inherited power from the colonial authorities have continued with the same policies and governance approach.

The Scope of the Problem:

There are no reliable statistics on the extent of human trafficking anywhere in the world. One reason for the lack of reliable data on human trafficking is because this is a crime that is hidden – as it is part of the underground economy. Again, the victims of human trafficking are often reluctant to report their victimization

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or to cooperate with the law enforcement agents investigating the crime for myriad of reasons. In addition, some of the victims of human trafficking do not know that they are protected by the local laws of the land. Furthermore, as Bales (2004) has pointed out, there is little or no cooperation between governments and the international anti-human trafficking agencies. Laczko (2005 and 2003) has also observed that

... one of the most challenging problems facing researchers is the fact that most of the populations relevant to the study of human trafficking, such as victims/survivors of trafficking for sexual exploitation, traffickers, or illegal migrants are part of a 'hidden population', i.e. it is almost impossible to establish a sampling frame and draw a representative sample of the population (as cited in Craig, et al 2007, p.21).

In 2007, the United States of America State Department estimated the number of people trafficked annually across international borders to be 800,000. Another estimate, according to Bales (2005) indicates that the number of people trafficked annually worldwide, is about four million people (Wheaton & Schauer, 2008 p.4). There are about 12.3 million people who are enslaved today, according to the International Labor Organization (ILO) as cited in Craig, et al (2007). Out of this number, notes the ILO, more than 360,000 are enslaved in the industrialized countries, with about 270,000 of them engaged in forced labor. In West and Central Africa, more that 200,000 individuals, according to UNICEF data, are trafficked into slavery (cited in Siasoco, 2001). Most victims of human trafficking are women and children. However, some records have it that the incidence of adult male victims of human trafficking is much higher than earlier reported and are on the increase. Carroll (2009) notes that "according to the latest U.S. State Department report on human trafficking, some 45 percent of the 286 certified adult victims in fiscal year 2008 were male, a significant increase from the 6 percent certified in 2006 (p. 1)". The report states that most of the adult male victims of human trafficking are forced to work in the construction sites or farms. The majority of the male victims of human trafficking in the U.S. are from Central and South America. One reason provided in the report for why male victims of human trafficking are underreported is that men are unlikely to report their victimization because of fear of the stigma that might attract.

Some of the victims of transnational trafficking are forced into prostitution. Others are coerced into working in sweatshops, domestic labor, farming and even child armies. There is high demand for cheap labor in these industries. In support of this assertion, Gilmore (2004) notes that "forced labor occurs in poorly regulated industries with a high demand for cheap labor – sweatshops, restaurants and hotels, in addition to agriculture and domestic work (p.1)". Gilmore further argues that one reason why these industries are conducive for human traffickers is because there is little or no government oversight in these industries. As such organized criminal groups and unscrupulous employers are

able to exploit the labor of human trafficking victims without official detection. Craig, et al (2007) state that:

“of those trafficked into forced labor, approximately 43% are trafficked into sexual exploitation, approximately 32% into labor exploitation and about 25% are exploited for a mix of sexual and labor reasons. The ILO estimates that the worldwide traffic in human beings is worth at least US\$32 billion annually, with just under half of that (about US\$15.5 billion) obtained from the traffic to industrialized countries (p. 20)”.

According to Gilmore (2004), most “victims of forced labor are trafficked into the United States from at least 38 different countries, with China, Mexico and Vietnam topping the list. Some are born in the United States and later held captive (p. 1)”. Additionally, Wukman (2009) states that about ninety-six percent of victims of human trafficking are women and female children, and three percent are boys. More than seventy percent of the female victims of human trafficking are coerced into the commercial sex industry. Adult males are also trafficked, including both educated and illiterate. Any one can be a victim of human trafficking, including citizens of developed or developing countries. As Bales (2004) has rightly observed, it is no longer the case as it was in the past where slavery was justified on the grounds that the enslaved belong to a different race, ethnic or religious groups from those profiting from the trafficking. The justifications sometimes given that it was in the best interest of the enslaved or that the enslaved was not fully human are no longer tenable. Human trafficking is a major threat to global economic and political order. It is capable of destroying the already fragile economies and governments of the poorer countries of Asia and Africa. Many countries in Asia and Africa are major sources, destinations and transit for trafficked persons according to available records.

To illustrate how diverse the human trafficking problem is, a closer look at the problem of human trafficking in the United States, especially Houston Texas and Nigeria will suffice. According to one estimate, more than 18,000 people of foreign origin are trafficked into the United States each year according to the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA, 2009). It is important to reiterate, that the recruiting, enslavement and movement of persons also occurs within a country’s borders. As such, domestic trafficking and child prostitution remains a major problem in the United States. Citing the Polaris Project Washington, DC, TAASA says that more than 200,000 children are trafficked into the sex industry in America each year. According to ICE Operation Predator records, notes TAASA, about 1 in 5 girls, and about 1 in 10 boys are sexually exploited before they reach adulthood in America. Child trafficking and child pornography according to TAASA (2009) generate several billion dollars to the international sex tourism industry world-wide. Wukman (2009) citing a report by the National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway and Throwaway Children (NISMAART) notes that one out of every three teenager who

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runs away from home will be recruited into the sex industry within 48 hours. The average age of children recruited into prostitution or pornography is 12 years. Shared Hope International, a Vancouver, Washington-based anti-human traffic nonprofit organization reported in 2008 that 75 percent of the minors involved in prostitution have pimps (Wukman, 2009). The magnitude of the problem is apparent if 6,000 children in the state of Texas run away every month according to Pat Fransen, an FBI Agent, as cited by (Wukman 2009 p.3).

Texas, because of its location as a border state is a major point of illegal entry into the United States. Other points through which people are smuggled into the United States include, Southern California; Tucson, Arizona and New Mexico. In addition, some human smugglers operate through the ports in Atlanta, Orlando and Washington, D.C. (TAASA, 2009). Houston is a popular entry point for human smugglers for many reasons, including the fact that it is a big city close to a border town. Again, it has a significant population of Latinos and has a high need for immigrant labor, both legal and illegal. The illegal immigrants easily find jobs in the many industries of Texas, such as textiles, agriculture, restaurants, construction and in domestic work. As Gilmore (2004), has observed “while forced labor exists across the United States, reported cases are concentrated in states with large immigrant communities, including California, Florida, New York and Texas (p.1)”. The large geographical area of Texas also makes it conducive for immigrants. Furthermore, Houston’s proximity and easy access to the towns which share a border with Mexico, has a sea port, and is along the I-10 corridor. To further support this viewpoint, Wukman (2009) cites a biannual report titled “Growing Up in Houston 2008 -2010,” put out by the Children at Risk which observes that “Houston has been identified as one of the main hubs and destinations for human traffickers and the I-10 highway, which runs between El Paso and Houston, has been found to be the main human trafficking route in the United States (p. 3)”.

Another major indicator that human trafficking is a major problem in Texas in general, and in Houston in particular, is that according to available records in 2006 from the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Rescue and Restore Campaign Results, April 2004 through 2006, 25% of certified victims of human trafficking were in Texas. Majority of these victims of human trafficking were in the Houston area according to TAASA (2009). Furthermore, “of the three social service agencies in Houston serving human trafficking victims, YMCA Intl. Houston has served over 105 victims, 2 of whom were under age minors (TAASA, 2009)”.

To further demonstrate how diverse and serious the problem of human trafficking is, this section focuses on Nigeria. Nigeria is considered a major source, destination and transit for the victims of human trafficking. The destinations of the Nigerian women and children victims of human trafficking is Europe, mostly Italy, the Middle East and North America and for the purposes of adoption, domestic and agricultural labor, and for the sale of their human body parts. The destination of the majority of the children victims of human trafficking

from Nigeria is Nigeria and other African countries. It has long been recognized that the trafficking in women and children for the purposes of economic and sexual exploitation is a serious transnational crime, which many observe is akin to modern day slave trade.

The Nigerian government is not oblivious to the problem of human trafficking. Nigeria recognizes that the crime of trafficking in persons poses a major threat to Nigeria's development and stability, and that it poses a major threat to its values and national economy. As an indication of the seriousness Nigeria attaches to the problem, it has created an agency to deal with the problem of human trafficking. Known as the National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons (NAPTIP), this agency came into effect through Act No.24 of 2003. This Act makes it a crime and imposes punishment for any individual or groups of individuals involved in the trafficking of persons, particularly women and children, and other related offenses. The Agency established under this Act has the authority and responsibility for the investigation and prosecution of offenders. It is also the responsibility of the Agency to counsel and rehabilitate persons who are victims of trafficking. The Agency is also mandated to provide protection for trafficked persons, informants and other information as may be necessary during the course of any investigation relating to the trafficking of persons. In addition, the Nigerian government has signed and ratified several international treaties directed at combating the trafficking in persons, some of which are shown below:

- a. The United Nations Convention Against Transnational Crime (the Palermo Convention) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in Resolution GA/55/25 on 15 November 2000, and acceded to by initial State parties in Palermo, Italy, at the High Level Political Signing Conference, 12 – 15 December 2000. It entered into force on 29 September 2003.
- b. The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Conventions Against Transnational Organized Crime, adopted by A/RES/55/25.
- c. The Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, Supplementing the United Nations Conventions Against Transnational Organized Crime adopted A/RES/55/25.
- d. The Protocol Against Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms adopted by A/RES/55/255.

There are no reliable statistics on the extent of human trafficking in Nigeria. However, an insight into the extent and seriousness of the problem can be gleaned from the number of Nigerians deported from Italy and other European countries. For example, data from the Nigerian Police indicate that between 1999 and 2001, about 8,633 persons were deported to Nigeria from Europe. Specifically, it was estimated in 2001 that there were about 10,000 Nigerian prostitutes in Italy. This figure, according to the Nigerian Embassy report in Italy,

does not include the 800 Nigerian prostitutes in Italy who were deported to Nigeria between 1999 and 2000 (see Loconto, 2001; C. Okojie et al, 2003).

The Nigerian Tide Newspaper of July 10, 2007 cited the National Agency for Prohibition of Traffic in Persons (NAPTIP) report that the agency has within the last four years rescued 779 victims of human trafficking. The ages of these victims of human trafficking ranged between 13 and 22 years, and the gender ratio was two males to eight females. According to the report, the destinations of some of the victims of human trafficking from Nigeria are Spain, Belgium, Saudi Arabia, Ireland and the Netherlands. The European Network for HIV/STI Prevention and Health Promotion among Migrant Sex Workers (TAMPEP), a Non Governmental Organization (NGO) reports that about 60 percent of street girls in Italy are Nigerians. The report also mentions that about 13,000 Nigerian victims of human trafficking were stranded in Libya. Cameroun, Benin, Gabon and Niger are used as transit points for Nigerians trafficked to foreign countries. The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) had, by 2007, received report of more than 10,000 cases of human trafficking. The Agency had, by 2007, according to its report successfully prosecuted and convicted 12 barons, noting specifically that most of the criminal barons were women. What is not clear, however, is whether these women were acting as fronts for other politically connected and powerful men or on their own considering that women are otherwise marginalized in the economic and political sphere in Nigeria due to the prevailing patriarchal values and structures in the society.

Dimensions of Modern Slavery:

There have been several attempts in the history of the modern world to abolish slavery in all its forms. This has never worked as slavery has always re-emerged in one form or the other. As Laurel Fletcher, a Human Rights Professor at the University of Berkeley, California, has rightly pointed out (cited in Gilmore, 2004), “slavery is a problem the public thinks we solved long ago, but, in fact, it’s alive and well. It has simply taken on a new form (p.1)”. The first attempt at abolishing slavery in the modern era could be traced back to 1588 when Lithuania and Japan entered into a treaty to abolish slavery. However, slavery was reinstated by the two countries during the Second World War. It was in 1600 that the last villein died in England. Russia’s first attempt at abolishing slavery was in 1723. In 1772 Slavery was declared illegal in England. Slavery was also abolished overseas following the ruling of Lord Chief Justice Mansfield who stated that the English law does not support slavery. It was in 1787 when Sierra Leone was founded by the British government to repatriate emancipated slaves. The 1863 United States Proclamation declared the slaves in the Confederate-controlled states free. However, this Emancipation Proclamation did not also include slaves residing in the “border states” and Washington, D.C. However, it was the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution which took place in 1865 that slavery was finally abolished all over the country in the United States.

Slavery was officially abolished in almost all countries of the world by the late 1800s. However, records show that slavery was widely practiced in many places often with the connivance of the governments of the day. Blackmon (2008) has shown that slavery was re-instated in the US and flourished up till the Second World War despite the official abolition of slavery. According to him, several laws were made with the intention of intimidating African Americans. Some of the laws, such as vagrancy laws and other misdemeanors were used to force African Americans to a life of servitude. Blackmon (2008) states:

Under laws enacted specifically to intimidate blacks, tens of thousands of African Americans were arbitrarily hit with outrageous fines, and charged for the costs of their own arrests. With no means to pay these ostensible “debts,” prisoners were sold as forced laborers to coal mines, lumber camps, brickyards, railroads, quarries, and farm plantations. Thousands of African Americans were simply seized by southern landowners and compelled into years of involuntary servitude. Government officials leased falsely imprisoned blacks to small-town entrepreneurs, provincial farmers, and dozens of corporations – including U.S. Steel – looking for cheap and abundant labor. Armies of “free” black men labored without compensation, were repeatedly bought and sold, and were forced through beatings and physical torture to do the bidding of white masters for decades after the official abolition of American slavery (inside front cover).

Chattel slavery, the kind of slavery that existed in the ancient times and in early America but is still been practiced today according to iAbolish (2008). This kind of slavery is found mostly in Mauritania and Sudan. Chattel slaves are their owners’ property and can be used as a medium of exchange. The offsprings of chattel slaves can be sold by their owners since they are his or her property. There are about 90,000 chattel slaves in Mauritania today despite its official abolition in 1980 according to iAbolish (2008). This source also notes that Chattel slavery “is typically racially-based, for example, in the North African country of Mauritania, black Africans serve the lighter-skinned Arab-Berber communities (iAbolish, 2008 p.1)”. Chattel slavery is also known to thrive in the Sudan, where the Arabs who live in the northern part of the country are known to frequently raid the southern villages where the black Africans reside. During the raids, the African men are killed and the women and children are taken into slavery.

Debt Bondage is another dimension of modern day slavery. There are about 15 to 20 million victims of debt bondage in the world today according to iAbolish (2008). These are mostly found in Southeast Asia. Here, poor people offer their children or themselves as collateral for loans. The loan givers keep them and use them for either domestic or agricultural work ostensibly until they pay off their loans. Those bonded for debt are often unable to pay off these loans because the loan givers keep adding up their up-keep expenses into these loans making it

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virtually impossible for the bonded people to pay off their loans and regain their freedom. In addition, the loan givers set the interest rates and fees, and also keep the books. The children of the loan givers sometimes inherit the bonded people as their property and this cycle has been known to go on for ever in some cases.

Child Carpet Slavery is yet another dimension of the 21st century slavery. This form of slavery exists in India. According to Siasoco (2001), there are between 200,000 and 300,000 child carpet slaves. These children in slave labor are often abducted from their homes and held captive. There are forced to weave on looms in locked rooms. The caste system of India, according to Siasoco (2001), makes the abolition of this kind of slavery difficult. The author notes however, that several of the child carpet slaves have been rescued by the International Labor Rights and Education Fund and other human rights organizations.

Sex slavery is one of the commonest forms of modern slavery in the world today. This form of slavery mostly involves women and children who are forced into prostitution. Some are deceived with promises of a good job and then coerced into prostitution. iAbolish (2008) notes that this form of modern slavery is also prevalent in Southeast Asia. It is common, according to these researchers, for fathers, husbands and even brothers to force the women into prostitution for monetary and or other tangible benefits. Some of these women are eventually trafficked to North America and other European countries for prostitution. Available records show that Japan is a major destination point for victims of sexual trafficking who are exploited in its “entertainment industry.” There are many people from different parts of the world who are victims of sex slavery, both in the developed and in developing countries.

Forced labor is also a form of modern day slavery. Victims of forced labor slavery are recruited and forced to engage in such services as domestic work, construction and even human mine detectors according to iAbolish (2008). Many migrant workers are particularly vulnerable to being victims of forced labor because the organized criminal groups that traffic them can move them from place to place with ease. Many victims of forced labor were deceived with promises of better jobs or other opportunities. Gilmore (2004) cited report of forced labor cases. According to her, cases of forced labor include:

a Berkeley, California businessman who enslaved young girls and women for sex and to work in his restaurant; a Florida employer who threatened violence to force hundreds of Mexican and Guatemalan workers to harvest fruit; and two couples in Washington, D.C., who brought Cameroonian teenagers to the United States with the promise of a better education and then forced them to work 14 hours a day as domestic servants without pay and under threat of deportation (p. 1).

In the Dominican Republic according Siasoco (2001) many people, especially from Haiti are abducted and forced into labor during the sugar cane harvesting

season. The Dominican Army often with encouragement and support of the Dominican State Sugar Council (known as the CEA) carry out the abduction and supervision of the slave labor of the sugar cane cutters, especially those from Haiti. Siasoco (2001) also described another form of slave labor that obtains in Pakistan. There are more than 50,000 bonded laborers in southern Singh, Pakistan. The report further notes that more than 7,500 of these bonded laborers have been freed since 1995 by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. These laborers operate with their legs in iron shackles. Even those who have been freed from this slave labor cannot enjoy their freedom because they risk being abducted and returned to the slave labor if they return home.

Summary and Conclusion:

The transatlantic slave trade in which many European countries participated in the transportation of Africans to Latin America, the Caribbean and the United States to work in plantations without pay was officially abolished by the government of the United Kingdom in 1807. Many other countries following the United Kingdom's legislation abolishing slave trade also adopted similar laws making the selling and buying of human-beings illegal. Despite all these proclamations by the various countries of the world, slavery has remained with us. Slavery exists in several forms, including the 'descent slavery' practiced in some African countries such as Mali and Mauritania; "bonded labor, serfdom, debt bondage, sexual slavery, child labor and enforced participation in armed conflict" as noted by Craig, et al (2007). Slavery has endured despite its abhorrence by civilized societies because of the critical role of labor as a factor of production. Some governments have either actively or tacitly participated in the exploitation of other peoples' labor (or even their citizens' labor) for economic benefits. As the Citizens of Community Values (2009) rightly put it "it all boils down to profit! A girl who is forced into prostitution in Asia or Africa brings in about \$10,000 a year. If that same victim is trafficked into an industrialized country, that profit increases to \$67,200" (p 1)".

One of the most popular forms of modern slavery is human trafficking. It is estimated that more than twenty seven million people are victims of human trafficking. Annually, there are about 800,000 people trafficked world-wide. Human trafficking is a very lucrative business with a market value of more than \$32 billion annually and it is likely to surpass the drug and arms dealing in the near future if the trend continues. A review of the human trafficking literature shows that everybody is at risk of being trafficked, including men, women and children. Citizens of both developed and developing countries, whether educated or un-educated, are at risk of being trafficked. However, it is pertinent to point out that the poorer countries of the world are major sources of victims of human trafficking while the rich countries are most often the destinations of human trafficking victims. Human trafficking is carried out by organized criminal groups. It is noted that sometimes families and friends either out of ignorance or

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desperation for economic survival participate in the trafficking of their own people. Many businesses both big and small also benefit from the labor of trafficked persons. According to Citizens for Community Values (2009) there are several media through which people are recruited into sexual and labor bondage. Some victims of human trafficking are abducted, some respond to newspaper advertisements by fake employment agencies. There are some human trafficking victims who are recruited through word of mouth by friends, family members or acquaintances. Citizens for Community Values (2009) further note that some of the victims of human trafficking are coerced into prostitution, engaged in other adult oriented businesses such as agriculture, childcare/domestic work and restaurant services.

Modern slavery constitutes a gross violation of human rights. It is also considered a major threat to global economic and political development, democracy and peace. Some of the factors that foster human trafficking and other transnational crime are poverty and global inequality. Poor people and citizens of developing countries are most vulnerable for trafficking. Most of the victims of human trafficking are from the developing countries, especially those going through ethnic conflict, economic and political instability. Endemic political corruption by government officials principally by law enforcement agents and the judiciary can also foster criminal activities. In addition to corruption, the law enforcement agents of many poor countries are ill-equipped and understaffed and therefore ineffective in responding to transnational crime. Human trafficking according to Bales (2007) and Wheaton and Schauer (2008) can be eradicated if the governments of the world can make concerted efforts to end “world poverty, eradicate corruption, decrease greed, slow the population explosion, halt environmental destruction and armed conflicts, cancel international debts for countries that cannot pay, and get governments to keep the promises they make every time they pass a law” (Wheaton and Schauer 2008 p. 28). Craig, et al

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Nations and other human rights groups and governments should also join

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