

Rotarians against Child Slavery

(A Newsletter for the proposed Rotarian Action Group - See website www.racsrag.org)

Issue No 14

"It is not easy to crush a human mind, but with enough brutality, time and indifference to suffering it can be done. Around the world it IS being done" (Kevin Bales)



Matching grant application approved

Sound the trumpet, bring out the bunting and raise the flags. Our application for a Matching Grant to purchase a vehicle for a Child Slave Rehabilitation Centre in India, has just been approved by Rotary Foundation.

The soon to be purchased multi-seated vehicle will be used by the staff of Bal Vikas Ashram to transport the rescued children for health check ups, restoration to the children's homes, court cases and raids to release other children from bondage.

Grateful thanks to Rtn Carol Metzker, Past President of the RC of West Chester Downtown in Pennsylvania, USA, who masterminded the grant application, to Rtn Raj Pandey of the RC of Hertford in England, who travelled to India to identify a suitable vehicle for the Centre (see his comments below) and to the members of the RC of Pratapgarh in India, who agreed to help Raj in his endeavours and to support the whole project.

The 7/8 seater Mahindra

Bolero will cost over \$14,000 and apart from significant contributions from Districts 1080 and 7450, will have been funded from a number of club sources, ie the Rotary Clubs of Westchester Downtown and Exton Frazier (District 7450, USA) and Norwich St Edmund (District 1080, England).

The latter club's contribution was very much bolstered by significant donations from its twinned clubs in Germany (RC of Mainz 50° Nord) and in France (RC of Reims St Remi)

Comments from Raj Pandey, RC of Hertford, England

"Thanks to RACS for giving me the opportunity to visit Bal Vikas Ashram in Allahabad, India, accompanied by RC of Pratapgarh, India, meeting and being with these children, listening to their terrifying stories, feeling the pain inflicted upon them some of them didn't even know where they were born, what religion or cast they belong to and worst of all who their parents are, which changed my outlook on

life.

Ashram itself is doing wonderful work with rescued from child slavery children from all over the north of India, providing a basic rehabilitation, medical and training to these children, they have a few metal bunk beds, three basically equipped training workshops, where children get just enough knowledge for starting a life of their own in society.

In my observation. A lot

still needs to be done, to name a few, better living arrangements, better training equipment, and basic computer education.

My biggest appreciation goes to Mr Vasant Tripathi, President Mr Saty Kedia, Dr Sanjay Kapoor and Mr Santosh of Rotary Club of Pratapgarh, who provided me there with full support in the Bal Vikas Ashram's Project." Raj Pandey, RC of Hertford, England)

Sweatshop uniforms

In England, the children will be soon be back at school and once again supermarkets here and other retailers are vying to offer the cheapest school uniforms. Some are so low in price that they make me very uneasy about their origin. Times may be hard in this country, but we should not seek to prosper at the expense of the vulnerable. Wouldn't it be a good idea if uniform retailers were asked to publish the country of origin of the garment, a declaration that no children were used in the manufacturing process or supply chain and the hourly rate paid to the factory workers ?

Can we really make a difference ?



Someone posed me the question recently "*if there are millions languishing in slavery around the world, what positive impact can a group of Rotarians and a few thousand anti-slavery supporters possibly make to alleviate or eradicate this global exploitation of human beings ?*"

I wonder how many times such a question was posed 30 or so years ago on another significant form of injustice, ie the apartheid system. But we know the outcome to that situation.

Anti-apartheid groups around

the world kept up the pressure that hastened its downfall. They worked to keep the abuses of the apartheid system in the public eye; they mounted campaigns to bring financial pressure on the apartheid regime and they supported the local groups in South Africa through political lobbying, with legal aid and with money. They showed that small actions can lead to progress and that even greater progress can be achieved when individuals combine to take small actions collectively

So why are we as individuals, as Rotarians, as churches, as political parties, as international communities, so half-hearted in our endeavours to end the practice of slavery, which is as brutal in its violations of human rights as was apartheid ?

Can we really, really make a difference ?..... Yes we can, yes we can, yes we can.

Slavery in Britain

I am obliged to Anti-Slavery International for informing me that a week of special TV programming starts this Monday on Channel 4 (UK only) and uncovers the dark reality of slavery in Britain today.

[Dispatches: Britain's Secret Slaves](#) – Monday 30 August , 7.30pm

A special documentary investigating the plight of overseas domestic workers in Britain who are kept locked up by their employers and subjected to sexual, physical and psychological abuse.

[I am Slave](#) – Monday 30 August, 8.30pm

Written and produced by the team who made *The Last King of Scotland* and inspired by real-life events, [I am Slave](#) is the extraordinary story of one woman's fight for freedom from modern-day slavery in London. The film was born back in 2003 when the film's writer, Jeremy Brock met Mende Nazer, a Nuban girl who had been abducted, enslaved in Khartoum and later brought to work in a house in London from which she managed to escape in 2000. She has written a book about her experiences with journalist Damien Lewis. Nazer's story – and "*her dignity, the way she carried herself given what she had been through*" says Brock – compelled him to take the idea to the film's producer Andrea Calderwood and she agreed to help him make the film, which is a powerful story of imprisonment, cruelty and despair, but also one of hope and humanity.

[Hunt for Britain's Sex Traffickers](#) – starts Tuesday 31 August 9.00pm

The story of the biggest UK police operation against sex trafficking, following the investigation and eventual sentencing of some of Britain's most serious sex traffickers. In three parts from Tuesday 31 August to Thursday 2 September.

I HOPE THAT THE UPCOMING PROGRAMMES INSPIRE YOU TO GET INVOLVED WITH THE WORK OF ANTI-SLAVERY ORGANISATIONS OR THE PROPOSED ROTARIAN ACTION GROUP AGAINST CHILD SLAVERY

Trafficking in the USA – An article by a RACS member

“Look no further than your back yard”

**By Carol Metzker, Past President of the Rotary Club of West Chester
Downtown, Pennsylvania, USA**

On June 30, 2010, four brothers were arrested in Philadelphia. They were charged with operating a human trafficking organization for seven years that smuggled young Ukrainian workers into the United States, then forced them to work without pay by using physical violence, threats and other means, according to the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and other news sources.

Not in Africa. Not in India or Haiti. In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. In the United States, 30 miles from my front door.

Slavery doesn't exist only in “far off” places; it touches our back yards.

Fortunately, people who fight for others' freedom aren't just famous names in history books or workers in other countries. They are our neighbors, and they're alive, well and hard at work.

One of those is Ronald Chance, adjunct professor of Intelligence Studies at Neumann College in southeastern Pennsylvania near Philadelphia. A former Director of Intelligence for the U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, D.C. where he investigated sweat shops and human trafficking in the workforce, Chance has helped form taskforces to help rescue and restore victims of human trafficking in a couple of large cities along the U.S. East Coast. He has spoken at the United Nations on the topic of slavery.

Human trafficking and slavery is a problem in Philadelphia and the U.S. mid-Atlantic region, according to Chance. He cites recent examples in addition to the case in Philadelphia this past June: In spring 2008 in the nearby city of Wilmington, 30 Russian women showed up on the street as prostitutes and they were noticed by a group that works toward prevention and treatment of AIDS. They were apparent victims of trafficking. In another instance, a health worker reported that at his apartment building in southeast Pennsylvania, men lined up at a specific door every weekend. When he investigated the situation, he discovered that eight Mexican women were being held and forced to work in the sex trade.

In Chester County, Pennsylvania, outside of Philadelphia, the most common industries for utilizing slaves are the sex trade, and agriculture and food processing, Chance continues. “Some [victims] are smuggled into the country, promised jobs as cooks or nannies,” he says. “They come from Mexico and Latin America, Asia, the former Russian states and Eastern Europe. They come for the promise of a better life in America, more money, equal rights and education. They're desperate for a better situation, so they're vulnerable to deception.” All too quickly, the promises dissolve and victims find themselves enslaved.

Through the work of the Philadelphia Taskforce on Human Trafficking—a coalition of members from government agencies and NGOs including the FBI, U.S. Department of Justice, the Philadelphia Police Department, Archdiocese of Philadelphia and other faith-based organizations that offer social services—the Philadelphia area has seen significant changes in the past three years.

One of the most notable changes, described by Ron Chance, is the treatment of women who are living in the U.S. illegally and arrested for prostitution. “In the past, unless they were willing to testify against their traffickers [a situation that caused fear of retaliation against

“Look no further than your back yard” (Continued)

themselves and family members], they were considered illegal aliens and deported,” he explains. Today they are considered victims who need help. “Rather than arresting and deporting them, some of the labor and sex trafficking victims are referred to Catholic Social Services, where they are being helped with shelter, food, counseling and other social services,” Chance says.

How to Help

Chance lists two needs in the Philadelphia-area and surrounding community, which could potentially be needed in other U.S. cities and might be fulfilled by Rotarians:

- **Translators**—people who can translate African, Eastern European and Asian languages. Translators would allow police to hold conversations to determine if subjects are human trafficking victims. Let local social service organizations know if you are fluent in another language and willing to volunteer as a translator.
- **Awareness.** *Rethink and reframe.* Some of the people society deems criminals are actually victims. When calling the police to make a complaint—to arrest folks and “get them off the street”—consider what might be occurring, as did the health worker who noticed odd behavior at his apartment building. Hold community discussions—inside and outside of your Rotary club—about trafficking and slavery.

As leaders worldwide, Rotarians are in a perfect role to hold conversations within communities and to raise awareness. Who better than Rotarians are in positions to ask who needs help—who is vulnerable, unemployed, undereducated and undervalued—and to make a change for the better!

Slavery – the overlooked crime against humanity

Two hundred years after the British Parliament passed the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act, more children than ever before languish in slavery, forced to work, under threat of violence and for no pay. On the African Continent, hundreds of thousands are considered chattel and slavery is accepted as an everyday social institution, whilst on the Indian Sub-Continent, millions languish in generational debt bondage. Across the globe, young girls sold for sex and labour, are already the second most lucrative commodity for organized crime.

Today we have a choice on this issue. We can despair that exploitation is an age old problem, that human nature never changes, that in any case, slavery is a problem for government and then do nothing. Or we can, as Rotarians, remember the tenets of the 4-Way Test, Part 2 of the Objects of Rotary and Rotary International’s Code of Policies in relation to the rights of children and then do our utmost to help eradicate this evil practice.

“All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing” (Edmund Burke)

Mark Little, RC of Norwich St Edmund
28 August 2010
Action Group’s website: www.racsrag.org.