

Rotarian Action Group against Slavery

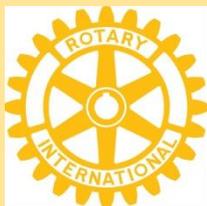
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Editor: Mark Little – Rotary Club of Norwich St Edmund, England



Do you believe in challenging the status quo ? The status quo is millions of victims of human trafficking at any given moment. Will you become a hero ? Will you be the voice that says, "I'm going to do something about this ?"

(Matt Friedman)



January - Slavery & Trafficking Prevention Month

It was former President, Barack Obama, who proclaimed January as "Slavery and Human Trafficking Month" in the USA. It is a reminder to all Americans that every action which is taken in the USA, from the clothes which are worn, to the food which is consumed, is connected with what happens around the world. It is also intended to remind US citizens to continue fighting for human rights around the world.

Conversation with IJM's Gary Haugen

Gary Haugen's conversation with Sallyann Price in the February edition of the Rotarian is a must read for those of you who are keen to understand the issues relating to modern slavery and Rotary's unique role in combating this heinous crime.

Gary's basic contention is that humanitarian work means little if basic safety is threatened. *"When people think about the world's poorest people, they don't usually think about violence. They think of hunger, disease and a lack of education and job opportunities. But just as important is daily vulnerability to violence, and not necessarily the violence that makes headlines: war, genocide, mass atrocities"* A read of the full conversation can be obtained from this link to [The Rotarian](#)

Gary also believes that *"we are in a moment in history when forces are coming together to make it possible to end slavery in our life time"* (see Editorial comment)

Film – "Face to Face with Slavery"

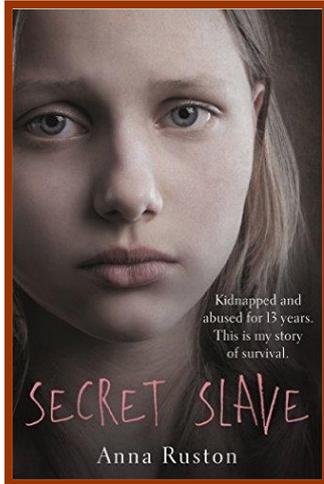
[Face to Face with Slavery](#), is a half hour documentary film produced by two volunteer film makers, Cassie and Jordan Timpy, who decided to donate their skills "for a greater purpose". They travelled to Free the Slaves front line community projects in Asia and Africa and crafted a poignant story of their journey to reveal the brutality of slavery and show case the courage of those activists who are working on the front line to overcome it. If you wish to see a trailer of the film first, here it is [trailer](#)



Cassie Timpy



British woman –a sex slave for 13 years



Growing up in a deeply troubled family, 15-year-old Anna Ruston (not her real name) felt lost and alone in the world. So when taxi driver “Malik” befriended her, Anna welcomed his attention.

She agreed to go home with him to meet his family, but once there, she was locked in a room where she would live and be raped repeatedly for 13 years.

Detailing her ordeal in her book “Secret Slave”, Anna says she was also pimped out to other men and her captor “sold” each of the four children she bore in captivity.

Eventually she managed to escape with the help of a Health Visitor. She says that she was too scared to give any evidence to the police, but was encouraged to write about her experience as part of

her therapy.

Some of her reported experiences as a slave can be heard in a radio interview in the link below. Her words are re-voiced to protect her identity.

[Anna’s radio interview](#)

Editorial

Gary Haugen is right. If ever there was a better time to eradicate slavery it is now. Most of the impediments faced by 18th century anti-slavery activists, no longer exist.

In the first place, the **moral argument** has already been won. All nations accept that slavery is a great evil and many international conventions denounce it and make it illegal. Most of these conventions are based on the precepts of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states, inter alia, that “*All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights*” (Article 1) and that “*no one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms*” (Article 4). The 1948 Declaration has been signed by all member states of the United Nations.

Secondly there is no longer an **economic argument** to be won. This is because in the context of the world’s economy, slavery is a relatively small enterprise. The International Labour Organization’s estimate of around US\$44 billion per year in slave-derived profits is a drop in the ocean of a global economy estimated to be worth US\$74 trillion. So with the exception of a handful of countries, such as Uzbekistan and North Korea, the end of slavery threatens no country’s livelihood. Because most slave based revenues benefit small scale criminal networks, not national economies, ending slavery would only disadvantage the criminals who profit from slavery.

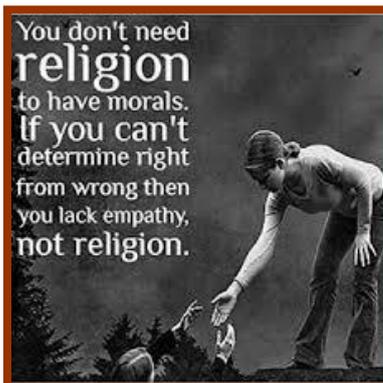
Thirdly there is no **legal argument** to be won as laws against slavery exist in every country. As Gary

Haugen has rightly stated the real problem is “*not the absence of law, but the absence of law enforcement that protects everyone*”. Around the world some of these laws do need updating and some need their penalties increasing, but nowhere on earth is slavery legal. Mauritania was the last country in the world to abolish slavery in 1981.

Clearly today’s struggle to end slavery is easier than the one facing the 19th century abolitionists. No one has to violate laws to help victims as the early abolitionists were obliged to do. Bringing an end to slavery merely requires the political will to enforce laws, not campaigns to make new ones.

The film “Face to Face with Slavery” consists of four chapters, with each

“The problem is not the absence of law, but the absence of law enforcement that protects everyone” (Gary Haugen)



The Answer—
Slavery is illegal in every nation
in the world, yet it exists
everywhere



Editorial (cont'd)

chapter depicting the work of grass roots anti-slavery activists in four separate countries.

Chapter 1 of the film highlights the work of anti-slavery organizations like “Shakti Samuha” in Nepal, an organization which reintegrates survivors, provides legal support, and protects the victims of human trafficking and slavery. **Chapter 2** depicts the work of “Free the Slaves” and “MSEMVS” in India and the incredible success achieved in freeing an entire village from the clutches of slave masters and helping them to work for themselves, eg by establishing their own brick kilns. **Chapter 3** travels to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and features the work of anti-slavery activists like “ASSODIP” (the Association for the Development of Peasant Initiatives) and “Search for Common Ground” in providing vocational skills and loans to ensure that survivors do not become susceptible to slavery again. **Chapter 4** takes us into Ghana where Free the Slaves, working in partnership with anti-slavery organizations such as MIHOSO (Mission for Hope) and PDA, work tirelessly to educate the people (especially the children) about the dangers of being trafficked into slavery particularly in the gold mines.



Anna Ruston’s story and entrapment (“Secret Slave”) bears a striking resemblance to the events that occurred in the UK town of Rotherham in which up to 1400 children, some as young as nine, were systematically entrapped and abused by members of the British-Pakistani community over more than a decade. An inquiry into the matter found that local councillors turned a blind eye to abuse for fear of being labelled racist amid a politically correct culture. The entire incident has resulted in a major investigation into child sexual abuse in the UK.



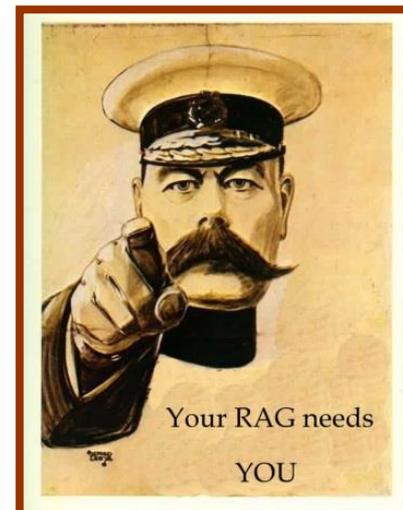
RAGAS Needs Active Members

Gary Haugen has intimated that if ever there was a tipping point in the fight to end slavery, it is now. RAGAS agrees. He also believes that Rotary is uniquely in a position to make an impact on this issue. RAGAS agrees. Last June at the RI Convention in Seoul, he said Rotarians can sound the alarm. *“You can rally the political will and the resources to make sure that even the poorest are safe from slavery. The forgotten millions who were once living under the terror of polio had no voice – but you lent them your voice, so they were heard and seen. And now millions are safe. Today another unique moment in history is before you.”* RAGAS agrees.

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

So dear reader what are **YOU** going to do about it ? Might I suggest that the first step (which is usually the hardest) you could take is to sign up as a **PAID UP** member of RAGAS via this website link [RAGAS MEMBERSHIP](#)

Today there are millions of adults and children waiting to be freed. The anti-slavery organizations which liberate the slaves know how to set slaves free and they know how to help slaves achieve rehabilitation and reintegration back into their own homes. What they struggle to do is to mobilize funds that will help extend their work further. This is where RAGAS is making a contribution. Check out the website www.ragas.online to see how we are making that contribution. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu has said “ If we are neutral in situations of injustice, we have already chosen the side of the oppressor”.



Freed from Jihadi Slavery in Sudan

by Pastor Heidi McGinness

Director of Outreach, Christian Solidarity International

“Each time that a person stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope.....and daring those ripples to build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance”

(Robert F Kennedy)

It was night time in the Abiem Community Development Foundation Compound in Wanyjok, South Sudan. As we sat underneath the night sky, my Swiss colleague, Markus Weber, declared, “It’s remarkable, the stars of heaven shining so brightly, unobstructed by buildings, city or even village lights.” “There’s nothing like the night sky in Africa,” I added. “Nothing.” Franco Majok, CSI Project Manager for South Sudan and Nigeria, and Luka Garang Kenyang, CSI Associate, were silent in their agreement. That, and what we had witnessed in the bush in the border areas between both Sudans put us in a reflective mood. We were all engulfed by the sheer wonder of the starry night.

It had been a long day in the bush in triple digit heat welcoming home 200 men, women and children from jihadi slavery, welcoming them home to South Sudan. It was an emotional day as we listened to their stories of violent abduction, being forced to witness and endure rapes, seeing executions. Some of our brothers and sisters had been in slavery for 30 years; they were ripped out of the love of family and support of village life as 8 or 9 year olds when they were forced on a journey to Hell called Jihadi Slavery in Sudan.

It is difficult to take in their suffering. Once, Luka Garang was translating an interview I was holding with a beautiful woman in her forties; her harrowing account muted me. After a spell, I asked him, “I know what this does to me, Luka, but what does it do to you?” Luka replied, “We cry inside.”

In quiet reflection, each one of us wondered how we could sit under the sky in safety and less than 20 days walking from where we were sitting in freedom, our siblings were watching the same night sky, seeing the same stars, but they in bondage and we...free.

It was too much for us to ponder, and so we resolved to return, as we have for years, until each captive is free. Our resolve to bring all of them home broke our pensive mood, as we recalled happy events of the day. When our work was done, the chiefs from many villages, village women, clergy, and church members came to welcome the captives home with ebullient joy, worship, on-the-spot reunions between family members, and a meal for everyone to share. It was a great day – one that would be repeated again the next.

Sitting under the November sky we sought to see the stars and constellations that had guided and inspired humanity since the dawn of time. We spoke about the ancient mariners hitching their navigation to the stars, as well as modern-day, adventure some sailors who set sail following the stars to their dreams. All that marvel and talk of stars of wonder, stars of might, had Markus pull out his smart phone, open the SkyView app, and point it to the skies. We each took turns seeing the app outline Leo and Pisces for us. “And there is the Jungfrau,” Markus said (the Virgin or as we say, Virgo). What a collision, I thought, the ancient mariners meeting the technology of SkyView.

“It’s not just that people follow the stars on open seas. For us Dinka, the stars tell us when rainy season approaches and when rainy season ends. For example,” Franco continued, “There’s a group of stars -- three of them -- that tell us the beginning, the approach and end to rainy season by the way they arch their way across the sky from east to west. In Dinka we call the three stars ‘Wettheljok’. In Arabic they are called ‘Thuraya.’”

“Where are they?” I asked excitedly. “There they are,” Franco pointed them out. “Rainy season is over by their position.” We were silent, soaked once more in the celestial canopy of stars God had provided. “I wonder,” I mused, “Was it a night like this when the Wise Men and the Yazidi people saw the Christ’s Star rising in the East?”



Freed from Jihadi Slavery in Sudan (Con'td)

by Pastor Heidi McGinness

Sensing it a divine intrusion into human time, these Magi set out in a caravan to follow the Star to Bethlehem's stable. God ordained them to arrive at the right time, in the right place, sparing the Christ Child from Herod's murderous grasp. I wondered, was it a night like this when the shepherds watched over their flocks by night, when the Angel of the Lord appeared to them, and a multitude of Heavenly Hosts created a celestial explosion by their divine light? Was it a night like this when the shepherds said, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see what the Lord has made known to us?"

Just then, we saw walking fireflies approaching us. The women of the compound, wearing torches on their foreheads, and carrying small flashlights, were bringing the evening meal of rice, sweet potatoes, spinach and goat meat for us to savor.

It was late, and getting later. It was time to prepare for the morning. We took one last look at the skies before retiring to our individual little tukuls. Before I ducked into my mosquito-netted bed, I took one last look at that magnificent, mystical, African sky, and thought, "In less than a month I'll be journeying to the Bethlehem of my heart once again." I'll follow that Star to the feeding trough, and look with wonder into those Holy Infant eyes. I'll give Him my heart once more. But while I do that, I'll keep one eye peeled on the sky, just in case the Exalted One returns.

Wherever you are, might you look at the star-filled night overhead and wonder, "Was it a night like this when the Christ was born?"

School4Freedom Update

by Carol Metzker, One World Rotary eClub

Meet Pramod, a 15-year-old boy in India who, until last year, was enslaved working with cattle and in domestic servitude, because his father was bound in debt bondage to a slaveholder. He did not attend school and did not realize he had the right not to be exploited or punished until the School4Freedom (S4F) came along. Now he is learning the English and Hindi alphabets along with other academic subjects and also that he has specific basic rights.



Pramod is one of 46 children who attend the S4F, receive hot lunches and enjoy the benefits of solar streetlamps in their village.

The Rotary S4F project that began in early 2016 has achieved further milestones in its third quarter, according to a report from project partners MSEMVS and Voices4Freedom (V4F).

School4Freedom Update (Cont'd)

Highlights:

- The school is up and in session. The children are learning English and Hindi.
- Some community members have filed a grievance with government officials about their debt bondage slavery.
- A women's self-help group has been formed (that later leads to vocation training and income for self-sufficiency).
- Although the slaveholder continues to push back with threats and ridicule, frontline workers continue conversations among villagers and government leaders.

Thank you again to all the Rotarians, clubs and districts that made this \$36,000 three-year project possible, and to our partners V4F and MSEMVS

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