

Rotarian Action Group against Slavery

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Candle Light Vigil in Centennial Park



Doors closed 15 minutes before the start of the RAGAS Break Out Session. Large numbers still queuing unsuccessfully outside the venue.



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

“So many of our dreams at first seem impossible, then they seem improbable and then, when we summon the will, they soon become inevitable ”

(Christopher Reeve)



“Modern Slavery” laid bare at Atlanta Convention

This exposure of the evil effects of modern slavery to the Rotary world, was kick started on Saturday evening by an extremely moving Freedom Concert which was followed by a Candle Light Vigil organized by RAGAS Vice Chair, Dave McCleary.

With the moving testimony of several survivors, the Vigil was a poignant reminder to some 7,000 Rotarians, packed into Atlanta’s Centennial Park, of the millions who are brutalised and broken, exploited and enslaved around the world.

Delegates at a Monday morning plenary session experienced a discussion on “modern slavery” by a panel consisting of film celebrity Ashton Kutcher, US Senator Bob Corker

and Gary Haugen, CEO of International Justice Mission.

The panel, moderated by Bob Hope, was later joined by survivor, Rebecca Bender, after she had given a moving account of her past ordeals as a sex slave.

RAGAS’s own Breakout Session entitled “Rotarians combating human trafficking and slavery” took place on Monday afternoon. The doors to the 500-600 capacity room were shut 15minutes beforehand with a further 200 delegates denied entrance because of health/safety regulations .

On Tuesday, RAGAS’ participation in a second Breakout Session entitled “Until all are free: next

steps in the fight to end slavery” and led by International Justice Mission, was also jam packed with delegates queuing outside and unable to get in.

The RAGAS booth was constantly busy during the five days of the Convention in the Hall of Friendship, which has resulted in a plethora of new members subscribing to join the Action Group.

Editor’s Note: Read *Rtn Carol Metzker’s reflections on the Atlanta Convention on pages 3 and 4 of this Newsletter.*

Best practice to eradicate forced labour in global supply chains

In a bid to eradicate forced labor in global supply chains, the Consumer Goods Forum (CGF) has released a new report, [Business Action Against Forced Labour](#), highlighting best practices in tackling the issue.

The report shares case studies from members such as Coca-Cola, Mars, Marks & Spencer, Unilever, and Walmart, detailing how they are setting up new programs, engaging in cross-sectoral collaboration and effect-

ively implementing auditing schemes.



RAGAS appoints three new Coordinators in the US

At the Annual meeting of RAGAS in Atlanta last month, three new Coordinators were appointed to work in California, Florida and Iowa.

Background details of two of the new Coordinators, ie Dr George Bellitsos and Jill Cohen are included below. Details of the third new Coordinator, Jack Higgins, will be included in the next issue of the Newsletter.

Slavery is becoming a major issue in the United States. The current estimate of the number of people in modern slavery in the US is 58,000.

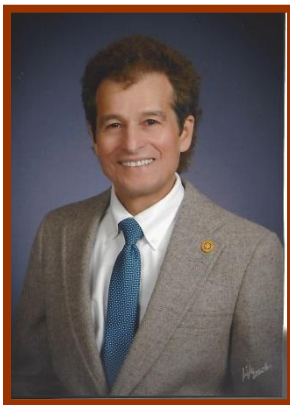
According to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center operated by Polaris, in 2015, 5544 human trafficking cases were reported based on 22,000 calls. From these cases the most reported venues/industries for labour trafficking included domestic work, agriculture, travelling sales crews, restaurant/food services and health and beauty services. In 2015, the most reported venues/industries for sex trafficking included commercial-front brothels, hotel/motel based trafficking, online advertisements with unknown locations, residential brothels and

street based sex trafficking.

In 2016, the Walk Free Foundation, Gallup and Polaris undertook survey research to better understand the general awareness of NHTRC's hotline number among the American public. The results showed that only 6.7% of the public know the NHTRC and only 12% were aware that there is a hotline focussed on human trafficking. This indicates that the 5,544 cases reported in 2015 is likely to be a very small proportion of the actual prevalence of Human Trafficking in the US.



Operated by Polaris, this helpline is toll free and available to answer calls 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in more than 200 languages



Dr George Belitsos (Above)

Jill Bolander Cohen Below



Dr George Belitsos – Coordinator (Iowa)

Dr George Belitsos is the founder and CEO Emeritus of Youth and Shelter Services, Inc, which at the time of his retirement, had 28 locations, serving 5,000 youth per year. George currently serves as a member of the following statewide groups: The Iowa Child Welfare Advisory Committee, the Board and current Chair of the Iowa Network Against Human Trafficking, the Board of the Partnership for a Drug Free Iowa. In January 2016 he was appointed to the Iowa Commission for Tobacco Control and Prevention. George also founded the Central Iowa Service Network against Human Trafficking and is a member of the following local groups: The Mary Greeley Medical Center Patient Safety Council, the Chamber Local Government Committee, AFFIRM, Story County Prevention Policy Board, the USS Public Policy Committee. He is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Rotary Club of Ames, and is on the Board of the Story County League of Women Voters

Jill Bolander Cohen (Florida)

Jill Bolander Cohen is the Founder of the Lifeboat Project, Founder of the Anchor Point Ecumenical Center, and Co-Founder of the Greater Orlando Human Trafficking Taskforce. She currently serves as a Board member for Zonta Greater Orlando. In recent years, Jill has served as: Vice President of the Greater Orlando Human Trafficking Taskforce, a Board Director for Seminole South Rotary, Co-founder/President of Zonta Greater Orlando, Member at Large Presbyterian Women of South Atlantic Justice and Peace, Chair Compassion Peace and Justice Central FL Presbytery, PCUSA Delegate and Presenter and UN Commission in the Status of Women.

Jill has been presented with various awards including the 2013 Channel 13 Everyday Hero award, 2015 Fellowship Peace Seeker Award and the 2017 Victims Rights Week Outstanding Service Award from the 48th Judicial Circuit



New RAGAS Coordinator for NE India

Dr Kameswar Elangbam

Dr Kameswar Elangbam is the Immediate Past President of the Rotary Club of Shillong in District 3240, India. Dr Elangbam is a Consultant Orthopedic Surgeon who trained in trauma surgery in Germany with the help of a fellowship from the Swiss established AO Foundation. As an Advisor to the Government of Meghalay (a State in Northeast India) Dr Elangbam has been instrumental in developing a local Trauma Centre for the fitting of artificial limbs and a State Resource Centre for the rehabilitation of those who suffer from specific disabilities.

As a Rotarian Dr Elangbam has been involved with several water supply projects and rotary medical camps. He is also an ardent advocate against Child labour and human trafficking



Above: Dr Kameswar Elangbam visiting the RAGAS booth at the RI Convention in Atlanta

New Heights in Atlanta

(by Carol Metzker, One World Rotary eClub and RAGAS member)

Who could have imagined! Celebrity speaker Ashton Kutcher, survivor speaker Rebecca Bender, multiple booths about human trafficking in the House of Friendship, a candlelight vigil, an audience of nearly 700 and still a line of people clamoring for an empty seat at the Rotarian Action Group Against Slavery (RAGAS) breakout session—Rotarians’ anti-slavery and anti-human trafficking events reached new heights at the 2017 Rotary International Convention in Atlanta.

Four years ago, after multi-year efforts and a lot of persuasion, Mark Little and a small group of Rotarians were officially sanctioned as the Rotarian Action Group Against Child Slavery, now RAGAS. A year later, the Action Group was granted space to hold the first presentation about human trafficking/modern slavery at the Rotary International Convention in Sydney. At that 2014 breakout session in Sydney, more than 200 people crowded into a room meant to hold 100. Fanned by a handful of determined Rotarians, what began as a few small sparks has become a flame.

One of the highpoints of the June 10-14, 2017, conference was a visit from celebrity actor, entrepreneur and abolitionist Ashton Kutcher. As a panel speaker during the first General Session Kutcher discussed Thorn, his new organization that focuses on fighting sex-trafficking of children through technology (wearethorn.org). Highlights of his comments:

- 70% of transactions selling children for sex touch the internet in some way. 63% of survivors of child sex trafficking were advertised online at some point during their victimization.
- Thorn creates and applies software to identify victims who are under the control of another person and to ascertain the age of each victim to determine if a victims is a child. Information goes into a database used to track movement of individuals and helps law enforcement.
- Thorn also runs deterrent campaigns—ads that offer would-be johns (consumers of sex) an 800 toll-free number to deter the crime and help with sex addiction and other problems that leading johns to purchase children.
- In the first 12 months the group was engaged, Thorn identified 6,000 victims and 2,000 traffickers.



Below: A section of the delegates at the RAGAS Breakout Session



Ashton Kutcher

t



New heights in Atlanta (Cont'd)

The conference wasn't all seriousness. Rotarians and RAGAS members—friends—grinned as they reunited. There were celebrations, sightseeing adventures in Atlanta and trips to restaurants with plenty of Coca-Cola, sweet iced tea and peach cocktails that are part of the allure of the State of Georgia. Thousands of LED bracelets—like those worn at rock concerts—glowed with the announcement of \$1.2 billion more pledged for polio eradication.

Like the center city Atlanta Skyview ferris wheel, the work of RAGAS has had ups and downs. But its continual turning has meant progress in the awareness of human trafficking/modern slavery and support for projects worldwide. Ultimately, the progress has meant a difference in the lives of countless victims and survivors who have seen the end of injustice and the beginning of a new life in freedom.

Post Bag

Dear Editor

Thank you deeply for sharing your insights about slavery at the Atlanta Convention. I have briefly visited your action group website and Facebook page, and hope to get involved with the group - however that can be done. This morning I briefed my club about the issue as discussed at the convention (we also had a local expert on the issue talk to our club last week) and a couple of us are planning a community forum to raise awareness.

One thing that continues to be taboo, it seems, among Rotarians, is the issue of United Nations peacekeeping troops and their propensity to rape and sell children for sex in places like Haiti, the Central African Republic and many other locations around the globe. The UN does not deny the problem. It put out a report on 28 February 2017 detailing what measures it plans to take to put a stop to the evil perpetuated by people in its uniforms. Unfortunately, the UN made similar (empty) promises some 10 years ago, yet its personnel continue to rape for pleasure, power and profit - with impunity.

Senator Bob Corker - a speaker on our very stage during Monday's general session - was quoted as follows in an Associated Press article on April 12, 2017:

"If I heard that a U.N. peacekeeping mission was coming near my home in Chattanooga (home of John Germ), I'd be on the first plane out of here to go back and protect my family."

I was pleased to see this issue take center stage in Atlanta, and I applaud your leadership. However, I hope that Rotary - with its vast influence at the UN - will grow the courage to pressure that organization to put a stop to the evil being done by its "peace" keeping forces. To do otherwise strikes me as hypocritical and cowardly. In April, while speaking at our district conference, I broached this subject and was nearly pushed off stage. My topic - I was told - was spoiling the upbeat party atmosphere.

Please keep up the fight.

Yours in Rotary,
Ken McEntee
President
Rotary Club of Strongsville, Ohio USA



Above: Waiting for the Freedom Concert and the Candle Light Vigil in Centennial Park.

Below: Skyview Atlanta with Rotary Ferris Wheel.



Editorial

Ken McEntee's letter on the previous page raises the issue of the plethora of charges levied at several United Nations Peacekeeping forces over the years of the exploitation of children for sex purposes and urges Rotary International to use its vast influence with the United Nations to put a stop to the evil being done by its "peace" keeping forces in various war zones.

Are the charges true or false ? Well, an investigation by Associated Press (AP) found that these "peacekeeping" troops have faced some 2,000 allegations of rape, paedophilia, and sexual abuse of civilians in a little over a decade. Many of the victims were just young children. Haiti has been especially hard hit, following many years of UN military occupation. The AP investigation reported on a child sex ring operated by 134 UN peace troops from Sri Lanka who gruesomely exploited at least nine children for years. In the wake of the report, 114 peacekeepers were sent home. None were ever imprisoned.

The UN's responses to these crimes has been consistently disappointing. Last year, the Security Council passed its first ever resolution to tackle sexual abuse by its peacekeepers. This resolution stated that military or police units should be repatriated "*where there is credible evidence of widespread or systematic sexual exploitation and abuse*". Just repatriation ! No punishment or justice for the victims ! Is this really UN's best response ?

The real problem is that the UN has no jurisdiction over peacekeepers, leaving punishment to the countries that contribute the troops. In such circumstances, someone should be exerting pressure **on those countries** which supply the peacekeeping forces with a view to punishing these militarized predators who inflict atrocities on civilians across the globe. But who ?

Unless the rules are changed, it is unlikely to be Rotary International. According to Article 2 090 of RI's Code of Policies, "*RI and its member clubs must refrain from issuing partisan political statements. Rotarians likewise are prohibited from adopting statements with a view to exerting any corporate pressure on governments or political authorities*"

So whilst we adhere to the tenets of the 4-Way Test, ie "Is it FAIR to all concerned", "Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned", we are obliged to do and say nothing about this matter because it is a political issue. In such circumstances, how can we follow former RI President, Kalyan Banerjee's exhortations about our responsibilities as Rotarians.

At the RI Convention in New Orleans in May 2011, Kalyan asked the delegates the question – "*Why are we in Rotary ?*" He answered his own question. He said "*I believe we are here because we care and because we see both what's wrong in the world and what's right....we are not here to listen to the naysayer, the doom mongers, those who say the world can be no better than it is, so why even try to change it ? We are here because we believe in change*"

Mahatma Gandhi said "*If I seem to be political, it is only because politics encircles us today like the coils of a snake from which one cannot get out, no matter how much one tries. I wish therefore to wrestle with the snake*"



'I did not even have breasts': Haitian girl forced to have sex with nearly 50 UN workers as part of child sex ring involving at least 134 peacekeepers

- Rape victim has revealed how she was forced to have sex with UN workers
- She claims peacekeepers in Haiti offered children cookies in return for sex
- In Haiti, 134 Sri Lankan peacekeepers exploited children from 2004 to 2007



Editorial (Cont'd)

During my visit to the Dr Martin Luther King Centre in Atlanta a couple of weeks ago, I took a photo (see copy left) of some apposite words uttered by the great man's widow, Coretta Scott King, who said "**Freedom and Justice cannot be parceled out in pieces to suit political convenience. I don't believe you can stand for freedom for one group of people and deny it to others.**" I agree whole heartedly with those sentiments and hope that RI will one day find a way to persuade the UN or any of the countries involved, to end these evil crimes against people's basic human rights..

I would welcome any comments on this matter.

Polaris Report

: [The Typology of Modern Slavery](#)

After collecting and analyzing over 32,000 cases of human trafficking documented between December 2007 and December 2016, Polaris has recently issued an important report which identifies 25 types of human trafficking in the United States. From sex trafficking within escort services to labour trafficking of farm workers, the ways humans are exploited differ greatly. The report points out that each type has unique strategies for recruiting and controlling victims and concealing the crime. Each of the 25 sections consists of information under the following headings: Traffickers Profile, Recruitment, Victim Profile, Methods of Control. The complete list of the types of human trafficking can be found in the Annex to the Newsletter.

The Mekong Club - Promo Video 2017

Many of you in the United States will remember Matt Friedman who last year undertook a 70 day speaking tour around the United States raising awareness about the slavery issue to "*spark abolitionist feelings amongst the participants*". RAGAS has just received this video from Matt, who is the Chief Executive of the Mekong Club. The Mekong Club is an organization made up of Hong Kong based private sector business leaders who have joined forces to help fight slavery in Asia. Please do watch the video which will answer the questions below

[The Mekong Club's promotional Video](#)

What is the **Mekong Club**?

Why do we work with the **private sector**?

How can businesses **help end** modern slavery?



"There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but he must take it because conscience tells him that it is right "

(Dr Martin Luther King, Jr)



Matt Friedman – A modern day abolitionist



Getting started: Helping your Club Begin the Fight against Human Trafficking/Modern Slavery

By Carol Metzker, One World Rotary eClub and RAGAS member

Q. One of the most common question Rotarians asked me at the 2017 Rotary International Convention was this: **How do we help our clubs get started working against the injustice of human trafficking/modern slavery (HT/MS)?** [U.S. uses the term human trafficking and the remainder of the world uses the term modern slavery. Whatever term you choose, thanks for working together to fight the issue!] **My club and I know only a little about the issue and much of our community doesn't realize that it takes place here—not just somewhere overseas. How do we get everyone on board and develop a foundation to tackle projects to end this issue?**

A. Here's one way—tried and true—that helped a few Pennsylvania counties learn about the issue and begin to take action while simultaneously building relationships and increasing support for various aspects (survivor aid, better laws, prevention programs and more).

Prepare a community education session including Q&A with Rotary as the coordinator and session facilitator/MC, that includes three guest speakers who talk about their work on the issue:

1. **Social services agency** already working with victims/survivors of HT/MS in your region. It may be an NGO that works only with this clientele—an outreach or day/drop-in program, short-term emergency shelter or long-term or transitional residential program—or homeless, substance abuse or domestic violence center that bridges the overlap in issues.
2. **Law enforcement** working against labor and sex trafficking or debt bondage slavery. In the U.S., FBI, ICE and sometimes local law enforcement will address the subject for groups.
3. **An elected official** who knows the laws of the jurisdiction and what related laws other other constituents are working on (perhaps Hotline posting, Safe Harbor for children or Aid for survivors). In addition to being happy to speak about this subject that is important to voters, officials have already established relationships with the press to help publicize your event.

Prepare by researching existing groups in your area. Use google, polarisproject.org, referrals from local social service agencies or RAGAS's project partners or members. Call/talk to individuals from agencies (see 1 and 2 above) to find out what the issue looks like in your area and if and how they're addressing the issue. If they say it isn't a problem in your area, look for another organization. For example, some people still believe that children should be arrested as prostitutes—they are still learning that kids are victims of sex trafficking, not criminals. Invite someone from each group to speak about the local (or international) situation at your Rotary club meeting; vet them as speakers so you get compelling speaker-experts to invite to the community program.

While talking to each agency, ask their biggest needs surrounding the fight against HT/MS. This will set you up for local projects. For example, if a survivor services organization asks for new socks for survivors, consider asking audience members to bring a pair to your program. If they seek funds to support housing or GED programs for victims transitioning to self-sufficiency, start spreading the word at your club presentation and the community program.



Getting started: Helping your Club Begin the Fight against Human Trafficking/Modern Slavery (Cont'd)

Learn more. In addition to learning at those club programs, take a few minutes to peruse the internet on the subject. Want to know:

- Types of HT/MS most prevalent in your country and how it's responding through laws? Visit globalslaveryindex.org or reference the U.S. TIP (Trafficking in Persons) Report including the country of interest.
- How many cases (a case can be one or multiple victims) were reported to the U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline from your state and how many victims were adults/minors or citizens/foreign nationals and what industry they were held in? Google search "National Human Trafficking Hotline" + [your state] + "statistics." Find out your U.S. state's rank at Shared Hope International or your anti-HT laws at polarisproject.org.
- The role of the internet in child sex trafficking? Visit wearethorn.org.

You don't have to know everything to start projects. Just partner with experts. You'll learn as you go... as the field changes and grows, you will too.

Once you and your club have learned a bit more and vetted speakers, plan the community program. **Invite a wide range of organizations working against HT/MS to host a table at the event**, hand out literature and talk to visitors about their work on the subject. (Decide in advance if they are allowed to collect money.) Include additional social service agencies, community coalitions, faith-based committees, and—of course—a table with Rotarians from your club to show what you're doing and to invite the community to join in.

At the community event, each speaker talks for 20 minutes about HT/MS from their perspective and their action. Afterward, have **20 minutes for Q&A**. Then invite audience members to **visit tables**, network on the subject and commit to take action.

Important Note: Some social service agencies might have a survivor who is willing to speak. This can be invaluable. Just consider before approaching a survivor without being referred: not all survivors want to speak (it can set off PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) episodes or they might just want their privacy/anonymity. Some survivors may agree but not be ready and an entire audience can be impacted as well as the survivor). Ask if they want to do Q&A; sometimes audience don't know what questions are sensitive and certain questions can cause pain for some survivors. Regardless, make sure you pay a survivor. He or she has already worked too much without pay. If their original vulnerabilities were poverty or lack of family support system, the last thing Rotarians should do is perpetuate those difficulties.

More Help for You and Your Club

The Rotarian Action Group Against Slavery is here to help you in numerous ways:

- Provide advice from Rotarians with years of experience working against the issue.
- Connect you with other Rotarians in your country (or support you if you're the pioneer Rotarian in your geographic location).
- Recommend speakers for district conferences, club meetings, Rotary-sponsored community programs.
- Refer you to online sources, videos, books, curriculum, flyers and other materials so that you don't have to reinvent the wheel. A lot of information can be gleaned from RAGAS's regular newsletters.
- Offer projects for you to join and provide a forum for you to ask for help with your HT/MS projects.

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Disclaimer: The views expressed by the contributors are not necessarily those of the Editor or of the RAGAS Board

Annex

25 Types of Human Trafficking in the United States

Source: Polaris: The Typology of Modern Slavery

1. Escort Services
2. Illicit Massage, Health & Beauty
3. Outdoor Solicitation
4. Residential
5. Domestic Work
6. Bars, Strip Clubs & Cantinas
7. Pornography
8. Travelling Sales Crews
9. Restaurants & Food Services
10. Peddling & Begging
11. Agriculture & Animal Husbandry
12. Personal Sexual Servitude
13. Health & Beauty Services
14. Construction
15. Hotels & Hospitality
16. Landscaping
17. Illicit Activities
18. Arts & Entertainment
19. Commercial Cleaning Services
20. Factories & Manufacturing
21. Remote Interactive Sexual Act
22. Carnivals
23. Forestry & Logging
24. Health Care
25. Recreational Facilities