

## MODERN SLAVERY

The institution of slavery is as old as civilization. Many nations and empires were built by the muscles of slaves. But what kinds of people were enslaved, and why? In ancient civilizations, slaves were usually war captives. The victors in battle might enslave the losers rather than killing them. Over time, people have found other reasons to justify slavery. Slaves were usually considered somehow different from their owners. They might belong to a different race, religion, nationality, or ethnic background. By focusing on such differences, slave owners felt they could **deny** basic human rights to their slaves.

And despite many efforts to end slavery, it still exists today. Some 27 million people worldwide are enslaved or work as forced laborers. That's more people than at any other point in the history of the world.

For many people, the image that comes to mind when they hear the word "slavery" is the slavery of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. We think of the buying and selling of people, their shipment from one continent to another and the abolition of the trade in the early 1800s. Even if we know nothing about the slave trade, it is something we think of as part of our history rather than our present. But the reality is slavery continues today.

Millions of men, women and children around the world are forced to lead lives as slaves. Although this exploitation is often not called slavery, the conditions are the same. People are sold like objects, forced to work for little or no pay and are at the mercy of their "employers."

Slavery exists today despite the fact that it is **banned** in the countries where it is practiced. It is also prohibited by the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1956 UN Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery. Women from Eastern Europe are forced to become prostitutes, children are trafficked between West African countries and men are forced to work as slaves on Brazilian agricultural **estates**. Contemporary slavery takes various forms and affects people of all ages, sex and race.

Experts say that changes in the world's economy and societies over the past 50 years have enabled a resurgence of slavery.

Three factors have contributed most to the rise of modern slavery. The first, a recent population explosion, has tripled the amount of people in the world, with most growth taking place in the developing world. The second, rapid social and economic changes, has displaced many to urban centers and their **outskirts**, where people are powerless and without job security. The third, government corruption around the world, allows slavery to go unpunished, even though it is illegal everywhere. In this way millions have become vulnerable to a resurgent form of slavery. This new slavery has two characteristics that differentiate it from the slavery of the past: slaves today are cheap and they are **disposable**.

An average slave in the American South in 1850 cost the equivalent of \$40,000 in today's money; today a slave costs an average of \$90. In 1850 it was difficult to capture slaves and then transport them to the US. Today, millions of economically and socially vulnerable people around the world are potential slaves. This "**supply**" makes slaves today cheaper than they have ever been.

From Internet. Adapted

**deny:** negar, refusar / negar, rechazar

**banned:** prohibir / prohibido

**estate:** finca, propietat / finca, propiedad

**outskirts:** els afores, rodalies / las afueras, extrarradio

**disposable:** d'un sol ús, rebutjable / desechable, de usar y tirar

**supply:** subministrament, provisió / suministro, provisión

