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## Special Issue on Human Trafficking

### Why Europe is Losing the Fight Against Trafficking

Matthew Colling



Trafficking in human beings is one of the most horrific blemishes the modern era has been forced to confront. It is a stain no less concealable or shameful than the legacy left us by the transatlantic slave trade. It is a more modern but no less gruesome form of slavery; something Western society has, for decades, felt proud to claim it had eradicated long ago. Slavery now is a barely clothed underage girl locked up in a basement cellar for weeks and months and even years. Perhaps she is in England, perhaps in Holland, or perhaps somewhere deep in the slums of Istanbul or Mumbai. Slavery is a father locked up in an illegal work camp perhaps in Russia or somewhere deep in the Romanian forest glades, barely fed enough to survive and forced to work 18 and 20 hours a day. He sleeps in the field in which he works only after his shift is complete.

The evils of slavery plague us once again, as western society, especially Europe, is beset with a paradox. It creates the demand for cheap human cargo but at the same time tries to eradicate its supply lines. With clear divisions of ideology, societal norms, and best approaches to tackle human trafficking are found within the borders of just one EU country, such as Belgium, it is not difficult to imagine why and how each member state has even more difficulty reaching a consensus. As the issue stands today, life in the future EU appears grim for the victims of human trafficking, especially since legislation is currently inadequate to deal with the problem. As I was told many times off the record, law enforcement is forced to bend the rules to make sure it addresses what it

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Photo by Zach Davis

### Adoption and Corruption in Guatemala

Tristan Call



I arrived in Guatemala in the spring of 2005 for a four-month study on the traditional kinship and adoption practices of the Maya-K'iche' Indians. Like much anthropology, my research was self-directed; I couldn't understand why people separate themselves into families and ignore their obligations to others, and I wanted to understand how (through adoption) people are able to bridge the genetic divide.

I was entirely unprepared for what I actually found when I started asking questions: a lucrative international black market for adoption for which the town I was living in was nationally-famous, with rumored profits topping off at \$50,000 per child; mob lynchings when local child-traffickers were discovered; an aboveground adoption system that mixes with its underground counterpart; a widespread paranoia of child-kidnapping that identifies

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### Technology and the Rise of Modern Slavery

Zach Davis



Sometimes it appears that the world is getting better all the time. Cellphones and computers are slimmer and more functional, medical researchers are finding new ways to prolong our lives, the internet continues to make information more organized and accessible, and global capitalism marches on. It is hard not to believe that we are in the midst of an unprecedented era of progress. Unfortunately, as Neil Postman writes in *Technopoly*, "Anyone who has studied the history of technology knows that technological change is always a Faustian bargain: Technology giveth and technology taketh away, and not always in equal measure. A new technology sometimes creates more

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## Technology and Slavery

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than it destroys. Sometimes, it destroys more than it creates. But it is never one-sided.”

One of the negative externalities of modern technology is that it has enabled the growth of large transnational crime organizations. With the use of advanced communications and transportation technology, these groups are able to operate in the shadows of the world economy and illegally buy and sell arms, drugs, and most egregiously, human beings. While the public has generally been aware about the black markets for arms and drugs for decades, information about the modern market for human beings is just emerging. Most shocking is the fact that, despite our collective assumption that slavery was an institution of a distant and distastefully immoral past, millions and millions of vulnerable persons continue to be bought and sold for profit. This practice is known as human trafficking and is defined by the UN as “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...for the purpose of exploitation” According to US government estimates, at least 500,000 people are trafficked across borders each year, and millions more within their own countries.

To learn more about this horrific subject and what I could do to help stop it, I spent last semester in New Delhi, India. While there, I interviewed Indian members of parliament, diplomats, and policemen who, wringing their hands, unanimously acknowledged both the existence of slaves in their midst, as well as their inability to prevent or mitigate it, clearly wishing the problem would just disappear. And while the victims of these crimes are invisible to the rest of society, their daily suffering is unspeakably real.

Once I had learned enough Hindi, I went to brothels and interviewed some trafficked prostitutes. While many were too frightened to talk openly, some did. Most of the girls were Nepalis or rural villagers who had been promised good jobs in Delhi by an “agent”, but once arrived had their passport and documents confiscated, were beaten and raped, and then transferred to a brothel where they service 10-15 men a day for as long as they are profitable. To keep the girls from running away, the pimps threaten their families with death and keep the girls locked behind metal bars at night. And since most of the girls are kidnapped at ages 11-15, they are in little position to resist. Nor can they expect a future life outside the brothel, since they usually die in their mid-twenties from AIDS or other untreated diseases.

While less sensational, indentured labor is also a terribly real phenomenon as well.

In this form of trafficking, persons are lured into the cities in hopes of higher wages, and once there, forced into working difficult or menial jobs for appallingly low prices, usually to pay off an exorbitant “debt” for transporting the person to the city. A typical example would be a debt of \$2000 and a daily wage of 50 cents. Thus it can take many years just to pay off that false debt owed to the trafficker. Violence and abuse are common and victims are kept isolated, physically and emotionally abused, and threatened with familial and personal injury and death. I witnessed an example of this kind of bondage one day as I was walking around a poor area of Delhi and came upon a seemingly abandoned building. As I walked in I saw dozens of young boys all working on tables stitching sequins onto women’s blouses. The task was unbearably tedious and I was told by one of the boys that they had come from nearby villages and worked from 6 AM to 10 PM every day and earned 20 rupees (40 cents) a day. Many of them appeared to be malnourished and sick.

These scenes are repeated every day, all over the world. It thrives because there is a market for it—there is a demand for commercial sex and cheap labor, and there is a supply of impoverished, vulnerable people to be exploited. And because, despite many government’s anti-trafficking legislation, modern technology allows transnational crime groups to operate and trade relatively undetected. This is not to say that slavery and human exploitation did not exist before mobile phones and airplanes, but rather, that in an age when such practices are so universally condemned by world publics, technology has allowed these groups to flourish.

However, I argue that technology has ultimately encouraged a trend more troubling than better equipped criminal gangs, namely, our tendency to equate technological advancement with societal progress; the replacement of our ends with our means. Efficiency and technology used to be mechanisms for achieving society’s objectives—now they have become the very standards of advancement. Notions of progress used to find their source in ethical or moral ideals. Now progress is measured in terms of GDP per capita and the latest Apple gizmo. Development is always thought of as economic, rather than social or moral, causing many to be callous about the great number of people exploited or left behind in the machinery of modern progress. I believe that the focus on technology as the end of progress has decayed society’s commitment to the infinite value of each person, and contributed to the commodification of human beings into exploitable objects.

For those wondering what they can do to help stop modern slavery there are some small ways to begin. The first is to recognize the various ways in which we objectify people in our own lives. Pornography and

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labor abuse of illegal immigrants are two aspects of the same spectrum of human exploitation. Concerted efforts to value and love all persons equally is an important step, beginning with those nearest to you. The second is to raise awareness of the issue by learning all about it yourself and telling your friends and families. The more people know about this tragedy, the stronger our voice will be. And third, think about what it means to progress as a society, and the different ways we can measure and strive towards it. If technology is causing us to focus on the means of progress, and forget that its ends must always be created with concern for the other, perhaps we should reconsider its role in our society. For it must be wrong to call our society advanced if we turn a blind eye towards the suffering of the most helpless among us.

*Zach is a junior majoring in International Relations and Philosophy.*

# Obama: The Candy Man Can!

Ryan Decker



Hope; dreams; change: The message of Barack Obama resonates with college students everywhere. He has a large following at BYU thanks to an influx of former Romney supporters. However, the rhetoric surrounding Obama reminds me of Willy Wonka—“Who can take tomorrow, dip it in a dream? The candy man can!” Obama’s rhetorical strategy of citing problems then crying “yes we can!” is little different from songs about the magical Candy Man. There are many intelligent, informed Obama supporters who have good reasons to support him, but many of the reasons I’m told are inaccurate. Much of Obama’s following amounts to a cult of personality. Two aspects of Obama’s appeal concern me: change and unity.

Every speech Obama gives is the same: aspirations of change without substantive plans. He is naive about foreign policy, energy, trade, taxing and spending, and the political process. Obama has given little indication of what specific things he plans to accomplish and how he plans to accomplish them. When questioned about his idealism, he accuses the questioner of lacking faith in America, reminding me of the faulty “with us or against us” rhetoric of the Bush Administration. Expansion of health care entitlements will not pay for itself and puts future policy makers in a straitjacket, whatever the Candy Man may say. The military cannot quickly and completely withdraw from Iraq—as the regrettably eliminated Joe Biden said, “Sunnis and Shiites aren’t going to suddenly hold happy hour once we’re gone.” CNN will show the country’s security and democratic institutions rapidly deteriorate, and the administration that allows the Iraq power vacuum to self destruct will lose political capital for itself and its party—in other words, Obama won’t really pull out. Further, his recent inconsistency about Al Qaeda in Iraq and his refusal to acknowledge the progress of the surge are disturbing indicators. Cold War follies of US presidents teach us that Obama’s promises to talk personally with dictators are naïve and dangerous. Comprehensive alternative energy cannot be accomplished immediately without thought for the transition period, regardless of how much faith Obama has in America. Deficit entitlement spending is not a free lunch, and increasing taxes on the “rich” (the owners of capital) is a recipe for slowed growth. Obama’s populist promises, including unilateral revision of NAFTA (from which the US has received a net benefit), were labeled “a badge of economic ignorance” by Financial Times. His reluctance to use public campaign funding indicates that promises

to eliminate the influence of special interests are dishonest—so much for changing Old Washington! Many of his supporters admire his charisma but ignore his lack of substance. This cult of personality is disturbing.

The other aspect of Obama’s appeal is his promised ability to unite America on a bipartisan basis. His centrist and Republican supporters ignore the fact that the nonpartisan National Journal named him the Most Liberal Senator of 2007. Obama is more liberal than Hillary but has disingenuously convinced the masses that he is a bipartisan centrist. Legions of former Romney supporters have signed up with Obama, despite his having zero political and ideological similarities to Mitt. While Obama may temporarily unite much of the electorate on a bipartisan basis, he will not unite Congress. He has no record of substantive cooperation with Republicans. Once the general election starts the Republican machine will expose the marketing farce that Obama is a post-partisan centrist. How will he provide unity if he leaves Iraq, socializes healthcare, continues irrational tirades against corporations and free trade, or attempts to legalize same-sex unions? Having these stances is fine, but instilling false hope that the United States can be unified on these issues is deceptive—in other words, Obama, “no you can’t.”

Judgment day is coming for the Candy Man. He will likely be elected but will have obstacles—he will have to account for his naiveté. “Mr. McCain is a brave man,” says the Economist, “with huge experience of international affairs and a much longer record of reaching out to his opponents in politics.” Beyond eloquent speaking, how will Obama handle leaders with far more experience and knowledge, in the campaign and later as president?

Obama is not prepared to shoulder the responsibilities of the President. Conservatives would be better served by McCain, who actually has a record of bipartisan cooperation and pragmatic policy. Liberals would be better served by Clinton, who has more realistic and practical expectations of the responsibilities of the presidency. Being president is more than giving speeches and clapping for yourself when you walk onstage—it is about experience, judgment, and pragmatism, the exact things this Candy Man lacks. Obama’s mass support represents a disturbing trend in American politics from substance to kitsch. Obama supporters need to know that they won’t find a Golden Ticket under their ballot.

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## Trafficking in Europe *continued from front page*

considers the most blatant and obvious forms of trafficking.

Likewise, NGOs are constricted by certain laws and rules from doing “what is right” as opposed to what is allowed by law. Though this is the unwritten code, many victims are still deprived of these safety measures. It is they who become the pawns that suffer most under the confusing mess of conflicting legislation and accepted practices.

Not unlike the occasion two hundred years ago—which saw the British Empire unilaterally end the Trans-Atlantic slave trade to the dismay of many other European countries who did not agree with Britain’s moral stance on the issue—today we again see disagreement between state actors who are unable to agree on definitions, moral positions, and methods to combat and end the trade in human beings. Sadly, the patchwork approach has and will continue to leave the most vulnerable people, the victims, at the mercy of the criminal element, which has, which can, and which will continue to find new ways to exploit them.

As it stands today, human traffickers operating within Europe can take their human cargo—which might include girls, mothers, children, and men—from Madrid to Brussels to Amsterdam and on to Manchester in less than a week. In comparison, it can take up to nine months for the Belgian police to acquire a suspected trafficker’s registered name through his listed mobile phone number in Italy. By then, of course, the criminal has switched phones and the network that was linked through the phone number has long since changed.

Not all victims are trafficked without any knowledge of their future employment in the sex trade, but most are. Either they never heard of warnings about human traffickers or they did not believe them. These victims are often young, desperate and incapable of believing that the West could be any worse than what they face at home; “it’s as though these girls really do believe that money hangs on trees in the West” remarked Solange, an expert in the field who has worked in airport detainment shelters for years before working with Payoke, one of the pioneer NGO’s in Europe devoted to the victims of Human Trafficking. Thus we can see that not only do source countries have push factors but destination countries, likewise, have pull factors, the promise of big money.

Unless the benefits accruing from globalization materialize through Europe’s continued push to unite itself into one common polity—poverty and incongruent police approaches will only continue to exacerbate the problem of human trafficking.

*Matthew Colling is a masters student in sociology.*

# Kosovo: Little Country, Big Repurcussions

Ryan Fairchild



On Tuesday, February 19th, the Serbian province of Kosovo declared independence, prompting celebrations by Kosovan Albanians, protests from Serbians, and mixed opinions from the international public. The United States was first to recognize Kosovo as an independent nation with President Bush acknowledging the event from Dar Es Salaam, in Tanzania: "History will prove this to be a correct move, to bring peace to the Balkans. The United States supports this move because we believe it will bring peace. And now it's up to all of us to work together to help the Kosovars realize that peace," Bush said. The opposition, led primarily by Russia and Serbia, argue that the move will spark instability in the region by emboldening other aspiring separatist movements, especially those of Albanian groups in Georgia and Macedonia.

Kosovo was the southernmost province of Serbia, one of the many countries to emerge after the dissolution of the Yugoslav republic, and has been host to ethnic tensions for quite some time. Serbians consider Kosovo to be the birthplace of their culture, but the region is composed of a 92% majority of Albanians. In fact, this is not the first time the Albanian majority has attempted to declare independence; the original secession occurred in 1990 but was only recognized by Albania and Afghanistan. The following decade was highlighted by vicious attacks carried about by the Kosovo Liberation Army and the Serbian government, both of which targeted the opposing ethnic groups, and ended with Kosovo being placed under U.N. mandate. The argument is made that the Serbians have abused the region such that they no longer deserve to have control over it, but history has shown that the Albanians have been just as malicious in their treatment of Serbs living in Kosovo. Simply giving the Albanians another country to call their own does not solve the root of the conflict—the Serbian minority will continue to live in fear and there will continue to be ethnic tension.

This marks the Russian concern that this division will prompt other such divisions, not only with Albanians, but also in other parts of the region and world. Spain has also refused to recognize Kosovo, most likely because of their own worries of Basque separatists in the north of their country. Taiwan, not surprisingly, has voiced their support as it instills more validity to their claim of autonomy from China. The opinion of those supporting Kosovo's independence arises almost exclusively from a nation's own desire for independence, or, as in the case of the United States, the desire to see 'freedom' in

almost any form emerge. Again, other issues must be considered. Serbia was already one of Europe's least developed countries with Kosovo being its poorest province. Political stability is strongly tied to economic stability, and if Kosovo is not strengthened, both with good internal policies and external support in the form of trade and investment, the likelihood is that the ethnic tensions already mentioned will be exacerbated. History has shown many emerging nations and leaders promising future growth and prosperity, but few in recent times have been able to deliver on those promises.

Kosovo has already declared independence and international opinion is already being galvanized in favor of or against the move, but that division must be placed aside if the world community is to achieve a consensus on how to best act to ensure peace and stability in Kosovo. The United States may have voiced support, and with good reasons, but is it willing to protect the Serbian ethnic minority if sentiment in Kosovo should turn against them? Russia may have denounced Kosovo's unilateral declaration, also with good reasons, but are they now willing to recognize the will of the Kosovan majority and help promote economic stability? In the end, the world will look back at this small nation's act as either a success in the promotion of newfound freedom or as an unsuccessful and missed opportunity by its surrounding friends. Let us hope for the former.

*Ryan Fairchild is an Economics major who wants to save the world through rock music*

## Guatemala Adoption

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all foreigners as potential *robaniños*; and all along, providing the financial incentives, with thousands of happy American parents picking out the colors for their Maya baby's first-world room.

I went there to study "cultural" traditions (and I did: my backup disks are littered with hundreds of pages of fieldnotes and transcripts on kinship fostering practices) but what I found had everything to do with the modern world—my world—and its intrusion into the global consciousness of the Maya-K'iche'. In 2004, Guatemala supplied 3,264 children to adoptive parents in the United States, the third largest number after China (7,000) and Russia (5,800). In the next two years, Guatemala passed Russia and became the second-largest child exporter (4,135); that's three times more children than are adopted from India, Mexico, Haiti, Brazil, Nigeria, and the Philippines combined.

Guatemala is a small nation with many adoptions. There are plenty of systemic reasons for this: loopholes in the law and enforcement

officials' reticence to verify parentage reduced paperwork. High, mandatory, legal fees made adoption work appealing for Guatemalan attorneys. Widespread poverty and limited access to birth control result in unwanted children. White parents from America find Maya babies exotic, beautiful, and less likely to cause racial conflict than black children, who are in more than plentiful supply for domestic adoption. These are excellent explanations, but what confronted me in my research every day was considerably more specific, sometimes towards the mundane and sometimes heartbreaking. I met a professional lawyer whose wife sold their son into adoption when she left him; three years later, he was still searching for the boy. I interviewed a man whose seven-year-old daughter was kidnapped and missing for two months, until he tracked down the traffickers in their safe house hundreds of miles away and led a police posse to rescue her.

It's difficult to criticize the adoption industry when it has such promising premises as the union of unwanted babies and loving but infertile parents. I should point out that I have no hostility toward that noble project. But the adoption markets in Central America have led to a darker side that I only began to understand when it affected my research. In one interview, an informant explained with amusement that people had probably suspected me of being a kidnapper from the moment I arrived, because I was a gringo. In another interview, a friend told me that just by talking to me he had risked being identified (incorrectly) by the community as having a child-trafficking business with me. Both of them explained to me what children are used for when they are adopted: used as cheap labor, sold into sex slavery and pornography, killed and their organs sold for transplants, even eaten. I wish I could shrug off their paranoia with a laugh, but this is, after all, an industry sparked in the 1980's by military officials during the genocidal Guatemalan Civil War who wanted to make a profit off of the orphaned children whose parents they had murdered.

On a monthly basis, I meet another person whose parent or sibling or friend has adopted a Guatemalan child. I never know whether to ask more probing questions: did you meet the mother? Was there a DNA test? What were your lawyer's fees and who arranged each transaction? I usually keep quiet, hoping that their child is in the majority: a child who was abandoned or unwanted or orphaned or abused and will finally have a chance at a loving family. On my flight from Guatemala City to Houston at the end of the summer of 2005, I counted 16 brown babies toted by adoring white parents, and I tallied the number scrupulously before I put away my notebook and started to pray for them.

*Tristan Call is a senior majoring in Anthropology. He likes eating out of tupperware.*



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