

Book Review

Siddharth, K. (2009). *Sex trafficking: Inside the business of modern day slavery*. New York: Columbia University Press.

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Siddharth Kara visited Slovenia during college, where he witnessed immense poverty, insurmountable strife, and the predisposition to human trafficking. Though he continued on to receive his Masters in Business Administration from Harvard University, he could not forget the painful stories of Slovenian sexual crimes. He began a journey to understand the origins of sex trafficking and human slavery. This expedition led to sixteen different countries and hundreds of interviews with individuals and families involved in the industry. His goal was defined on this trip: to abolish sex trafficking and all other forms of contemporary slavery. Kara wrote this book as a call to action for individuals, governments, and organizations to realize the origins, tragedies, and potential solutions for the current crisis of human trafficking worldwide.

As he dangerously enters brothels in the depths of the Nigerian mountains or the streets of India, he takes the reader along. This is not an easy trip, as the stories are filled with rape, abuse, and murder. The testimonies are graphic, detailed, and horrifying. Yet they serve as the greatest call to action. The reader cannot remain unaffected by the suffering that individuals and families endure at the hands of traffickers. Kara does more than respectfully

narrate the stories of the individuals. He explains the reasons trafficking exists while outlining his own solutions for eradicating it. Kara's rhetoric holds the reader while his experience enlightens. Whereas his overarching goal is not necessarily attainable through reading this book, there are steps any reader can take. Even the smallest gestures could help, such as sharing the book or discussing trafficking with friends, family, and co-workers.

The first chapter of this book provides a thorough orientation on trafficking today and goes beyond a mere definition. The author outlines the "*Anatomy of Sex Trafficking*," including the steps of acquisition, movement, and exploitation. Kara illustrates the immense profit made by slave owners and traders today and argues that the supply of slaves is facilitated through economic globalization and the proliferation of Western capitalism. The vastly unequal wealth distribution that has left millions living with less than \$2 per day, the erosion of social programs, and the disappearing freedoms for humans in certain desolate countries all contribute to the ease of trafficking. Kara shows the utter disdain in many countries where sex slaves are recruited for the notion of equal rights for women. He also shows the failures of law enforcement to prosecute the criminals or

protect the victims. In fact, in many of the countries Kara visited, the police were either bribed by or involved in the brothels themselves.

The middle section of his book details the places where trafficking exists. He explains his visits to India and Nepal, where the youngest girls are valued the most, families send their daughters off to work and never hear from them again, and there are few places that help victims if one ever escapes. Next he discusses Italy and Western Europe, where pimps are called protectors, police are often the main clients, and the crimes are organized within an intricate system of interracial gangs. In Moldova and the former Soviet Union, false job opportunities are used to entice young women, and often the sheer poverty makes families so desperate they will believe nearly any artificial pretense. Moreover, the ease of travel between the European Union assists traffickers in moving their victims. Women are often lured into false marriages, and child beggars are forced to lie in the streets of Albania and the Balkans. Kara also describes his visit to Thailand and the Mekong sub-region, which he describes as a “giant brothel.” In the United States, trafficking is not as prevalent as other countries, yet Kara takes time explaining that victims are moved quickly and often within the United States.

Some of Kara’s research endeavors consisted of staking out along borders or watching boats in harbors. Those estimates are not reliable and might mislead some readers. Although accurate estimates are hard to achieve in an underground crime, better methods can be utilized and would improve parts of this work. Furthermore, the vast amount of information on each country is astounding. His knowledge, combined with local resources, could be used to create country-specific literature to assist in eradicating human trafficking.

Kara mentions that good Samaritans and neighbors have been vital in saving many victims from desperate situations. By having this background information, citizens across the world will become more aware of the problem and learn how to help. Moreover, social workers who are working with youth, women, and immigrants should be well-educated in trafficking worldwide to assist those who have experienced this trauma. Social work educators may use this book to expand student awareness of these global injustices, while practitioners may find this book as good preventative medicine against increased sex trafficking in the United States. As more people go on this journey with Kara, the knowledge of this problem will expand, and hopefully as others feel called to action, the youth in this world will no longer become victims.