

# Stop Trafficking!

## Awareness Advocacy Action

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FOCUS: This month's newsletter explores how art is used to express stories and experiences in human trafficking.

*Through various forms of art, whether painting, sculpture, music, theater, dance, movies or any other expressive form, artists can bring to light stories and experiences, creating an emotional connection that goes beyond what can be conveyed through facts alone. Art is often used to attract attention to social justice issues and the plight of vulnerable people. Throughout the world, people are using their artistic gifts and talent to draw attention to the crime of human trafficking.*

## Together We Can End Human Trafficking: Kolkata, India

According to India's [National Crime Records Bureau](#), over 6,500 human trafficking victims were identified in the country in 2022 - 60% of them women and girls. Experts believe that there is serious underreporting of the crime and that the actual numbers are much higher.

Each year, thousands of men, women, and children in India fall victim to sex and labor trafficking either at home or abroad. Many women and young girls work as domestic workers, while men and boys labor in the agriculture industry, all receiving no or minimal pay. Young girls and women are forced into marriage or work in prostitution in brothels. India has been described as the epicenter of human trafficking in South Asia.

Activist murals raise awareness around specific solutions and also offer space for community activism.

In 2016, American artist Joel Bergner journeyed to West Bengal in India to create an activist mural in collaboration with survivors of trafficking in India. Bergner set out to paint a large-scale mural in partnership with survivors to tell their stories and to raise awareness of the issues surrounding human trafficking.

Working with the [Indian NGO Shakti Vahini](#), Bergner and a group of local artists created a mural that depicts the likeness of a formerly trafficked woman named Sangeeta. Her beautifully dressed figure spreads across the mural, gliding from left to right. Sangeeta extends her left hand towards an unseen figure and raises her head to meet their gaze. As she looks up with hope, determination, and strength on her face, a red hand grasps her left ankle and tries to pull her back into slavery. Yet, she persists and moves toward freedom and a helping hand.

This mural highlights the importance of survivor-informed input in all aspects of work to end human trafficking. It also calls attention to the issue for all who see it.

Click [here](#) to learn more.



Sangeeta reprinted with the artist's permission



## Let the Oppressed Go Free

*Let the Oppressed Go Free* is a bronze sculpture created by Timothy Schmalz that depicts people victimized by human trafficking being released from captivity. The artist found inspiration from Isaiah 58:6, which talks about 'setting free the oppressed.'

The sculpture contains 100 figures representing the faces of human trafficking: men, women, and children, all victims of sex exploitation, forced labor, debt bondage, and more. The sculpture includes figures that span history to demonstrate that human trafficking has been a societal issue for generations.

The massive piece measuring 22.5' long will be permanently installed at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. while a smaller version is in Rome, Italy.



## Films

Last summer, the movie *Sound of Freedom* cast light on one aspect of human trafficking. Film is one means of shedding attention on other realities of the crime. The films listed below reveal various aspects of the dark world of victims and traffickers, unscrupulous employers, pimps and brothel owners, labor brokers, and corrupt police who prey on the most vulnerable men, women, and children in countries throughout the world.



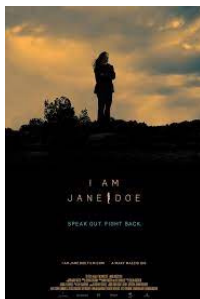
### Tricked (2013)

This documentary film takes place in cities throughout the United States and follows a vice squad as they rescue survivors and track down traffickers.



### The Dark Side of Chocolate (2010)

This documentary investigates how human trafficking and child labor in the Ivory Coast fuels the worldwide chocolate industry.



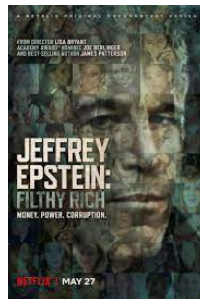
### I am Jane Doe (2017)

This Netflix documentary focuses on the legal suits brought against Backpage.com, a classified ad website notorious for sex trafficking. Congress held a private screening of the film. The FBI eventually closed down the website in 2018.



### The Twelve Thousand (2020)

"The Twelve Thousand" is a movie shot in Kathmandu that portrays the harrowing journey of Sona, a young woman who falls victim to human trafficking. Initially enticed by the promise of a better life in the city, Sona is deceived and eventually sold into sex trafficking at an Indian brothel.



### Jeffrey Epstein: Filthy Rich (2022)

Stories from survivors drive this docuseries examining how convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein used his wealth and power to carry out his abuse.



### Fields of Mudan

Chinese with English subtitles. This short film will break your heart. When Mudan, a frightened, young Asian girl, is forced into human trafficking by the brutal child brothel owner, Madam Zhao, the only solace she finds is through the memory of her Mother and the promise that she would one day find Mudan and take her away to America.



## ArtWorks for Freedom

[ArtWorks for Freedom](#) is a global initiative that uses the arts to raise awareness about human trafficking and call people to act within their power to stop this crime. ArtWorks for Freedom includes exhibitions, performances, film series, lectures, and other creative opportunities to draw attention to human trafficking and to empower individuals and communities to do what they can to be sure no one else becomes a victim, and victims become survivors who thrive.



## Borderless Captivity

This online photo exhibit by ArtWorks for Freedom features the many faces of human trafficking globally. The crime of human trafficking is driven by the demand for cheap goods and the devaluation and commodification of human beings, especially women and children. Traffickers always prey on people's vulnerabilities, such as poverty, homelessness, and displacement due to conflict or natural disasters, promising them a better life.

The photographs in this online exhibition are intended to put a human face on the statistics and headlines, to tell the stories of human trafficking and the journey towards freedom.

Please click [here](#) to view the photo exhibit.

## In Transit: The Body as Currency

Online Exhibit through June 30, 2024

*In Transit: The Body as Currency* is the inaugural exhibition of the Kay Chernush Virtual Gallery on the ArtWorks for Freedom website. The exhibition features nineteen artists whose work depicts some aspects of human trafficking and how human bodies are treated as currency on both the individual and systemic levels.

To visit the gallery, please click [here](#) and follow the prompts.

## "SUNS ARE SUNS"

"SUNS ARE SUNS" is a solo theatre piece founded on actual accounts of children and women who were victims of sex trafficking. This creation uses text, music, and movement to explore the multi-layered responses to trauma.

Dawn Akemi Saito, who is an actress and writer, collaborated with director Maria Mileaf to give shape to this powerful production.

Please click [here](#) to view this 4-minute presentation.

## Calling Attention to Pornhub

*As Pornhub continues to exploit and profit from videos of victims of rape and sex trafficking, the Traffickinghub continues to educate the public and advocate to shut the site down.*

*Traffickinghub's #ARTXFREEDOM was designed to draw awareness and help people "feel the pain of Pornhub's victims".*

*Click [here](#) to view the top winners of the contest and, importantly, [sign the petition](#) to close down the Pornhub website.*

## Louder Together

An initiative of [The Voices and Faces Project](#), “Louder Together” seeks to create poetry and performances that speak to a range of human rights and social justice issues. Each crowdsourced poem in the series utilizes the voices of those who have lived through or witnessed an injustice and uses their words as a call to social and political action. They work closely with trusted allies, including [Surviving the Mic](#), [Justice for Migrant Women](#), and [World Without Exploitation](#) to reach communities where they are in order to create work that is inclusive, representative and change-focused.

They believe that powerful poetry deserves to be heard in as many ways and places as possible. To do this, the Louder Together team at The Voices and Faces Project will bring each of their crowdsourced poems to life, either through a video, live performance, or through one of their literary publications. Please click [here](#) to find out more about Louder Together. Please click [here](#) to view the YouTube video from the Voices and Faces Project and Louder Together on human trafficking.

## Design

[Design Against Trafficking](#) is founded on the premise that design can be the catalyst in the formation of collaborations and synergies that can end human trafficking.

*WHEN PLACES SPEAK* is a photography exhibit that has been shown around the world. The exhibit provides a forum for places associated with trafficking to tell their story: from places where people are recruited to places used by purchasers, places used by law enforcement to stop trafficking, and places where survivors can transition.

By starting dialogues around the places sex trafficking touches, we can shed light on the fact that it is happening here, in our neighborhoods and communities.

## Rise of the Butterfly

*Layla Love is an American photographer whose work generally focuses on disadvantaged, exploited, and trafficked people. At age 21, she ventured to war-torn areas to help women who were victims of prostitution and human trafficking.*

*In 2016, Love, with Gloria Steinem, conceived of [Rise of the Butterfly, Art Driven Activism to Build Resilience](#). The mission of Rise of the Butterfly is to work with nonprofits who are working to protect those impacted by human trafficking and displacement due to environmental disasters and climate change.*

*[Rise of the Butterfly](#) aims to connect the Fine Art world with survivors of human trafficking and to raise awareness of human trafficking both in the United States and globally. Much of Layla Love’s work uses the butterfly motif, a symbol of the transformation of human trafficking victims to survivors who not just live but thrive.*



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## HAART Kenya

**HAART Kenya** is a non-governmental organization based in Nairobi dedicated to fighting human trafficking in Eastern Africa. HAART has worked with artists to create intriguing and alternative expressions of art that are based on different aspects of human trafficking. The charity supports survivors, many of whom were kept under lock and key while being sexually abused. Please click [here](#) to view a YouTube video by HAART Kenya on arts to end trafficking.

More than a million children are trafficked each year around the world, according to UNICEF. Wrenched from their familiar life, they are relocated and forced to work, often in the sex trade but also in sweatshops, begging and agriculture.

The vast majority of them are girls and they are deprived of an education and trapped in a life of poverty and slavery.

Kenya is a source, transit and destination country for men, women and children who are trafficked into forced labour and sexual slavery, according to the US State Department.

Children – mostly adolescent girls – are often trafficked from Kenya’s impoverished villages to towns and cities for domestic labour, sex work, street vending and begging due to poverty and lack of access to secondary education.

Human trafficking is particularly rife in poverty-stricken slums, said Kissmart Bakra, a musician from Mathare and an anti-trafficking ambassador for HAART Kenya.

“When you’re poor and unemployed, it’s easy to be tempted by someone selling you a dream job,” he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation from a corrugated iron shed in Mathare. “But if the job seems too good to be true, then it probably is.”

In 2015, the charity enlisted the help of painters, street artists and musicians like Bakra to create representations of human trafficking,

culminating in an annual exhibition.

High fertility rates, coupled with rural poverty and land scarcity, drive more than 250,000 Kenyans into cities each year, according to the World Bank, which predicts that the majority of Kenyans will live in urban areas by 2033.

In Nairobi’s sprawling slums, which house two-thirds of the city’s four million people, trafficked children work in brothels, bars and the drug trade, sometimes simply in exchange for food, according to charities.

Many slum dwellers who have migrated to Kenya – East Africa’s largest economy – from neighbouring Uganda and Tanzania looking for jobs are “ideal prey” for traffickers, Bakra said.

“Their families often don’t know where they are so no one checks in or follows up on them,” he said.

HAART Kenya gives free trainings to slum residents to teach them about the risk of trafficking as many are often “completely unaware of their rights” and are easily duped by recruiters, particularly if they are people that they know and trust.

“Traffickers just pose as recruiters and lure people into forced prostitution or domestic work with false promises of jobs,” Mutevu said.

“Having never heard of trafficking, most victims do not even realise they are being exploited,” she said, adding that the art project had also made the police and government officials more aware of the problem.

Click [here](#) to learn more.



BenjavisaRuangvareeArt/shutterstock.com





## Art Tipped Off Investigators to Sex Trafficking Ring

A series of paintings helped tip investigators off to a sex trafficking ring based out of Texas. Please click [here](#) to view this three minute YouTube video.



## ALLIANCE TO END HUMAN TRAFFICKING

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## More Resources

Please click [here](#) to find short YouTube videos and other media resources about various aspects of human trafficking.

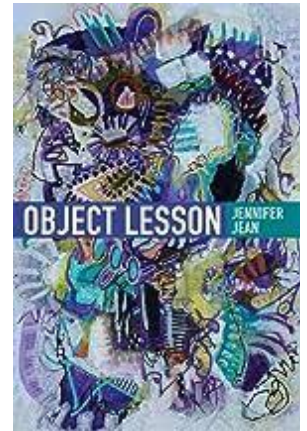
## Object Lesson

Jennifer Jean's latest collection *Object Lesson* is a call to action as it explores sex-trafficking and objectification in twenty-first century America.

Jean uses relentless, dire, vital language - often tinged with hope - to pull us into these latest, darkest stories of our homeland.

Her intensely crafted lyric narratives and persona poems are based on poetry workshops with sex-trafficking survivors through the [Free2Write Poetry](#) program. Other pieces are based on in-person, or researched, interviews with survivors discussing the definition of human trafficking.

These intensely crafted, lyric narratives and persona poems are about sex-trafficking and objectification in America.



## Red Sand Project

Red Sand Project is a participatory artwork created by Molly Gochman that uses sidewalk interventions and earthwork installations to create opportunities for people to question, connect and take action against vulnerabilities that can lead to human trafficking, modern slavery, and exploitation. Please click [here](#) to view a webinar featuring Molly and her work sponsored by Alliance to End Human Trafficking.

## Download and Play ACT!



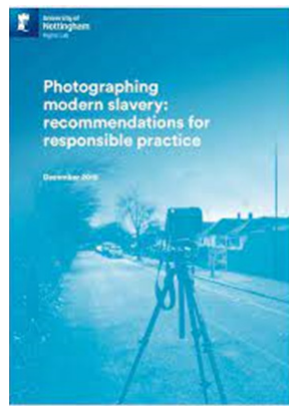
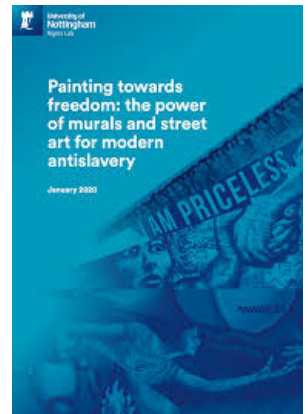
ACT! is a story-based educational game developed by the [Lifeboat Project](#) that helps players identify the warning signs and red flags of human trafficking. The game, which you can download for free, is available on Google Play and the Apple App Store.

The Lifeboat Project's mission is "to increase awareness of human trafficking through training." To learn more about ACT! and the Lifeboat Project, please click [here](#).

# Action

## Painting towards freedom: the power of murals and street art for modern antislavery

**This report** uncovers the spread, purpose, and functions of human trafficking murals across the globe. It analyses human trafficking murals for their themes and functions and uses four case studies to assess the potential role of murals in community-based anti-trafficking work.



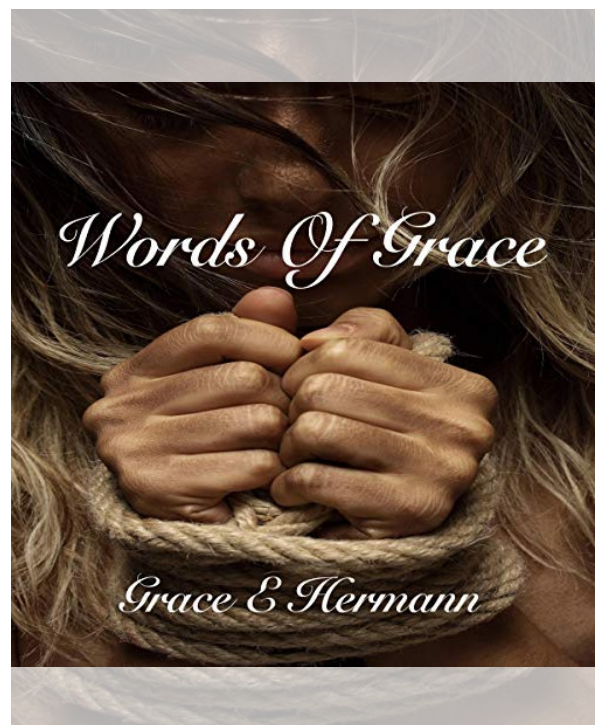
## Photographing Modern Slavery: Recommendations for Responsible Practice

This report studied the current imagery used to depict modern slavery and found it risks harming anti-slavery work and survivors by creating misinformation and re-exploitation. Please click [here](#) to access *Photographing modern slavery: recommendations for responsible practice* from the University of Nottingham Rights Lab.

## Words of Grace: Poetry from the Dark World of Sex Trafficking, audiobook by Grace Hermann

*"Your flowers are no longer his take them back reclaim them and let them blossom into its true self first water and give them the sunlight of healing they need then look at the beauty and embrace the change."*

Surviving a night of horrible violence through human trafficking, Grace now shares her poetry uncovered through the unfortunate event. Pouring her heart out through her pen, she shares the suffering, pain, beauty, and love, that is surviving and healing.







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