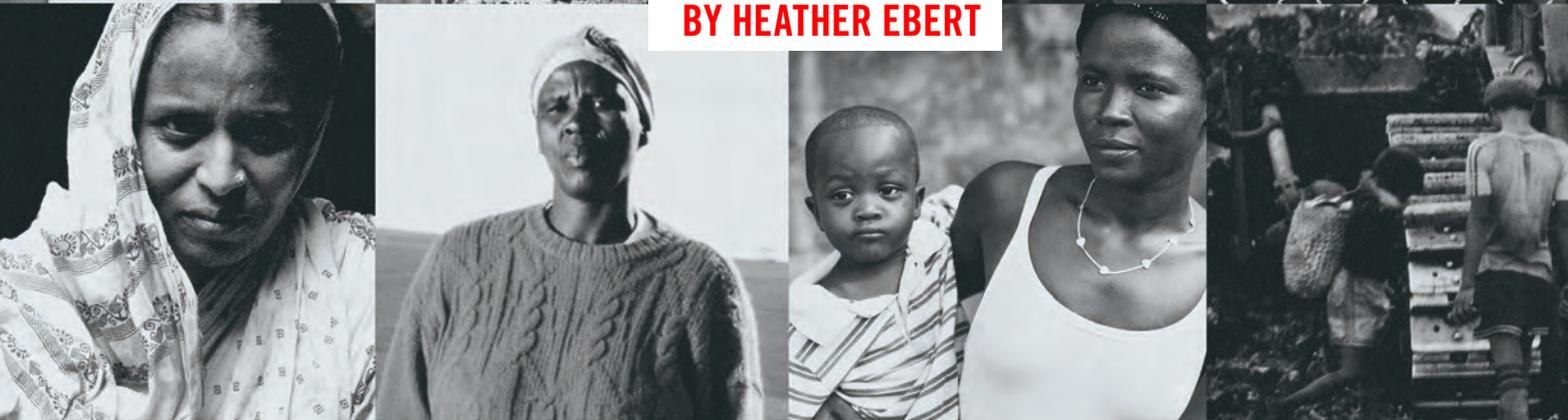


THE JUSTICE GENERATION

HOW MODERN-DAY ABOLITIONISTS ARE BEING A VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

BY HEATHER EBERT



MORE THAN 20 MILLION MEN, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN AROUND THE WORLD CURRENTLY SUFFER THE BRUTALITY OF FORCED LABOR AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION — THE VIOLENT INJUSTICE OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING. GOD COMMANDS HIS PEOPLE TO SEEK JUSTICE FOR THE OPPRESSED, AND THOUSANDS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS ARE ANSWERING THAT CALL.

When you first hear the stories, it's hard to believe they're true. Girls as young as 5 years old are for sale in a Cambodian brothel. Families are held hostage for decades in brick kilns in India, working 16 hours a day to pay off insurmountable debt. Hundreds of foreign workers are enslaved on tomato

farms in Florida. American teens are kidnapped and forced into prostitution at truck stops and motels, even in your own neighborhood.

The dawn of 2013 marked the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, in which President Abraham Lincoln declared slaves within certain states "are, and henceforward shall be free." Legal, open sale of human beings may have gone down in history, but the aggressive violence of slavery still exists. Modern-day slavery, known as human trafficking, has produced more slaves in the world today than ever before.

In the face of this unbelievable horror rises a movement of God's people,

bringing justice to the oppressed and revealing to victims — and to a watching world — the love and goodness of God. Students around the country are taking the lead on their campuses and in their communities to be the generation that ends slavery for good.

AWAKENED TO ACTION

Kaity Ruhland began learning about human rights abuses during her studies at Appalachian State University in Boone, N.C. Courses in international and comparative politics opened her eyes to the violent oppression plaguing the poor and vulnerable worldwide.

"I started researching the issues, but just felt paralyzed," Ruhland says. "I was

becoming more aware, but had no idea what I could do about it.”

Over winter break her senior year, Ruhland joined 42,000 college students from 50 states and 30 different countries in Atlanta, Ga., for Passion 2012, an annual gathering of young adults devoted to spiritual awakening on college campuses everywhere. In recent years, Passion events have focused more intentionally on modern-day slavery, partnering and highlighting numerous well-established anti-trafficking agencies.

One such partner is the International Justice Mission (IJM), a human rights agency based in Washington, D.C., that secures justice for victims

notes Ruhland. “We had a diverse group of 100 students come to the first informational meeting in March, and 200 showed up to the speaker event in April.”

STANDING FOR FREEDOM

In the fall of 2012, IJM launched a program called Stand for Freedom at a handful of campus chapters and expanded the events onto campuses across the country.

“The idea is to have at least 270 students take shifts standing for 27 hours to represent the 27 million estimated slaves,” explains Jaclyn Lesch, college student mobilization program manager for IJM. “The length of time captures a lot

“but also about the faith that drives that passion.”

Ruhland’s involvement with her IJM Campus Chapter gave her frequent opportunities to share her faith with many nonbelievers who joined the cause.

“I’ve seen a lot of fruit from this effort, because it develops conversation about the gospel,” says Ruhland. “Justice can’t happen without the power of Jesus.”

“The justice movement is a great opportunity for evangelism,” notes Stumpf. “People with no interest in Christianity are concerned about trafficking and matters of justice. The issue is a portal that gives us opportunities to talk about God’s

“ON THE FRONTLINES OF OPPRESSION, JUSTICE IS THE FIRST STEP TOWARD PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST TO VICTIMS OF SLAVERY.”

of forced labor, sexual exploitation, land grabbing, and other forms of oppression. A pioneer in the movement, IJM has been on the frontlines of the fight against injustice for more than 15 years.

Ruhland was deeply moved by IJM’s client stories. “My heart was so pierced, I’d just sob,” she says. “I felt convicted at Passion 2012 that there had to be more I can do with my life. I was majoring in human rights but knew that so many other students have never entered into this realm of awareness.”

Awakened by what she’d learned, Ruhland took action. Three days after heading home to the D.C. area, she was visiting IJM headquarters, meeting with staff in the education and student mobilization departments. Back at school for her last semester, she launched an IJM Campus Chapter to raise awareness and funds for the mission.

“AppState didn’t have any other human rights groups on campus,”

of attention and affords opportunities to spread awareness, obtain signatures on advocacy cards, and raise money.”

At California Baptist University in Riverside, IJM Campus Chapter advisor Amy Stumpf was on hand for the entire 27 hours of her chapter’s event.

“The 27 hours showed my students that this is something you have to be diligent and persistent about. The hours are nothing compared to years of oppression,” says Stumpf, who is also associate professor of society and religion at Cal Baptist. “At 3 a.m. when they’re loopy and over it, they have to stick it out. Justice seeking is never a convenient pursuit. It has to be an ongoing commitment.”

The extended nature of the Stand for Freedom events compels many students passing by to ask about the group’s mission. “These conversations offer students an opportunity to talk about their passion for justice,” says Stumpf,

desire to release people. That leads to great conversations with people who’d not normally open that door.”

On the frontlines of oppression, justice is the first step toward proclaiming the gospel of Christ to victims of slavery. “It isn’t enough just to tell people about Jesus when they’ve been hurt or abused,” adds Stumpf. “We have to also stop the perpetrators from committing the abuse. You have to execute justice for the gospel to take root.”

THE FUTURE OF JUSTICE

IJM president and CEO Gary Haugen was a key speaker earlier this year at Passion 2013. Before founding IJM, Haugen worked for the U.S. Department of Justice and served as the U.N.’s lead investigator in Rwanda following the country’s 1994 genocide.

In his long career as a justice advocate, Haugen has looked directly into the face of atrocity and into the faces of many survivors.



5 WAYS TO STOP TRAFFICK

Several organizations are leading in the charge against human trafficking. To learn how you can play a greater part, here are five places to start.

1. END IT MOVEMENT (*enditmovement.com*) Spread awareness and learn about agencies leading the fight against trafficking.

2. INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE MISSION (*ijm.org*) Stay informed on justice efforts around the world and resources for your campus.

3. ABOLITION INTERNATIONAL (*abolitioninternational.org*) Get info on sex trafficking in the U.S. and overseas and aftercare programs for victim restoration.

4. NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING RESOURCE CENTER (1-888-3737-888) This 24-hour hotline allows you to report a tip, request training or resources, and connect with local aftercare providers.

5. U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE (*state.gov*) The Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons offers extensive information about human trafficking.

During his presentation at Passion 2013, Haugen looked at the 60,000 faces in the Georgia Dome and saw the future of the justice movement.

“You are the generation that can end slavery,” urged Haugen. “Not because you’re so awesome, but because there is an awesome God of justice who is ready to move in power if you are ready to move in obedience.”

The 60,000 students at Passion 2013 were the first to join a national awareness campaign called the End It Movement, which supports the work of 19 anti-slavery organizations. Many of these students are now building IJM Campus Chapters, hosting awareness events, or partnering with nonprofits in their area to answer the call for justice.

“That’s what I love about this generation — college kids want to get their hands dirty,” says Stacia Freeman, executive director of Abolition International, an anti-trafficking agency that specializes in aftercare programs and victim restoration. “My generation wanted to throw money at the problem and hope it goes away.”

College is also the time to prepare for a lifetime of seeking justice. Every field of study and profession has something to contribute to the cause.

“Many fields may not seem directly connected to fighting trafficking, but are preventive in nature,” notes Freeman. “Any endeavor, whether as a volunteer or a professional, that addresses issues of poverty and vulnerability can ward off injustices before they occur.”

TAKE HEART

Leaders in the justice movement note that every generation has to be persistent and diligent against oppression. The battle can be tedious and long.

“The issue seems depressing, but God is winning. I have that unique knowledge that secular people don’t have,” says Stumpf. “I don’t get discouraged. I’m part of the winning team. God is kind and generous to let us be a part of this team.”

Leaning into the power of God has been the fuel of Ruhland’s efforts as well. “I’ve learned that the more I try to do on my own, the more the fire goes out,” she says. “The joy is seeing God move in and take over and use His strength to accomplish everything.”

May He rise up in power, and may we be standing ready when He does.

HEATHER EBERT is a freelance writer based in Nashville, Tenn., whose heart was captured by the call to justice when she first heard Gary Haugen of IJM speak on the issue in 2001. Heather uses her writing to serve locally based nonprofits advancing the cause of freedom in the U.S. and around the world. You can catch her blogging about the creative life at gettingcreative.me.



BLACKBOX INTERNATIONAL — Blackbox International is a faith-based organization that exists to holistically rehabilitate sex-trafficked boys ages 16 and under. Blackbox seeks to help these boys find healing from their past, joy in their present, and purpose for their future. Learn more at blackboxinternational.org.