



Dreams Die Hard

Study Guide

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BACKGROUND: SLAVERY IN THE U.S. TODAY

It seems unbelievable. It conflicts with our deepest sense of what is possible in our country and our communities. Legal slavery was abolished in the United States in 1865, yet now, once again, thousands of men, women and children across the U.S. are held against their wills through brutal violence and threats. They are forced to work and are paid nothing. This time, comprehensive laws are already in place, but protection is simply not reaching many of those who need assistance. The U.S. government estimates that between 15,000 and 18,000 people are trafficked into the country each year. Once inside the U.S., their slavery takes place out of sight, often in isolated farms, in red-light areas, inside suburban homes and in concealed factories.

In *Dreams Die Hard*, Maria, "Miguel," and Rose explain how they were trafficked into slavery in America, what it took to get their freedom, and their hopes for the future. The film gives ideas about how law enforcement officers, social service workers, and above all, citizens can reach out to trafficking victims to remove them from slavery, give them access to justice, and restore their dignity and rights.

HOW DO PEOPLE END UP IN SLAVERY?

Although some of those in slavery are U.S. citizens, most have been trafficked into the country from Asia, South and Central America, Russia, Eastern Europe, and parts of Africa. They have often left regions that have collapsed economies, and where there is a lack of opportunities for earning a living and education. They often come to the U.S. because someone approaches them and offers a better life; a chance at a steady job so they can send money home.

Maria came as a legal resident with her family, and at 15, she wanted to contribute to the household income; "Miguel" came to do agricultural work, to pay for treatment for his six year old son who had cancer; and Rose was promised an American education in return for babysitting. But once separated from their families and in a foreign country, the violence and coercion began.

Some traffickers simply keep their victims under lock and key, but more often they use a combination of techniques, including:

- Debt bondage: "Miguel" faced beatings and death threats if he tried to leave the farm without paying back his "transportation costs." On payday, the slaveholders subtracted inflated charges for rent and transportation, leaving him just enough to buy food.

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- Physical abuse: Maria was terrorized: raped, beaten and abused. “Miguel” saw other farm workers with appalling injuries because they had attempted to escape. Starvation, confinement, and other forms of violence are used—especially in the early stages of victimization—to traumatize the individual and make them easier to control.
- Psychological manipulation and threats to family: The man who held Maria captive said he was a 'brujo' or witch, who could read her mind and would kill her family if she tried to leave the house. Other women in sexual slavery are controlled through forced drug use and threats of being shamed in home communities.

Other techniques include isolation from the public, confiscation of passports and visas, and telling victims they will be put in prison if they contact the authorities.

WHAT KINDS OF WORK ARE SLAVES DOING IN THE U.S.?

Slaves are forced to work as domestic servants, as migrant agricultural laborers, as prostitutes and in sex shows and pornography, as sweatshop workers, and in service industries such as food services and landscaping. Working whatever hours are demanded, many of these slaves are living in conditions unimaginable in the U.S. today. “Miguel” was confined in a building that was hidden in plain sight between a holiday resort and a Florida highway and describes sleeping in cramped living quarters, six men to a room.

Slavery in prostitution and sex services: Forced prostitution and commercial sexual exploitation of children are part of the “sex markets” in the U.S., that are often controlled by organized crime networks. Sex traffickers usually recruit victims of their own nationality or ethnic background. Migrant smuggling enterprises run by Asian, Mexican, and Eastern European organized crime networks feed victims into both sex slavery and other kinds of forced labor. The man who held Maria was found to have a history of buying young girls from Mexico and trading them in when they turned 20.

Domestic slavery: Every year, U.S. citizens and foreign nationals bring thousands of domestic workers into the country, and some of them suffer abuse. Domestic workers have few legal protections, and because their work goes on in private homes, their conditions are rarely monitored. This makes it easy for domestic workers to be turned into slaves.

Agricultural slavery: Farm workers, especially migrant workers, are particularly vulnerable to forced labor. Legal protections for all agricultural workers are weak, and there is little monitoring of work conditions. Remote locations and insulation of immigrant work crews from the wider community add to their precarious circumstance to create conditions in which slavery can thrive.

WHAT HAPPENS TO SLAVES?

The experience of being trafficked can end in many ways:

- Trafficking victims are known to have died: for example, when a fire sweeps the house where they are locked in, in accidents on building sites, of disease in rural work camps, and by being murdered by their exploiters.
- Others are discarded when, through injury or illness, they become useless to their exploiter. For women forced into prostitution this may happen at the onset of HIV infection.
- Some trafficking victims escape. When they run away their situation is very unstable, like Rose who found herself alone in a parking lot with no jacket and no money. They are at the mercy of whomever they encounter. Fortunately in Rose’s case she knew of just one person who could help her and she managed to get in touch with him.

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- When they turn to officials, trafficking victims may get harsh treatment if the police officer or immigration staff regards the escaped victim as an illegal immigrant. Although some law enforcement officials have immediately rescued and protected people in slavery, there have been tragic situations where police simply failed to recognize slavery. Proper training is crucial.
- Many of those who escape slavery in the U.S. do so because a stranger takes an interest and notices that something is wrong. The concerned person may call the police or a trafficking hotline or contact a local social service agency.
- Social service organizations like those featured in this film are vital in the rescue of victims and in their struggle for justice. These included: Casa of Maryland, the Coalition for Immokalee Workers in Florida, and the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking in California.

WHAT HELP ARE TRAFFICKING SURVIVORS ENTITLED TO?

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act 2000 enables survivors to apply for a special "T-visa," to be able to stay in the U.S. while they rebuild their lives and seek justice. First, trafficking victims need to be certified by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to say that they have been trafficked and are willing to assist with prosecuting their traffickers. Then they can claim important federally funded services: housing assistance, food, income, employment assistance, English language training, health care, and counseling. (See DHHS website on assistance available: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/about/victim_assist.html)

MORE ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS WHO ASSISTED THE TRAFFICKING SURVIVORS IN THIS FILM:

Crisis House: The film mentions the coalition of over 40 agencies working in the San Diego area against cross-border trafficking. Crisis House, who partnered in the making of this film, is an active member of that coalition. Crisis House is a non-profit social service organization, which helps disenfranchised individuals and families overcome barriers to self-sufficiency. Their Project Safe Haven program is designed to specifically address the needs of people who have been trafficked. Website: www.crisishouse.org

Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST): Since 1998, CAST has assisted more than 200 victims of trafficking. As well as sheltering and assisting trafficking victims, CAST partners with law enforcement and government agencies to prosecute traffickers. CAST provides training and outreach to other groups working against trafficking, as well as affected communities and the general public. In 2005, they are conducting a nationwide training program in 23 cities targeting non-profits, law enforcement, and government agencies. Website: www.castla.org

Coalition for Immokalee Workers (CIW): Begun in 1993, CIW is a community-based organization whose members are largely Latino, Haitian, and Mayan Indian immigrants working in low-wage jobs throughout Florida. CIW organizes for fair wages, stronger legal action against those violating workers' rights, and the right for workers to organize. CIW's worker-led legal investigations have brought hundreds of people out of slavery. CIW trains law enforcement and social service workers in assisting people in slavery. Its boycott of the fast food company Taco Bell led to better wages and conditions for workers supplying the company. Website: www.ciw-online.org

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Casa of Maryland: Founded in 1985, CASA of Maryland serves immigrants from Latin America, Africa, and Asia, as well as U.S. citizens. CASA's legal services program represents day-laborers, domestic employees and other vulnerable workers whose rights are violated, including those rescued from slavery. CASA supports immigrant workers in crisis by assisting women to escape from abusive situations, providing temporary shelter in private homes, and enabling them to access social services to which they are entitled. Website: www.casademaryland.org

WHAT CAN BE LEARNED FROM THE STORIES OF THESE SURVIVORS?

Here are some ideas:

- In order to close down trafficking operations throughout the U.S., everyone needs to be well informed about trafficking. Law enforcement officers need to know what to do when they confront slavery. At the same time slavery is so concealed that it requires all of us to be alert and ready to respond.
- Trafficking victims need all kinds of help to heal, rebuild their lives, and secure justice. To help meet these needs, in many communities, concerned individuals and organizations are coming together to form anti-trafficking task forces including law enforcement, immigration attorneys, shelters, translators, counselors, and faith communities. These task forces carefully plan their response to cases of slavery, as well as undertaking targeted outreach and publicity.
- The lack of basic legal protections for domestic workers, migrant agricultural workers, and other vulnerable workers opens the door to abuses like slavery. They need better laws and more active enforcement of these laws. Also, support groups of such workers can be a starting point for learning about their rights, taking action against exploitation, and reaching out to those in slavery.
- Anti-trafficking organizations around the U.S. need more resources so they can rescue more people and give greater assistance to trafficking survivors.

USING THE FILM WITH A GROUP

The following are some ideas on using the documentary with a group to generate discussion:

- The documentary lasts approx. 36 minutes. Allow at least 30 minutes to discuss the documentary.
- Encourage people to make notes as they watch about particular ideas that strike them for discussion later.
- After the film, ask people what they learned. For example, why do people end up in slavery? What can be done to help? Who might be vulnerable in your region?
- Do members of your group want to respond in some practical way? What ideas do they have for making responses to slavery? Here are some ideas:
 - o show the film and raise awareness about modern slavery with other groups;
 - o circulate the Community Member's Guide among social service agencies, faith groups, and immigrant communities where you live;
 - o find out whether there is an anti-trafficking task force in your region, and whether effective training is taking place to prepare all the relevant organizations to work together to assist trafficking victims. If not, approach such organizations to discuss the need for such a task force and training.

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- o provide funds and other resources for anti-trafficking organizations like those featured in the film and for Free the Slaves;
- o continue to learn together about other forms of slavery around the world and in the U.S. (see resources below).
- Free the Slaves provides a range of resources and ideas for further involvement by groups and individuals in the anti-slavery movement (all available through our website: www.freetheslaves.net). These include:
 - o Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy. Kevin Bales, President of Free the Slaves, describes modern slavery as a global phenomenon and investigates how it exists in five countries. This award-winning book lifts the lid on slavery's role in our lives.
 - o Community Member's Guide. This booklet explains slavery and trafficking in the US and around the world. There are stories of survivors and of their rescuers, an overview of actions the government is taking, and a list of practical steps you can take to identify and assist trafficking victims in your region. Purchase copies or download from our website for free.
 - o Hidden Slaves: Forced Labor in the United States. This report, done in collaboration with the Human Rights Center, University of California, Berkeley examines the numbers and origins of victims and perpetrators of forced labor, as well as the industries and locations where forced labor has been found in the U.S. It also explores the adequacy of the U.S. response and makes recommendations.
 - o Dreams Die Hard: 36-minute DVD. This documentary profiles several individuals who were trapped in different forms of slavery in locations across the U.S. Individual stories show how they were enslaved, how they gained their freedom and their hopes today. The stories also show how organizations and individuals stepped in to assist them to freedom.
 - o Modern Slavery: 10-minute video. This short video features stories from Slavery: A Global Investigation (see below), and is a tool for raising awareness about modern slavery.
 - o The Silent Revolution: Sankalp and the quarry slaves: 18-minute DVD. This inspirational film follows a group of stone-breakers held in slavery who finally win the right to run their own quarry. Explores how people in slavery can create their own path to freedom with support from grassroots organizations.
 - o Slavery: A Global Investigation. 80-minute video. This documentary exposes cases of slavery in the rug-making sector of India, the cocoa plantations in the Ivory Coast, and the homes of diplomats in Washington, D.C. The documentary shows how slavery fits into the global economy.
 - o Education pack: For use at schools and universities: Contains lesson plans organized around the topics of modern slavery, slavery and human rights, slavery throughout history, and debt bondage. Downloadable from our website.

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Campaign to Rescue and Restore Victims of Trafficking: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/>
- Department of Health and Human Services Trafficking hotline for reporting possible trafficking cases, and referring victims for support by local non-profits and social service organizations: 888-373-7888
- Bilateral Safety Corridor Coalition: www.bsccoalition.org
- Freedom Network: www.freedomnetworkusa.org
- Protection Project: www.protectionproject.org

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Free the Slaves is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to ending slavery worldwide. We have 501(c)3 registration as Anti-Slavery International, Inc.

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