

Freedom & Social Justice

Freedom and social justice are attained when men and women are able to choose fulfilling work and receive fair wages. Employment without fear of slavery or human trafficking creates equality in both the work place and in all walks of life. Tragically this is not the reality for millions of women and children caught in the modern-day phenomenon of human trafficking.

THE TRAGIC TRADE IN HUMAN LIVES: SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Basic Statistics on Human Slavery and Human Trafficking

You may think that slavery is a thing of the past, but unfortunately it is alive and well today, and present in nearly every country in the world in some form or another. Though estimates are difficult to come by due to the clandestine nature of the crimes of slavery and human trafficking, the following are some basic statistics on the enormity of the problem around the world:ⁱ

- **Number of people trafficked:** 500,000 to 4 million worldwide.
- **Gender ratio:** 80% of trafficked humans are women and girls.
- **Age ratio:** 50% of trafficked humans are minors.
- **Value of human trafficking:** \$32 billion annually.
- **Average cost to buy a human slave:** \$90 USD.ⁱⁱ On the Ivory Coast, girls can be bought as slaves for as little as \$7.ⁱⁱⁱ
- **Most active human trafficking regions:** South Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe.^{iv}
- **Number of people trafficked into America:** 50,000 women and children every year.^v

It's true. The practice of buying and selling humans in America did not end with the abolition of the slave trade. Even today, there are human beings who are forcibly turned into slaves and traded on the black market for money.

DEFINING SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

But what is slavery, really? Unlike previous generations when humans were bought and sold openly and with the public's knowledge and approval, today's slave industry is hidden, and therefore obscured from the view of the average consumer. Nevertheless, slavery is extremely prevalent and damaging, and exists in two main forms:

- **Unfree labor:** Sometimes referred to as forced labor, unfree labor is a term used to describe situations where people are employed against their will under some kind of threat: threat of violence, threat of extreme hardship for themselves or family members, threat of detention or destitution, or threat of lawful compulsion. This is a broad term which includes all forms of slavery as well as debt bondage and labor camps.

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- **Debt bondage:** Also known as bonded labor, serfdom, or peonage, debt bondage is the practice of pledging labor as payment or collateral on a debt. A child's labor is often offered in exchange for a loan or payment of a debt. In some cases, if a parent was in debt bondage, a child may be forced to take the place of the parent once the parent is no longer able to carry on their responsibilities.^{vi}

In modern society, slaves are those who are forced to work without pay. Sound familiar? It is, but it's just less visible than it once was. That makes it even more difficult to overcome.

The Trade System of Human Trafficking and Slavery

If slavery is the act of forcing a human to work without pay, human trafficking is the trade system that moves human beings within a despicable, inhumane economic system. Slaves are trafficked like other commodities in a system known as human trafficking. This is a distinct problem within the issue of slavery. Trafficked humans are owned, sold, traded, and treated as property in an international market.

Individuals are recruited and then transported, transferred, and harbored for the purpose of exploiting them in forced or bonded labor, as sex slaves, as forced soldiers, and much more. The term human trafficking refers to the actual act of trading of human lives, even though not all trafficked humans work in slave-like conditions. In some cases, trafficked humans are paid for their work in the end.

It's also important to keep in mind that human trafficking is different than human smuggling. The smuggling of humans across borders involves the consent of the individual, and is motivated by a desire to migrate into a country where there are greater opportunities to prosper. As such, the person being smuggled usually pays the smuggler, making smuggling a crime against a state.

Human trafficking, on the other hand, involves the transport of humans without their consent and without payment between the smuggler and the victim. In this case, the crime is against the individual, making human trafficking a human rights issue, not a migration issue. And it's a problem in virtually every country. A least 161 countries report being affected by human trafficking as either a source, a transit region, or a destination.^{vii}

So how does a person end up as a commodity in an economic system? Contrary to what some people may try to suggest, the vast majority of people who are trafficked as slaves end up in the system against their will. Humans find themselves the victims of human trafficking for many reasons, including abduction, political instability, persecution, extreme poverty, limited employment options, violence and conflict. To give you an idea of how such a tragedy can occur, take a look at the most common tactics used by traffickers to trick and coerce other humans into ending up in the slavery market:

- **False promises:** Many traffickers will use promises and lies. For instance, they may falsely promise an individual political freedom, immigration into a desirable country, and wealth in order to initiate them into the human trafficking system. For instance, girls in Asia and Eastern Europe are often told they can obtain jobs as domestic workers or education exchange positions in other countries. Once they arrive in the foreign country, their

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passports are stolen and they are forcibly held captive. They find that they have been traded as sweatshop workers, unpaid domestic laborers, sex slaves, strippers, or pornography actors.

- **Encouraged addiction:** In many cases, traffickers will start by involving the potential victims in the use of addictive acts such as using drugs or alcohol, or gambling. Once the individual is hooked and/or in sufficient debt, the traffickers strike a deal with the individual whereby they sell themselves into slavery in order to earn money to support their addiction or in order to pay off their addiction-related debt.
- **Family debts:** In many cases, a family facing debt will sell a member of the family into servitude to business owners or moneylenders as payment for what they owe. The person given in payment of the debt must work for free – often for their entire lives – in order to pay off what the family owes. Often they are trafficked into another country where they are sold as workers.
- **Illegal immigration:** Families fleeing as political, religious, and economic refugees often find themselves illegally in foreign countries without a way to earn money and little capital with which to start a business. Fearful of being deported back to the country from which they fled, these people will take any jobs offered to them, even if that means becoming a slave.

It should be very clear by now that in many cases poverty is the reason people find themselves forced into slavery. Not only is poverty the biggest single contributing factor in the issue of child labor, families impacted by the cycle of poverty are more likely to become entwined in slavery as a hoped-for means of freeing themselves from economic strife.

Being trafficked only further damages an individual's ability to get out of poverty. Through verbal and physical abuse – 95% of all victims of human trafficking have experienced physical or sexual violence. Trafficked humans are subjected to insult after insult which slowly erodes their confidence and self-respect.^{viii} This creates very high levels of depression and suicide among this population, with many exhibiting signs of post-traumatic distress disorder (PTSD).

Sex Trafficking and Human Slavery

Sex trafficking or women trafficking is a special kind of human slavery that impacts a huge population of vulnerable people around the world. It's the trade of women, girls, and boys for the purpose of enslaving them in the sex industry as strippers, pornography actors, prostitutes, and brothel workers. The following numbers provide a window into just how large this problem is:

- **Average age of entry into commercial sex industry:** Between 11 and 13 years of age.^{ix}
- **Gender gap in sex trafficking:** 98% of all victims of sex trafficking are girls or women.^x
- **Size of the sex industry worldwide:** \$9.5 billion annually, making it the second largest criminal industry in the world.^{xi} Nearly half of all profits are generated in industrialized economies.^{xii}

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- **Number of slaves sold into sex industry in America:** 17,000 women and girls every year, most of whom are imported from Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe.^{xiii}
- **Number of sex trafficking victims transported to the US:** 750,000 over the past decade.^{xiv}
- **American cities most active in sex trafficking:** New York, California, and Florida.^{xv}
- **Causes of death for sex slaves and prostitutes:** In order of most common to least common: homicide, suicide, drugs and alcohol, HIV infection, accidents. The homicide rate among this group is 17 times higher than average.^{xvi}
- **Who the traffickers are:** Normally the traffickers are family members and friends of the victims who use their close connection to manipulate them. Traffickers are also members of sophisticated crime networks in every country in the world.

It's important at this point to contrast prostitution and sex slavery. Where as a prostitute will receive a paycheck or profit for their services, sex slaves are held captive by the traffickers and controlled without pay or remuneration. Though the humans involved in both forms of sex trade are often victims of the system, sex slaves often find it even harder to free themselves due to the lack of funds.

Child Labor and Human Slavery

Another special form of human slavery is child labor. While doing chores around the house is often seen as a beneficial activity for children – a means of teaching responsibility and productivity – when children are forced to work long hours for an employer instead of going to school or playing with their friends, it is considered child slavery. Here are some basic statistics on child labor around the world.^{xvii xviii xix}

- **Child labor worldwide:** Close to 200 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 are forced to work – this is close to one-fifth of the world's young children. Some estimates say that 70% of child workers are forced to do unpaid work for family members.
- **Regions with greatest child exploitation:** Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, North Africa, and the Middle East.
- **Children sold into bonded labor:** In India, it is estimated that 15 million children have been sold into bonded labor in exchange for small loans from moneylenders.
- **Hazardous working conditions:** 53 million children under the age of 15 are forced to work in hazardous conditions. The most hazardous working conditions (other than sex trafficking) occur in mining, construction, and transport.
- **Children in war:** 300,000 girls and boys are acting as child soldiers in adult wars, with more added to the ranks every year.^{xx} The UN estimates that there are child soldiers

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serving in wars in 17 countries, including Burma, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Congo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Afghanistan.^{xxi}

- **Fear of slavery:** The fear of child labor also contributes to the reduction in education outcomes for children. In Albania, 90% of girls report that they refuse to go to school for fear of being abducted and sold into sexual servitude.

By and large, children who work cannot also go to school. Yet we know that education is necessary for children looking to overcome poverty. When children are forced to work instead of learn, their future prospects are severely limited (assuming they are able to free themselves from the slave system). As a result, child slavery is one of the biggest factors to prevent a community from getting out of poverty.

Unfortunately, these uneducated children impact entire societies. According to research done by the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour, it is economically beneficial for a country to end child labor and educate children instead. Their numbers indicate that the world's total income would increase 22% over 20 years – by \$4.3 trillion – if child labor were eliminated worldwide.^{xxii}

HOW FAST FASHION AND OUR CURRENT CONSUMPTION SYSTEM REINFORCES SLAVERY

Industry and consumers have the power to either reinforce the trade in human lives or work to free them. Unfortunately, our current consumption system is flooded with cheap goods. In most cases, the only way to drive down prices on consumer goods is to pay the people creating those goods as little as possible. In some cases, it means paying them nothing at all. Indeed, many consumer products are made directly by humans forced into slavery.

A couple of examples will help to illustrate how widespread the problem of slavery really is:^{xxiii}

- **Fast food chains:** Many fast food chains want to meet consumer demand for cheap meals. As such, they demand lower costs for growing things like tomatoes, which can drive farmers to enslave other humans to work their fields.
- **Cocoa and chocolate:** The US has laws to prohibit the import of products produced using forced labor or indentured labor. But a loophole to this law was introduced in 1997 that allowed an exemption: goods that are produced by slaves could be imported if such goods were not produced “in such quantities in the United States as to meet the consumptive demands of the United States.” This allowed cocoa and chocolate – two high demand foods produced by child slave laborers in Cote d’Ivoire and Ghana – to be imported into the US.

These are just a few examples of products that rely on human slaves. The more we as consumers demand cheap goods, the more industry will look for ways to drive down prices – and that often means resorting to using slaves. Here’s a quick list of other products that may be created using forced or child labor:^{xxiv}

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- Bricks
- Carpets
- Castor beans
- Citrus fruits
- Coffee
- Copper
- Corn
- Eggplants
- Electronics
- Embroidered textiles
- Fireworks
- Flowers
- Footwear
- Garments
- Granite
- Meat and fish
- Pornography
- Rice
- Stones
- Sugarcane
- Tea

It's surprising just how prevalent slavery is within our economic system, isn't it?

Conflict and Human Slavery

Some materials used in the production of goods are considered so valuable and profitable that they are often seized by militant and government groups in order to garner huge incomes to fund conflicts and war. Known by several names – blood diamonds, conflict diamonds, and conflict minerals to name a few – these raw resources are usually significant hotbeds of human slavery. The

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same drive that incites these groups to steal mines and businesses for profit drives them to abduct humans and force them into slavery – greed.

Take conflict minerals, for instance. Known as the 3Ts (tin, tungsten, and tantalum, though gold is also considered a conflict mineral), conflict minerals are essential elements for electronic products, such as cell phones, computers, tablets, iPhones, and GPS devices. But they are in increasingly short supply around the world, and there are fears that we will run out of the 3Ts before substitutes can be found. Conflict minerals are also used to make things like cars and light bulbs. As such, the 3T minerals are incredibly lucrative on the international market.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in Central Africa happens to be a country rich in conflict minerals, but they're also a country racked by internal conflict. As of this writing, several groups including the army, armed rebel groups, and several militias continue to war. In order to continue to fund their efforts, virtually all sides of the conflict attempt to control the flow of raw resources like conflict minerals. This results in several types of slavery:

- **Child soldiers:** Children are forced to become slave soldiers to defend whichever side “owns” them. They are given guns and trained in cruel and inhumane tactics common in guerilla warfare.
- **Forced labor:** Adults and children alike are forced to work in the mines under conditions ranging from debt bondage to outright slavery. These mines are incredibly dangerous and can cause numerous health problems for children and adults both.
- **Sex slavery:** Women are abducted and turned into sex slaves for the armed soldiers. Additionally, women who have been raped flee their villages to find slave work in the mines, where they face even more sexual exploitation. Estimates suggest that 1,152 women are raped every day in the DRC, which equals 48 women every hour.^{xxv}
- **Transport slavery:** People are abducted and forced to carry bags of minerals from the mines to the buyer without pay or choice, and this is also dangerous and difficult work.

At every level of the supply chain, these slaves are subjected to horrendous conditions and health hazards. In fact, one estimate suggests that 98% of all Congolese mines are controlled in one form or another by a military group.^{xxvi} Those working the mines for instance, face the following risks:^{xxvii}

- Lack of safety equipment leading to asphyxiation from the dust and noxious gases
- Frequent landslides and cave-ins
- Malnutrition due to lack of healthy food
- Physical abuse and mistreatment, leading often to deformed muscles and bones
- Living quarters with poor sanitation and lack of clean drinking water
- Diseases including silicosis, eye injuries, conjunctivitis, tuberculosis, asthma, skin lesions, and diarrhea

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The conflict minerals are usually exported to regions such as Asia and Europe where they are smelted, refined, and processed in preparation for their use in various consumer products. The complex system of brokers, wholesalers, and retailers makes it nearly impossible to know whether these minerals have been obtained from conflict regions such as the DRC. The trade of conflict minerals the blood diamonds is not confined to the DRC; other regions experiencing internal conflict and the resulting slavery include Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.^{xxviii}

Sweatshops and Wage Slavery: Another Kind of Slavery

Perhaps the biggest impact industry has on the slavery of humans is the poor incomes given to those working in nearly every industry – from cotton farming to mineral mining to clothing factories. In particular, slave-like conditions are often perpetuated in sweatshops where humans work for very low wages under harsh conditions.

Though sweatshops don't depend on slavery in the strictest of sense, they do impose what many refer to as wage slavery. As a quasi-voluntary form of slavery, wage slavery occurs when an individual works under conditions where the employer has an unequal bargaining power, resulting in an atmosphere where workers are not permitted to or capable of self-managing their working conditions. As a result, though a person working in a sweatshop is not by traditional standards, "owned" by their employer, they are virtually powerless to improve their employment situation, and as a result must do unfulfilling work,^{xxix} which makes this a type of slavery.

You can see this kind of wage slavery in sweatshops in developing countries as well as in developed countries like America.

- **Sweatshops in America:** The US Department of Labor estimates that 50% or more of all garment factories in the nation, of which there are at least 22,000, are run like sweatshops.^{xxx} In fact, 75% of these factories violate minimum wage requirements and overtime laws and provide no benefits.
- **Sweatshops abroad:** The average sweatshop worker is paid less than \$1 per day, which is rarely enough for basics such as food, shelter, health care, and education.^{xxxi} Laborers often arrive at sweatshops to pay off family debt or because of extreme poverty in their home communities. Many are not able to make enough to extricate themselves from the sweatshop employment, and rarely do they have enough money to send back to their families as hoped.
- **Undocumented workers:** Individuals from poor countries in Latin America, Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa, come to America to find decent work and to support their families, many of whom arrive without proper documentation. These people work on farms, in factories, and in domestic positions for long hours, receive very little pay, are given no benefits, and are subject to physical and sexual abuse. Because of fear of being deported, most will endure slave-like conditions in order to remain in America, despite the deplorable working conditions.

Of course, sweatshops are even more prevalent around the world, especially in developing countries where wages are low and labor laws are very relaxed or non-existent. This kind of wage slavery is serious and should also be on the radar of any mindful consumer.

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ACHIEVING FREEDOM AND JUSTICE THROUGH ETHICAL BUSINESS PRACTICES

Consumer shopping habits and the cheap products economy have a big impact on the existence of slavery, and knowingly or not, consumers and companies alike are complicit in the spread of the human trafficking and slavery. Just as consumers and industry contribute to the proliferation of slavery around the world, so too can they impact change by working to liberate human slaves and fighting against systems that allow slavery to exist.

At Hearts, one of our core principles is a firm belief that consumers can use their purchasing power to change the system. On the issue of human trafficking, this couldn't be truer. Hearts is creating an ethical business based on standards and principles that encourage freedom and justice for all humans within the supply chain by prohibiting all forms of slavery, including unfair labor, debt bondage, sex slavery, child labor, and the trafficking of humans. Freedom and justice arises through fair trade, cooperatives, and other people-centered economic models that put the welfare of humans above the need for profit.

Some of the most basic principles that should be adopted by ethical companies for fighting slavery include the following:

- **Fair wages to alleviate poverty:** By reimbursing employees with a living wage, companies can help to alleviate the poverty that may otherwise compel them into a life of slavery. A living wage should be enough to provide, at the very least, the essentials, including quality food, shelter, health care, safety, and education.
- **Active rescue and rehabilitation:** Many corporations today are actively involved in the rescue and return of trafficked humans to their families. Liberation activities are often supported through company profits and community development projects in affected regions.
- **Government policy support:** Ethical businesses are those that support government legislations that prevent the trafficking of humans. This could include legislation that limits the trade of particular materials such as conflict minerals or blood diamonds, or regulations that impose minimum employment standards throughout the value chain, regardless of which country in which the work takes place.
- **Product innovation:** Another way industry can lead in the fight against slavery is to create products that are free of raw resources sourced from conflict regions such as the DRC. Congolese leaders, for instance, are calling on the mobile phone industry to produce cell phones and other electronics that are free of conflict minerals.^{xxxii} Innovative solutions are currently being developed by big corporations in order to stop the flow of conflict minerals into the pockets of consumers. Seek out alternative methods and more and more companies are rising to the demand.
- **Empowering women:** Since girls and women are by and large the victims of the sex trade, it is important to provide healthy, safe employment opportunities to this group of people in order to keep them out of the sex trade. Companies that offer meaningful, ethical

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employment to women help prevent these women from feeling the need to sell themselves into the slave trade in order to survive.

Two common mechanisms used by ethical companies are fair trade standards and cooperative systems, both of which generally prohibit slavery, child labor, and require living wages and safe working conditions. By adhering to these voluntary standards and through regular supply chain audits to ensure standards are being upheld, ethical businesses can ensure the sourcing of their materials and assembly of their products do not contribute to slavery and human trafficking.

Many sustainable fashion companies make it a priority to work with small-scale artisan families or companies where eco-friendly techniques are practiced and profits stay within the community. By supporting and empowering hard-working people where they live, ensuring the even distribution of wealth, and building into the community through the development of schools, clinics, and community centers, these eco fashion companies are making it possible for groups to prosper free of the threat of slavery.

ETHICAL CONSUMERISM THAT HELPS TO FIGHT SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

1. **Boycott unethical businesses:** A boycott of fast food chains in 2005 helped drive companies to improve wages and working conditions for the farmers growing their products. This kind of civic action can put real pressure on industry to shape up and stop supporting practices that rely on human slaves.
2. **Tell your politicians you want anti slavery legislation:** Even today, cocoa that is cultivated by child laborers can be imported into the US, though the laws have been tightened since the 1997 exemption was introduced. Many other products like cocoa are produced using human slaves. Learn what those products are and tell your politicians this is not acceptable! You can find a list of products produced by slaves through the US Department of Labor's [List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor](#).
3. **Choose certified slave free products:** You can find a list of facilities that are certified to uphold international labor rights agreements through the [Social Accountability Standard \(SA8000\)](#). Fair trade certified products are also free of slave labor and are a good bet if you want to avoid human trafficking in your ethical shopping.
4. **Avoid diamonds and other mined minerals:** Many high value minerals, including blood diamonds and the 3Ts (minerals used to make cell phones and other electronics) rely on slave labor. Try to avoid these products whenever possible or look for options that are certified to be free of forced labor.
5. **Support sex slave-free hotels:** Hotels are often locations where human sex slaves are taken and forced into prostitution and other sex acts. As such, it is important to support hotel chains that prohibit the use of their facilities by sex traffickers. Next time you go on a vacation, be sure to support a hotel that has signed The Code, which is a code of conduct signed by socially responsible tourism businesses. These Code Members agree to help stop the problem of commercial sexual exploitation of children by refusing to allow their

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facilities to be used for such acts. Here is a list of [Code Members](#) to help you determine the most ethical hotel chains at your destination.

6. **Volunteer with an ethical trading organization:** There are many worthy organizations working to fight the practice of human trafficking, like the [Ethical Trading Initiative](#). There are plenty of opportunities for you to get involved in organizations like these to have a hands on impact in this important issue.

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ⁱⁱ Connolly, M. (2012, April 4). *SHOCKING - Share these human trafficking statistics with your friends*. Retrieved April 28, 2012, from Catholic Online: <http://www.catholic.org/hf/faith/story.php?id=45587>

ⁱⁱⁱ *Human Trafficking and Slavery*. (2004, March 26). Retrieved April 28, 2012, from Congressional Quarterly - Researcher: <http://www.hrusa.org/workshops/trafficking/CQResearcher.pdf>

^{iv} (*Human Trafficking and Slavery*, 2004)

^v Ronchetti, E. (2011). *Women Trafficking in 2011: The New Face of Sex Slavery*. Retrieved April 20, 2012, from Soroptimist: <http://www.soroptimist.org/articles/women-trafficking-in-2011-the-new-face-of-sex-slavery.html>

^{vi} Genicot, G. (n.d.). *Child Bonded Labor*. Retrieved April 30, 2012, from Georgetown University: <http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/gg58/CBL.pdf>

^{vii} UN.GIFT - Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking. (n.d.). *Human Trafficking: The Facts*. Retrieved April 30, 2012, from UN Global Compact: http://www.unglobalcompact.org/docs/issues_doc/labour/Forced_labour/HUMAN_TRAFFICKING_-_THE_FACTS_-_final.pdf

^{viii} (UN.GIFT - Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking)

^{ix} *Sexual Exploitation of Girls Position Statement: Girl Matters - A Voice for Hidden Victims*. (n.d.). Retrieved April 30, 2012, from NCCD Center for Girls and Young Women: http://www.nccd-crc.org/nccd/pdf/Sex_exploitation_girls.pdf

^x (UN.GIFT - Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking)

^{xi} (Ronchetti, 2011)

^{xii} (UN.GIFT - Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking)

^{xiii} *Sex slaves, human trafficking in America?* (2007, March 3). Retrieved April 28, 2012, from MSNBC TODAY News: http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/22083762/ns/today-today_news/t/sex-slaves-human-trafficking-america/#.T5xE2dXfVBk

^{xiv} (*Human Trafficking and Slavery*, 2004)

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