



# FAITH ALLIANCE TO END HUMAN TRAFFICKING

## A New Dialogue on Human Trafficking: Exploring the Spectrum of Exploitation

*A symposium to broaden and deepen conversations about human trafficking*

May 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at Sam Sorbara Auditorium, University of St. Michael's College, 81 St. Mary St., Toronto

### Speakers

**Sue Wilson, CSJ**

**Human Rights and Human Trafficking**

How is a focus on human rights challenging anti-human trafficking work?

**Imelda Poole, IBVM**

**What is My Narrative?**

An anti-human trafficking approach taken from the perspective of story-telling

### Panellists:

**Jennifer Richardson**, Provincial Anti-Human Trafficking Coordination Office

**Laurie Hermiston**, Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto

**Deepa Mattoo**, Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic

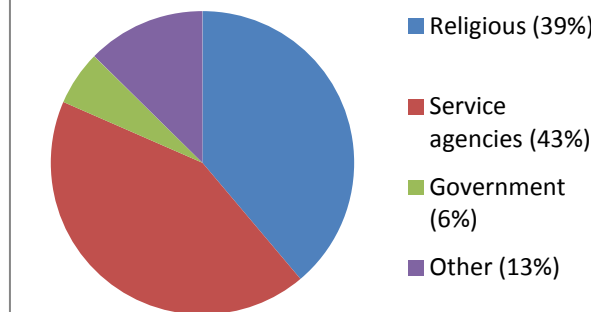
**Shelley Gilbert**, Legal Aid Ontario

**Varka Kalaydzhieva**, FCJ Refugee Centre

**Tanya Aberman**, FCJ Refugee Centre

**Fay Faraday**, Labour and Human Rights Lawyer and Coordinator of the Migrant Women's Rights Project

### Attendees (103)



## Faith Alliance:

Faith Alliance is a collaboration of religious and other partners working to end human trafficking by raising awareness and inspiring action.



Faith Alliance co-chairs Ann McGowan (Mary Ward Centre) and Sr. Thérèse Meunier (Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto) welcome participants to the symposium

## Symposium Purpose:

The prevalent human trafficking discourse is currently shaped by a few stories and groups: it overlooks many forms and facets of trafficking, such as labour trafficking and exploitation, and it fails to address the root causes of the problem. In addition, the current narrative does not capture the complex experiences and needs of those who are exploited but do not fit the very limiting legal definition of human trafficking. This lopsided narrative has a negative impact on many people and groups who are already marginalized.

The goal of this symposium was to give voice to some of those groups and their concerns: to look at the whole spectrum of exploitation that exists. Organizers hoped to engage in a respectful dialogue that will inform actions and guide our policy makers to take action to address in a meaningful way all experiences and situations where human beings are exploited and abused.

Although not exhaustive, the day helped to shift people's approach to this work.

# The Current Anti-Trafficking Approach: Problems and Challenges

## *Law and Order Approach:*

The current legal and governmental approach to countering trafficking focuses on rescuing victims and putting criminals behind bars. This approach has had little success in lessening incidences of trafficking. It ignores root causes and doesn't reduce trafficking. In some instances, laws that are supposed to prevent trafficking have actually increased it.

## *Historic racism and oppression:*

Today's anti-human trafficking movement has its roots in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century anti-White slavery movement that fought the procurement of women and girls for forced sex work. Anti-trafficking work exists within a framework that places ultimate value on white women's sexual purity.

## *Confusion of Terms:*

Arranged marriage ≠ Forced marriage –

In an arranged marriage, both parties agree to the match. In a forced marriage, there is no choice.

Sex work ≠ Sex trafficking –

People may engage in sex work due to choice, circumstance, or coercion. Not all sex workers are trafficked.

Legal definition of human trafficking –

The legal definition of trafficking is very narrow and does not extend to many types of exploitation that take place.

## *Current Barriers to Reporting Instances of Trafficking:*

- There is no protection for whistle-blowers – they face detention and deportation
- The Temporary Foreign Worker Program ties migrant workers to one employer – if they complain about that employer they cannot work elsewhere
- If a complaint is made about an employer, all those working for that employer could lose their visas and be deported
- Migrant workers are viewed as outsiders – Canadians think they have no obligations to them
- Police interview techniques don't appreciate what trauma can do to a person's memory
- Many migrant workers come from places where corruption is rampant and have an innate distrust of police

## DO NO HARM

This should be the motto of all those fighting trafficking. Often, anti-trafficking actions have had unintended consequences that put others at greater risk. You have to consider these consequences and ensure that actions do not cause harm.

Examples:

- Manitoba made it harder to bring in migrant exotic dancers on the premise that they would be more likely to be trafficked, so traffickers started using students, instead
- Not allowing single men come to Canada – forced marriage goes up as men want a wife to be allowed entry
- Putting more restrictions on migrant work in Canada under the pretence of fighting trafficking – these restrictions put workers at greater risk

## Recommendations:

- Make it easier for migrants to work in Canada
- Respond to the *whole spectrum* of exploitation – not just those who fit the narrow legal definition
  - Work for a new legal definition that includes this spectrum
- Review anti-trafficking funding, moving the focus from prosecution to root causes
- Focus less on control, more on choice
  - Ex: Change the Temporary Foreign Worker Program to allow greater freedoms for workers
- Operate with a client-centred framework
- Meet exploited people where they are – without judgement and without a saviour complex
- Provide culturally appropriate support for trafficked people (ex: allowing an Indigenous woman who was trafficked to smudge and use medicines)
- Get more data – right now only data is from law enforcement which is just a fraction of cases and is biased towards sexual exploitation cases
- Create and fund programs that are specifically designed for exploited persons
- The province of Ontario should try new approaches and make recommendations to the federal government based on their successes and failures
- Standardized training and assessment should be done for all law enforcement officials
- Licence overseas recruits to monitor for exploitation
- See trafficking as part of the continuum of economic disempowerment