University of Nottingham
Rights Lab

Photographing modern slavery: recommendations for responsible practice

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Photo: Leila Segal. leilasegal@gmail.com

Project at work: a Voice of Freedom participant takes a photograph during a workshop in Asti.

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Cover image: Behind the scenes of The Dark Figure*, Bournemouth, Dorset.
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Please note that in the case studies, the captions which appear on a separate page to the images should be considered an essential part of the photograph. In many cases survivor testimony or other further information accompanies these images which make them an essential component to understanding the image.

Summary of findings

1. The current use of imagery, particularly photography, in the anti-slavery movement risks harming anti-slavery efforts and survivors through misinformation and re-exploitation.

Images that rely on outdated and racist stereotypes can create an inaccurate perspective of what slavery looks like. For instance, images of people in chains remain prominent in the UK, despite psychological methods of coercion being more common methods of control than physical restraints. Images should empower the viewer into action, not shock them into paralysis.

2. In order to utilise photography effectively and ethically, organisations looking to generate or use photography should seek out practices which incorporate survivor voice and perspective.

To avoid generating compassion fatigue, or creating sensationalist imagery that disregards the realities of modern slavery, no-one is more qualified than survivors themselves to provide input on imagery and campaigns. Survivors should be consulted throughout image production and display as much as possible, and be fairly compensated for their work.

3. Participatory photography is an ideal methodology for creating original and impactful imagery.

Providing survivors of slavery with cameras and encouraging them to document their own experiences should be common practice in generating anti-slavery imagery (but only when associated with Recommendation 4). This methodology can not only result in powerful and impactful imagery, but can also have profound psychological benefits through empowering survivors.

4. Informed consent should be a priority in anti-slavery imagery.

Photographing those who are currently enduring slavery, or have recently left their situation of exploitation, is a difficult ethical issue. Arguably, given their lack of agency, those who are enslaved are not free to have their image taken in any capacity, as they cannot truly consent. Therefore, our interactions should always be fully consented in order to re-empower survivors. Photographers must be careful not to coerce or re-exploit, be cognizant of the risks to the subject in using their image, and take all necessary steps to ensure that individuals have given their informed consent.

5. Creativity and originality are vital when generating survivor imagery.

Where getting survivor perspectives is difficult, it can be tempting to rely on artificial, potentially harmful imagery. In these cases, creators should be encouraged to consider more unusual and creative techniques to raise awareness of the issue. Creators should avoid relying on past stereotypes or fabricating stories should be avoided, and instead experiment with genre or medium.

Introduction

How do you make in the invisible visible?

From photojournalism, to artists' reproductions of slavery, to portraits of survivors, there are numerous genres of photography which seek to illuminate the reality of modern slavery. These images will frequently be utilised by governments and NGOs in order to make the wider public aware of the realities of modern slavery. Formal reports often accompany their narrative information with images, and government campaigns often make imagery central to their message. As a crime that thrives in the shadows, portraying modern slavery can present a challenge for photojournalists.

The fight for the abolition of slavery has always had a significant visual component. Although other methods of visual representation existed, such as engravings or sketches, none purported to convey the "truth" of the world in the same way that photography did, and hence the invention of the camera in 1839 captured the public's imagination. However, the culture of photography carries a legacy of colonialism and white supremacy: of a white male gaze informing us of how we are to view the enslaved 'other.' This kind of photography is imbued with voyeurism and implications of inferiority, portraying scarred backs and supplicated bodies. The 'other' in the image is not a thinking, feeling person; they are instead a vehicle by which suffering can be conveyed to an audience.

As a result of this history, and in effort to move away from it, image makers have attempted to be creative with how they present modern slavery to the public. Although the techniques used are wide and varied, there are four primary categories of photography within the anti-slavery movement that are most frequently seen:

1. **Documentary photography** – whereby a photographer enters a space in which modern slavery occurs and attempts to capture the reality around them.
2. **Re-enactment photography** – whereby a photographer artificially constructs a staged image which is based on their understanding of modern slavery.
3. **Survivor-produced photography** – whereby a person who has experienced modern slavery uses photography to portray their experiences. Of particular importance here is the methodology of participatory photography, which is a method of survivor-produced photography.
4. **Contextualised photography** – whereby an image is intentionally not revealed to be concerning modern slavery until reading the accompanying text (for example, portraits of survivors, landscapes of sites of slavery).

Each of these categories comes with its own set of opportunities and challenges. Every interaction between a photographer and a subject is loaded with power dynamics and questions about agency, which will only be compounded if one of them is a survivor of modern slavery. Photography should resist objectifying, sexualising and demeaning those who have been enslaved. Equally, photography should seek to portray the true reality of modern slavery – as far as is possible – to help the public recognise it. Imagery can be both impactful on public opinion and of service to survivors of slavery – the two are not mutually exclusive.

This report aims to provide a set of comprehensive guidelines for responsible image usage, and explain some of the methodologies employed by NGOs that create photographs in a positive and responsible way.

Historical context

The visual culture of today's anti-slavery movement can be traced back to the very invention of photography in 1839. In the United States during the nineteenth century, when slavery was a powerful and controversial institution, photography was used as an advocacy tool by those who supported slavery as well as those who opposed it.

In the nineteenth century there was a preoccupation with "truth" and scientific accuracy, and the daguerreotype, as the first mode of photographic production, came to take on form in common lexicon - "it…became a common verb that meant telling the literal truth of things."[1] With regard to slavery, both sides of the conflict would utilise photography to advocate their own agendas. Abolitionists believed that photography would attest to the humanity of the slave and weaken the institution of slavery, whilst slaveholders simultaneously believed that it would support their claims that African Americans were subhuman and uphold slavery. In this way, the visual realm of photography became a battleground of ideological beliefs.

The photography produced and distributed by white abolitionists is particularly notable in this report. Although abolitionists viewed their cause as noble, they were often oblivious to their own harmful attitudes being projected onto those in their photographs. An example of this can be seen in the photograph of Private Gordon. The image of the escaped slave shows his horrifically scarred back, as he is positioned away from the viewer, denying us his gaze but fully displaying his injuries. The image caused a sensation upon its publication in 1863, with the New York Independent stating that, "This Card Photograph should be multiplied by 100,000 and scattered over the states."[2] Yet by placing the emphasis on the body of Gordon, rather than his voice or his story, abolitionists were denying the presentation of all aspects of his experiences.

The most empowering and effective anti-slavery photography was generated by the survivors themselves. African Americans who knew and endured slavery created powerful portraits of themselves, designed to counter dangerous racist stereotypes, which emphasised their dignity and humanity. Frederick Douglass, a former enslaved African American turned prominent abolitionist, was the most photographed American of the nineteenth century.[3] His images were designed to portray him in a powerful and dignified manner, and he would praise photography's capacity for uplift when he stated "the humblest servant girl may now possess a picture of herself such as the wealth of kings could not purchase fifty years ago."[4] Douglass was not the only figure to adopt such an approach; former slave and abolitionist Sojourner Truth famously sold photographs of her portrait to sustain her abolitionist efforts, stating: "I sell the shadow to support the substance."[5]

The importance of such imagery cannot be understated. As Matthew Fox-Amato asserts, "photography injected the cultures of proslavery and abolitionism with a stronger sense of legitimacy, animosity, and urgency that highlighted the sectional crisis and made compromise all the more unthinkable."[6] There are lessons to be learned in our contemporary moment from these past images: that the most impactful images can be generated by survivors, and that those who are dedicated to combating slavery can be at risk of doing harm by projecting controversial and damaging ideas into their images. We must build on both the successes and the mistakes of past abolitionist movements to build a more responsible image culture in the present.

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[1] Alan Trachtenberg, "Chapter One: The Emergence of a Keyword," in *Photography in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Martha A. Sandweiss (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1991), 17.

[2] Deborah Willis and Barbara Krauthamer, *Envisioning Emancipation: Black Americans and the End of Slavery* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013), 37. For the Gordon photograph, see https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/302544.

[3] John Stauffer, Zoe Trodd, and Celeste-Marie Bernier, *Picturing Frederick Douglass: An Illustrated Biography of the Nineteenth Century's Most Photographed American* (New York & London: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2015), x.

[4] Shawn Michelle Smith and Maurice O. Wallace, "Introduction," in *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity*, eds. Maurice O. Wallace & Shawn Michelle Smith (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2012), 6.

[5] Augusta Rohrbach, "Shadow and Substance: Sojourner Truth in Black and White," in *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity*, eds. Maurice O. Wallace & Shawn Michelle Smith (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2012), 83.

[6] Matthew Fox-Amato, *Exposing Slavery: Photography, Human Bondage, and the Birth of Modern Visual Politics in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 9.

Case study

The GSI Report 2018

A notable example of a report utilising photography to underline its findings is the Global Slavery Index (GSI) Report, produced by Minderoo Foundation's Walk Free initiative. Fiona David was the Executive Director for Global Research at the Walk Free Foundation from 2012-2018, where she led the team that created the Global Slavery Index, from its first to its fourth edition in 2018. She is currently the Research Chair for Minderoo Foundation. Fiona is an expert in transnational crime, particularly human trafficking and people smuggling. She has worked on these issues since 1999, when she was seconded from the Australian Institute of Criminology to the UN's first global programme to combat human trafficking. Below, she commented in 2018 on the use of imagery in the GSI Reports:

"Please note my comments are specific to the GSI as that is one area where I do exercise a lot of editorial control, but they reflect my broader approach personally (and noting different people have different views on this).

I want our imagery to both capture the heart-strings but also the imagination of our readers – by quickly, and powerfully communicating to them the diverse, and often pretty gritty, grim reality of literally what this crime type 'looks like' across, in the many different contexts we see it occurring.

This depends on us understanding the diversity of this crime. Understanding how offenders work. Understanding how exploitation looks and feels. I honestly think it's hard to do well if you don't have some depth of subject knowledge.

Some of my favourite examples are for example, the photo series in the last GSI up front in an essay of Nigerian sex workers, who literally live/sit/work in the corn/farm fields along a particular rural road. The series includes photos of mattresses and 'dressing rooms' stashed in behind bushes, flimsy plastic chairs that are people's sole 'work station' while they solicit customers, and shows the lack of basic dignity involved in these situations where there is no lavatories, no rubbish collection, no roof or running water, let alone things like safety or shelter.

I also want us to capture the zeitgeist – if it's the migrant crisis, I want us to reflect the connection literally, visually between people stuffed into the holds of vessels, as it helps capture the very real lack of control and powerlessness of these so called 'willing economic migrants'.

I want us to challenge stereotypes. Victims are 'vulnerable' or 'weak'. Or all offenders are 'big time crooks'. Or all of this involves organised sex industry. Or Women or never boys. Or faith and families are universally a force for good (see the series from Senegal back cover last GSI of boys begging for religious schools).

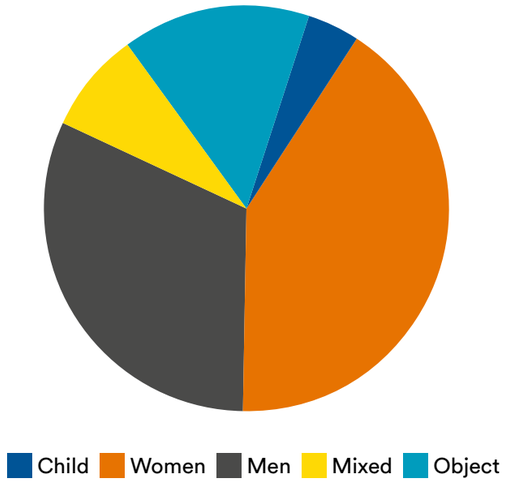
This crime happens in the cracks. We need to show those cracks.

Given the incredible diversity of this crime, we seek images from as wide a geography as we can find, and we try to find non-traditional and intimate, real photos of either situations as they are experienced first-hand, or showing the types of living and working conditions people experience.

I do not want our imagery to reinforce stereotypes (so we tend to be very light on generic 'sex industry' images); identify victims; or identify people who may not have consented to having the image taken."

Breaking down the imagery of the 2018 GSI Report reveals the ways in which NGO reports can showcase photographs. Of particular relevance are the number of photographs, the contents of the photographs (with particular regard to the gender of subjects), and the placing of photographs in the report.

In the 2018 GSI Report, there were 51 photographic images included, which increased from 46 in 2017. This allowed images to be placed throughout the report, underlining the arguments being made in the text. One way in which these photographs were made more impactful was by giving them ample space on the page – of all the images in the report, 43.1% of them were given a full page. Having multiple images crammed together on one page can dilute their effectiveness and make the report look cluttered, yet the GSI Report avoids this by allowing the images to be more impactful. They accompany the text, and do not overwhelm nor dilute it.



> Having multiple images crammed together on one page can dilute their effectiveness and make the report look cluttered, yet the GSI Report avoids this by allowing the images to be more impactful.

The use of captioning in reports is also crucial. Without the context behind the photograph, the viewer may project their own interpretation onto the image. This will most likely be inaccurate, and may be harmful. One key way that these kinds of assumptions can be combated is through including captions alongside the image, and making it clear which image is being referred to. The 2018 GSI Report contains clear captions for 80.4% of its captions, which was a rise from 71.7% the previous year. In this way, the GSI Report works to contextualise the images in its reports.

The content of the photographs also warrants consideration, as choosing who appears in these images and who is absent may reflect wider silences in anti-slavery culture. For instance, reports may be tempted to rely entirely on images that are likely to warrant a sympathetic response, such as women or children, at the expense of other groups, such as older men. However, the GSI Report keeps these groups fairly balanced, as many of the images focus on the individual stories of the people in the images.

[7] These statistics are drawn from quantitative research by the report's author. For full report see: The Global Slavery Index 2018, https://www.globalslaveryindex.org/resources/downloads/

> The use of captioning in reports is also crucial. Without the context behind the photograph, the viewer may project their own interpretation onto the image.

Current perceptions of modern slavery

Echoes of historical slavery are frequently heard in today's images of slavery. Putting the terms "slavery," "modern slavery," or "human trafficking" into any image search engine generates many images that are harmless, but also many which are potentially harmful and inaccurate. Images of hands in chains are a common feature of many anti-slavery campaigns or posters, as are depictions of other types of physical restraint. The bodies of those cast as 'slaves' are often used as a canvas, with words being written on or projected onto their flesh. In this way, as in the image of Private Gordon, the body becomes a spectacle to be consumed by the viewer, denying the person any agency outside of their own body. Not only are such images harmful to survivors, but they also paint an inaccurate perception of what slavery looks like.

Unlike slavery in the nineteenth century, slavery today is illegal in most countries in which it occurs. It therefore often takes place behind closed doors, or hidden in plain sight in ways that can be difficult to identify. In the UK, for example, modern slavery is most likely to occur when an individual can be coerced by external forces, such as someone controlling their passport, holding them accountable to a debt, or the threat of violence. Such techniques are often invisible, and so are difficult to convey visually. This can lead to stereotypical and inaccurate imagery.

As such, governments and NGOs who create anti-slavery awareness campaigns tend to rely on re-enactment photography. This typically involves actors taking part in staged scenes which are determined in advance. Most commonly, at least one person in the image is portrayed as someone who is currently enduring modern slavery. These images can take the form of scenes which are supposed to mirror real-life experiences of modern slavery, such as a staging of a space in which forced labour is occurring. Common features of these photographs include writing, barcodes, or price tags on their body, and dark lighting with muted colours, if not entirely black and white. The figure tends to be displayed in one of two ways: (1) facing the camera directly – most common when some sort of money motif is being displayed on the person, or their mouth is in some way obstructed, or (2) hunched over, either on the floor, a chair, or a bed, often holding their face in their hands to signify distress.

The issue with this medium is that it is based entirely on the person (or persons) staging an understanding of what modern slavery looks like. If the perspectives of survivors themselves are not sought, the images can very easily be inaccurate and/or stereotypes, or otherwise damaging.

There is also the risk of evoking compassion fatigue in the viewer. Compassion fatigue is the sensation in which a viewer is exposed to decontextualised atrocity images to such an extent that it fails to emotionally affect them. This idea was applied to journalism when Moeller wrote that, "We fall into compassion fatigue after seeing graphic images and hearing graphic tales that mean little to us beyond the fact that 'people are being hurt.'"[8] Although Moeller links her analysis to genocide photography, the same applies to images of modern slavery. By attempting to sensationalise and dramatize modern slavery without proper contextualisation, many attempts ultimately normalize it.

[8] Susan Moeller, "Compassion Fatigue: Graphic, Complicated Stories Numb Readers and Viewers to Atrocities," *Media Studies Journal 15*, no. 1 (Summer 2001): 108-112 (110).

Case study

PAG-ASA

PAG-ASA has been assisting victims of human trafficking and cooperating in the fight against exploitation since 1994. Their goal is to offer a tailor-made and comprehensive support package to each victim they assist. With the purpose to help them move beyond exploitation and become an empowered individual able to take back control over their life. Their shelter offers a safe space, as well as administrative- ,legal- and psychosocial support, and runs programmes such as the Photo-Voice project as explained below.

"We base our project on some principles:

- Participation is on voluntary basis (we put no pressure on the participant)
- We put survivors at the center in all our activities. Therefore the main goal of each project is to add a positive value for survivors. The pictures (as awareness material) in this case are a plus to the project, not the main goal.
- One of the basic principles upon which we base our support to survivors is the guidance toward empowerment and independent, conscious decision-making. This is also the case for this project: we give all the elements, but it is up to the participant to take all the decisions.

Photo-Voice project: First, we explain the project to the whole group of survivors living in the shelter. We never 'ask' them to participate, we inform them about activities and they are free to participate. Afterwards we give them two weeks to think about participation, ask for further information, and talk with their social worker. If they decide to participate, they need to take action and inform us about their desire to take part in the project. We want to be sure that participation is voluntary.

Some survivors already have a clear idea for the picture; others prefer to first talk or reflect about it. Sometimes they have more than one idea, and if possible we try to recreate all of them (up to 3). They also decide if they want to recreate a moment of the past, what they feel in the present or a hope for the future. We try to have an open approach and let them make their own decisions. They are free to leave the project at any moment, if they no longer feel at ease (a social worker will still be at their disposal, if they want to talk).

The last three days before the shoot, we set up the necessary material with the survivors. At this moment, the scene becomes very real for survivors, so we try to stay alert, and check for signals of distress, but usually participants are really enthusiastic.

A photographer comes to the shelter on the day of the shooting. Each participant 'recreates' the scene they want to convey in the photo, and talks about it with the photographer. During the shooting, the survivor is the 'actor' in the picture but also a sort of director: they say if the scene corresponds with what they had in mind; propose changes if needed; etc. A social worker is always present during this process.

The message, the idea and the staging are all from the survivors, we consider them to be the 'director and the creator' of the photograph."

Image credit: ©PAGA-ASA – Hope.

"Thank you to all the people from PAG-ASA who carry me towards the light."

– Woman from China.

Participatory photography >

Despite ethical difficulties, photographs that engage with modern slavery are necessary to raise awareness, and the medium of participatory photography is the form most likely to empower survivors and create impactful imagery.

Although there is no universal definition of participatory photography, Susan M. Bringham, Catherine Baillie Abidi and Yuhui Zhang provide a workable definition when discussing their work with refugee women in Canada, stating, "Participatory photography is a research method that relies on visual images and the active engagement of participants. Participants use photography to document their lives and their environment, express themselves, share their stories, and create awareness of their circumstances and experiences within a group and, if the participants choose, with a wider audience."[9] Within the context of modern slavery, therefore, participatory photography involves supplying survivors with a camera and a supportive infrastructure of experienced practitioners ready to ensure their emotional wellbeing, and empowering them to generate their own images that respond to their lived experiences. This work should empower survivor participants, and result in an archive of imagery that documents and responds to the issue of modern slavery.

In the UK, this approach has been pioneered by the organisation PhotoVoice. According to their website, "PhotoVoice's vision is for a world in which everybody has the opportunity to represent themselves and tell their own story."[10] Committed to the medium of participatory photography, PhotoVoice run workshops around the world that raise awareness of various human rights issues. For instance, in 2017 and 2018 PhotoVoice ran a project in Ghana, which focussed on the difficulties of entering the construction industry.[11] These photography workshops helped young people in Ghana to explore their experiences of entering the difficult construction industry.

Participatory photography has not been universally praised, as critics have suggested that these images operate at a surface-level only. Artist Natasha Christopher states, "Strategies engaging participatory practice do not necessarily solve the photographic dilemma of finding ways to grant equal agency to both subject and photographer. In fact, these strategies often captivate the audience with a feigned authenticity, one that only serves to create another layer of ambiguity in the 'truth factor' of the photograph."[12] Indeed, participatory photography should not be motivated by a desire to be 'authentic,' and instead any images that are produced should be considered a by-product of the main objective: to empower survivors.

It is impossible to take a photograph that will perfectly encapsulate the universal reality of slavery, because no such reality exists. Issues of consent, authenticity, and exploitation will still affect participatory photography. However, of all the mediums through which to represent slavery, participatory photography puts the emphasis where it should be – on the experience of survivors.

[9] Susan M. Brigham, Catherine Baillie Abidi & Yuhui Zhang, "What participatory photography can tell us about immigrant and refugee women's learning in Atlantic Canada," *International Journal of Lifelong Education* 37, no. 2 (2018): 234-254 (236).

[10] "Vision and Mission," *PhotoVoice*, accessed October 4, 2019, https://photovoice.org/vision-and-mission/.

[11] "Constructing Futures," *PhotoVoice*, accessed October 4, 2019, https://photovoice.org/constructing-futures/

[12] Natasha Christopher, "The whole truth, nothing but the truth: Photography and participatory practice," in *Wide Angle: Photography as Public Practice*, ed. Terry Kurgan (Johannesburg: Fourthwall Books, 2015), 76-88.

Case study

HAART Kenya

Awareness Against Human Trafficking (HAART) was started in 2010 by a group of passionate lawyers, missionaries and humanitarian workers in response to the need and gap in the number of organisations dealing with the issue of human trafficking in Kenya. The two key foundational principles underpinning HAART's work with victims of trafficking are being Trauma-Informed and Victim-Centred. These principles form the lens through which they carry out their work and empower victims in their healing and growth.

"For HAART Participatory photography has two aspects. The first aspect uses the lens of being trauma-informed, where survivor's trauma is acknowledged while respecting their autonomy and seeking out consent in being involved in each aspect of the process. For participatory photography to be truly participatory, consent is not a one-time event, it is consistently sought out throughout the whole process, without consequence to the survivor. Secondly, while the content creator is the expert in the creative, the survivor is acknowledged and remains the expert in their story, the telling and depiction of their story.

Photography and videography to many survivors of trafficking can often feel objectifying if not approached in the right way. Any photographer or filmmaker works at HAART with full guidance from the primary consultant in the victims' department, the psychologist and the shelter manager. This is the main management team and they are in constant contact with the child survivors of trafficking. They are professionally and socially equipped to best advise on how the photographer will capture moments, in a way that promotes healing. The main thing is to avoid making the girls feel insecure or re-traumatising them.

The current portrayal of modern slavery is often extremely sensationalized, focusing on the most shocking elements regardless of them being true. Victim rights and dignity, are often not seen as the priority in the depiction of these cases with the argument being that the shock value will be able to spur action. The faces of victims are often shown, without concern to consent or privacy, leaving the victims vulnerable to further harm and abuse by both the media houses as well as the communities that receive those stories. In one of the most shocking examples of harm caused through the portrayal of modern slavery in the media; victims of sex trafficking were filmed in lingerie and asked probing questions regarding lesbian sex and their use of sex toys, which was aired on a popular TV station without any thought of hiding the victim's identity."

Image credit: HAART Kenya.
The teenage girls at the HAART shelter creating handprint art (to say thank you to donors for supporting them).

The importance of survivor voice

There are multiple ways in which survivors can impact upon the photographic process; one does not have to engage with participatory photography in order to empower survivors. No one is more qualified than a survivor of modern slavery to assess what an evocative image is and what is a harmful stereotype. Survivors can, and should, be hired as consultants to support anti-slavery organisations in their use of imagery, such as when devising awareness-raising campaigns. Survivors must be fairly compensated for their work to avoid re-exploitation. Having multiple perspectives from multiple survivors will ensure a broader range of experiences are captured.

The inclusion of survivor voices, whether through image production or consultation, can have positive effects on the well-being of those survivors involved. By working in environments that assert that their opinions, thoughts, and photographs are valid, the personhood and confidence of those who were formerly enslaved can be asserted. This, in turn, empowers survivors. Judith Lewis Herman states, "the first principle of recovery is empowerment of the survivor. She must be the author and arbiter of her own recovery. Others may offer advice, support, assistance, affection, and care, but not cure."[13] In this way, approaches that include survivor voice allow survivors to assert their own thoughts in their own words.

However, organisers should be mindful of the possible psychological ramifications of involving survivors. Those who are not yet advanced enough in their recovery may find engaging in photography workshops or looking at images of modern slavery distressing. Every individual should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, with mental health experts consulted. Survivors are not a homogenous group; every individual is unique and will have different needs. Safeguarding measures should be put in place to ensure that survivors do not end up in a situation which could reignite their trauma, and ensure that survivor consultations occur ethically. Possible measures may include:

- Where survivors have had less time to adjust, psychological evaluation from experts to ascertain that a survivor is able to be involved without psychological harm.
- A full contract of employment, outlining in detail the terms of the survivor(s)'consultancy work. This should be created with input from the survivor(s).
- The understanding that the survivor(s) can remove themselves from the process at any time.
- The understanding that survivors will be compensated for their time, regardless of output. For instance, a survivor may be less likely to be critical of a campaign if they feel that their payment is merely compensation for their approval.

Survivor voice should not be viewed as a vehicle to artistic integrity, or an ethical get-out-of-jail free card. Instead, it should be viewed as an integral component of abolitionist image-making.

[13] Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence - From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror,* (London: BasicBooks, 1992) COMPLETE CITATION

Case study

Voice of Freedom

Voice of Freedom is a UK-based organisation that works with women who have escaped trafficking and torture, bringing the voices of the enslaved to a wide public for the first time. The project enables the women to document their lives, feelings and experiences through the camera lens, and supports them as they create texts in their own words to accompany the images. Voice of Freedom has run participatory photography workshops internationally, including in Israel, with Ethiopian women trafficked through the Sinai, and in Italy, with Nigerian women trafficked through Libya. Below, Voice of Freedom responds to the question of how its workshops avoid taking advantage of survivors.

"It's a fine line that we walk as facilitators of the workshops. We want to see participants express themselves and produce rich, communicative, and interesting material in whatever way that they choose. This material may not be directly representative of the women's experiences, but can be creatively powerful work. We as facilitators are constantly aware of our potential influence over people who are vulnerable.

We use the term 'workshop facilitators' rather than 'teachers'. The idea is that we create space, but that the women dictate what happens in the space. We give tools and support the women, but try not to influence outcomes. This can be challenging, particularly at the beginning of a project – we, as facilitators, know where the women's work can go, what we think people might want, and what we think might be most powerful. So we are careful to remind ourselves that what we feel, what we think, and what we see comes from our perspective, and that it is the women's perspective that must come to the foreground. We step back, listen to participants, and respect what they say. We want to honour what they bring.

Once each woman has produced a body of photography, we sit down with her individually and look at her work so that she can make an edit. As facilitator, I could highlight the work that I think is the best representation of slavery, or of what I think she's expressed in workshops. But we will step back and ask the woman to choose the images she wants to talk about. If you give her the space, listen and don't try to control the process but give support, often a woman will choose images that facilitators may not have thought were significant.

So many of the pictures that are most powerful, and about which the women have most fluently spoken, will be ones that facilitators may not have thought remarkable; these images can provide an astonishing and powerful insight into experience that we could not have imagined. I have seen this happen time and again. If you try to control the process, try to help frame an image, or try to dictate a representation of what you think a woman has said to you, the work itself will have an unconvincing and false feel.

Although the women do take cameras home, and can work alone, ultimately there can be no project where facilitators are not present in some capacity – and of course, as people who are not from the background of the participants, facilitators can unconsciously influence outcomes, despite our best efforts. I think all we can do is acknowledge that it's an imperfect process, with the goal of facilitating direct communication between the survivor and her audience wherever that may be."

Image credit: Efe Bella, courtesy of Voice of Freedom.

"This picture reminds me of the journey, when we were about to enter the desert. When they put us in the hilos [truck], that's how we sat. I saw them start arranging people and I was afraid.

Even on top of the sea, this is how I sat, and I cried throughout. Almost 12 hours in the boat. We are more than hundred. We can't see the sea because girls have to sit in the bottom of the boat.

I sit like this whenever I am depressed. My dream is to become an accountant but because of the situation we are in now, we can't easily access education. If you want to go to university you need resources, back-up, connections. But you just turn out to be – black."

–Efe Bella

The ethics of documentary photography >

Although re-enactment photography may be the most common form of photography utilised by campaigns, formal reports produced by governments and NGOs tend to adopt a different genre. Overwhelmingly, these reports tend to focus on documentary photography, or photojournalism – images where a photographer has entered a space in which modern slavery is occurring, and takes photographs of the realities around them. Such impactful publications as the Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP) and the Walk Free Foundation's Global Slavery Index Report (GSI Report) have utilised these images to complement their texts for years.

When responsibly utilised, documentary photography can be a hugely impactful tool to help raise awareness of modern slavery. It is a medium that can expose the realities of slavery with minimum obstruction. For instance, The Guardian published a photographic series entitled 'Faces of Modern Slavery,' produced by Annie Kelly and Kate Hodal, which places survivors' voices at the centre of their journalistic piece. Yet, of all the mediums of photography, it is the most in danger of taking advantage of those in forced labour.

Photojournalist Souvid Datta rocked the photographic community in 2017 when it was revealed that he had doctored images, and also had taken a highly problematic image. Datta took an image of a sixteen-year-old girl, named 'Beauty,' being raped in a brothel. Datta uploaded the image on his website alongside her age, her name, and her story of having been a sex worker since the age of twelve. Datta claimed that he had 'Beauty's' consent. However, critics have pointed out the problematic nature of this, as local activist Shreya Bhat states, "many of us saw it as someone documenting something illegal, in a rather insensitive fashion, and not taking responsibility [for] any of it by calling the 16-year-old responsible and accountable, instead."[14] Datta responded to the backlash this photograph created by stating in a now deleted Facebook post: "Beauty, at 16, functioned as more of a responsible and accountable adult than many people I know – crucially holding herself to those standards too. Her participation in this project was fierce and well-informed, and to say otherwise, especially having not met her, is deeply paternalistic and presumptuous."[15] The issue of consent in photojournalism, therefore, can be seen to be highly controversial.

Not only was this image of rape distributed, it was included in Lens Culture's advert for the Magnum Photo Awards. LensCulture put up a Facebook post featuring this image, reading "Open for entries – the Magnum Photography Awards! One of the best opportunities for photographers around the world to get recognition for their work. Don't miss out!"[16] That an internationally recognised publication would feel able to use an image of a girl being raped in such a commercialised and insensitive way speaks volumes about the dangers of photojournalism. Capturing the truth of slavery as justification to further compromise an individual's dignity and freedom is dangerous. Consent is not a blockade to art; it is an invaluable tool, ensuring that image creation and use is responsible. Consent should not be used as a shield to hide behind in order to take advantage of those in slavery, especially with regard to children.

[14] Olivier Laurent, "Shaken Photojournalism Industry Questions Itself After Souvid Datta Scandal," *Time*, May 9, 2017, http://time.com/4772234/souvid-datta-question/.

[15] Thomas Stanworth, "Magnum & LensCulture: Photography Ethics Disaster?," *The Photo Fundamentalist*, May 3, 2017, http://thephotofundamentalist.com/general-discussion/magnum-lensculture-photography-ethics-disaster/.

[16] Charumathi Sankaran, "Framing the sex worker: The photo Souvid Datta did not plagiarise," *Daily O*, May 12, 2017, https://www.dailyo.in/arts/sex-workers-souvid-datta-mary-ellen-photography/story/1/17162.html.

Case study

EYESeeMe Project

EYESeeMe Project is a charity that runs workshops with children and young adults who have survived modern slavery in South and South-East Asia. The project involves using digital cameras as a tool for social change and personal empowerment. Below, founder Rebecca Robyns describes her ethical approach and her organisation's approach to working with children.

"The workshops are all pretty unique depending on the environment, so I try to work intuitively with my teaching. For example, if I'm teaching by water or an urban area, we try to use this in our work. We explore self-expression so we may dig deeper into what has special meaning for us, and from there, the narrative can develop. No two workshops are the same. They may follow a similar pattern – i.e. camera technique, guidance – but the class itself is grown organically so that the outcome is given freely and without restriction. I taught a class recently in remote Nepal near this river – and we talked a lot about water in our image-making, how it makes us feel, it's cleansing, vital to life, and that water can carry you on a journey. It is possible from a class like this for stories to emerge where some of the survivors recall their experiences of being taken down a river or denied drinking water.

The three key things are, firstly, the classes must always be small. I have ten cameras – so, by having a small class it allows for a certain intimacy, privacy, and support to those participating. When young adults and children are talking about their experiences, they need to feel safe. At any time, someone might feel anxiety or any reaction, so in a small group, I can support them properly and be aware of any change that might occur when someone's going through this experience. So small groups, and for the most part no camera sharing. I've had a few organisations say, "oh, we've got twenty children that want to share their stories and share the cameras," but I don't think that works very well it just becomes too hectic with a lot of waiting around for those wishing to share so I prefer to avoid this.

Secondly, in terms of safety, I always have members of staff present who are related to the NGO, so the children feel comfortable. I am a new person coming in – I may have spent the day with them, or a morning, but I am a new face, essentially a stranger so working with the staff helps me to easily engage with everyone and break down language barriers. I enjoy the team aspect actually and also appreciate their guidance when I am working with children.

Thirdly, we consider confidentiality when we record the survivors' stories. We'll generally work on a one to one basis again supported by staff, however, if the children are already together, i.e. in a safe house then they may wish to share their experiences together which is entirely their choice, but generally speaking a one to one situation is the preferred method especially if a survivor might want to disclose sensitive information, like names or facts. So those are the key things: small class, safety through having the team present for support, and confidentiality."

Image: EYESeeMe Project

Garbage Collector
Name: Ramzin
Age: 9 years old.
Sex: Male
Duration: 6 months
Pay: Daily tips averaging 20-30 Taka a day (50p)

"Ramzin's father was a Mango seller and his Mother worked with him some6mes. He did not enjoy school and would not go so his parents beat him because he liked the playground more. He ran away because they were angry and he was scared. The Railway station was near to his home and so he rode on a train to get to Dhaka. He laid on the street until a local man asked me to collect garbage for him, (plastic bottles). He would collect bottles all day until his feet hurt finding them sometimes in the road and at other times sifting through dangerous mounds of garbage. One day when he was sick he laid down on railway station floor and a Policeman came and took him to the office. Ramzin was rescued by the Shelter. Ramzin hopes to be reunited with his family soon and to help them. He still does not like school."

Getting creative with genre

Organisations or photojournalists may not be able to get survivor input on every occasion, for a variety of reasons. They may not be in a position to compensate survivors for their expertise, or may work in a geographically isolated location, or may be working to a tight deadline and unable to identify a survivor willing to engage in the project in the time available. In these instances, they may have to rely on more unusual methods.

The key component in getting creative with genre is time. The use of problematic or uninteresting images in reports usually occurs in situations where image sourcing was not treated as a priority from the outset. In situations where the author of a report realises at the last minute that they need a visual component to accompany their text, it is unlikely that they will be able to create or source appropriate or impactful imagery. If enough time is allowed to consider the kind of imagery that would help amplify the findings of the report, or campaign, then it will have a more cohesive visual element.

Some genres that could be developed to engage with the issue of slavery might include:

- **Landscapes.** These tend to focus on the natural world and usually do not include people, although this is not always the case. For example, The Dark Figure* is a project developed by photographer Amy Romer that includes a series of photographs of sites in which modern slavery has occurred.
- **Still life.** Photographs of inanimate objects, commonly displayed by the artist. Much of Voice of Freedom's work involves survivors taking still life images and applying their own meaning to them. Through the survivors' lenses, objects such as spoons, irons, and curtains are transformed into symbols of their journeys.
- **Portraiture.** These can be individual or group shots. For example, The New Abolitionists create portraits of people who have identified themselves as 'Abolitionists' within their organisation, which are displayed on their website. These include activists, survivors, public officials, and celebrities. They range in content from group shots, to individual shots; from naturalistic portraits to use of props; from people facing the camera and smiling, to people hiding their faces entirely.
- **Alternative art forms.** Photography may not be the ideal medium. Artistic mediums such as painting, drawing, or sculpture may provide an alternative to the camera lens. Sara Shamma's 2019 series *Sara Shamma: Modern Slavery* uses large-scale portraits to explore modern slavery.

Case study

The Dark Figure*

The Dark Figure* is a photographic project created by Amy Romer. This series is dedicated to mapping the neighbourhoods where victims have been held as modern slaves. The title of the project comes from former Chief Scientific Adviser to the Home Office Sir Bernard Silverman's estimation that there are 13,000 slaves in the UK today, which is referred to as The Dark Figure*. Amy Romer explains her thinking behind the project.

"I think the project is about getting the reader to see that it's slavery next door. It's not something that happens somewhere else to other people. It happens in your neighbourhood, or the neighbourhood you grew up in, or your sister's neighbourhood, or that town you drove through that time. And that's why it was really important to get more of a breadth of the country, and for it to be repeated. The project is the same thing over and over again and that's the point. It's happening everywhere, and it's happening all the time, and in all of these different places. So, it has to be kind of mundane and it has to be recognisable and ordinary – all those kind of words that you think of when you see these kind of pretty boring images are important. Whether someone is looking at it consciously thinking, "oh that's something I recognise," or not, it is something we all recognise living in Britain. And that's the point, that's why it was not going down the route of photographing someone with chained hands, or all the classic photos that we still see in the media over and over again. That's why it works so well.

I've known that the images are challenging for the press as they're not that engaging if you don't include the story. That's what makes it so engaging I think, with the contrast of this horrendous story that sits alongside. Which means that it's a project that has to be looked at more in depth. You can't just take a photo somewhere and expect anyone to understand it. You have to spend time on it. But that's my thing. I love that kind of long-form documentary photography approach. It is what it is. It's not quick and easy but I don't think journalism should be quick or easy.

I don't know why I am drawn to darker stories, and also stories that are difficult to portray – they're not visual. There's nothing visual about modern slavery because it's hidden. I think I quite like the challenge in that. It's like a puzzle."

Image: from the series The Dark Figure* by Amy Romer. amyromer.com

Hathaway Walk, Easton, Bristol
November 2014

Police arrested 53-year-old Jurate Grigelyte at her property in Easton, Bristol, after a school raised concerns about the welfare of a 6-year-old boy, who was the son of a victim of human trafficking and forced labour, working under Grigelyte.

Grigelyte trafficked Lithuanian nationals to the UK with the promise of good employment and accommodation, but instead would lock victims inside cramped, squalid properties, only allowing them to enter and leave through a window.

The victims, many of whom spoke little to no English, worked for Grigelyte's charity bag business collecting donations and sorting through clothing. They were transported around the South West in vans with no seats or windows. A typical working day lasted from 5am to 6pm. Grigelyte promised workers £25 per day, but would deduct money for rent, travel and various fines, often leaving workers debt-bonded, with no money for food.

Debt Bondage is the most widespread form of slavery in the world. A person becomes a bonded labourer when their labour is demanded as a means of repayment for a loan. The victim is then tricked or trapped into working for very little or no pay, to repay debts their employer says they owe. Often, the victims' identification is taken, and bank cards are controlled, limiting any hope of freedom.
June 2015.

Grigelyte was sentenced to 3 years imprisonment after admitting to 10 charges of facilitating entry into the UK with a view to exploiting labour, 10 charges of human trafficking and one count of forced labour.

Conclusions and recommendations

This report has blended together original research, observations about the current anti-slavery visual culture, and case studies in order to lay out various core principles for positive change to the photographic culture surrounding modern slavery.

Each of the case studies presented in this report contains their own strengths when it comes to cultivating a responsible and impactful image culture. From PAG-ASA, we learn about the various ways in which survivors 'create' photographs. From HAART Kenya, we learn about the power of participatory photography. From Voice of Freedom, we learn about the power of putting survivor voice at the heart of the creative process. From EYESeeMe, we learn about the ethical process of working with children. From The Dark Figure*, we learn about the challenges of working within different genres to make the invisible visible.

Yet there is no perfect model for taking images that engage with modern slavery, because the subject matter itself is so difficult. Anti-slavery photography itself is entrenched in a tradition built on exploiting the bodies of the formerly enslaved. How can you truly portray an issue that is based on human exploitation and suffering in a way that avoids any and all harmful implications? Truthfully, it is impossible. What this report does suggest, however, is acknowledging this and attempting to conduct image practice in as ethical, transparent, and open-minded a way as possible.

Therefore, when engaging with modern slavery through photography, participatory photography can and should play an important role. This participatory action research method, which provides people with cameras in order to tell their own stories, can not only empower survivor participants, but also produce impactful photographic works. This underscores the importance of survivor voice: wherever possible, survivors should be incorporated into the image-making and dissemination process, with their thoughts, inputs and time respected and fairly compensated. Through their guidance, stereotypical and potentially harmful depictions of slavery can be more readily avoided.

Photographic depictions of modern slavery should be preoccupied with the ethical questions involved. The risk of re-exploiting or re-creating trauma for survivors, or indeed those for still enslaved, through photography are significant. Documentary photography in particular has the risk of being sensationalist or damaging. The importance of consent is but one tool with which practitioners can navigate the ethical minefield of journalistic photography.

Ensuring that survivor voices feed back during the formation of visual work should always be a priority. Yet, this may not always be possible. In these cases, getting creative with genre and still working to avoid stereotypes will help generate compelling imagery. Experimenting with landscape photography, portrait photography, still life photography, or other mediums of non-photographic art may result in unique imagery specific to the needs of the individual project.

Awareness of modern slavery is only increasing, and with it, a call for usable imagery. All those who grapple with the fight to end slavery – from activists to governments, from NGOs to academics, and beyond – all need to recognise the significance of imagery in this struggle. It is vital that the images we all present of modern slavery are accurate, so that people can recognise the signs, and that we make every effort not to be harmful to survivors. This can be a difficult tightrope to walk. But the call to end slavery needs new, creative, and responsible ways to make visible the invisible.

“This underscores the importance of survivor voice: wherever possible, survivors should be incorporated into the image-making and dissemination process, with their thoughts, inputs and time respected and fairly compensated.”

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