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Gold diggers in Brazil. (Photograph © 1998 Sebastião Salgado/Contact Press Images)

DISPOSABLE PEOPLE

New Slavery in the Global Economy

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THE NEW SLAVERY

THE FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE IN SUMMER lives up to its reputation. As we sit outdoors in little village about one hundred miles from Paris, the breeze brings us the scent of apples from the orchard next door. I have come here to meet Seba, a newly freed slave. She is a handsome and animated young woman of twenty-two, but as she tells me her story she draws into herself, smoking furiously, trembling, and then the tears come.

I was raised by my grandmother in Mali, and when I was still a little girl a woman my family knew came and asked her if she could take me to Paris to care for her children. She told my grandmother that she would put me in school and that I would learn French. But when I came to Paris I was not sent to school, I had to work every day. In their house I did all the work; I cleaned the house, cooked the meals, cared for the children, and washed and fed the baby. Every day I started work before 7 A.M. and finished about 11 P.M.; I never had a day off. My mistress did nothing; she slept late and then watched television or went out.

One day I told her that I wanted to go to school. She replied that she had not brought me to France to go to school but to take care of her children. I was so tired and run-down. I had problems with my teeth; sometimes my cheek would swell and the pain would be terrible. Sometimes

I had stomachaches, but when I was ill I still had to work. Sometimes when I was in pain I would cry, but my mistress would shout at me.

I slept on the floor in one of the children's bedrooms; my food was their leftovers. I was not allowed to take food from the refrigerator like the children. If I took food she would beat me. She often beat me. She would slap me all the time. She beat me with the broom, with kitchen tools, or whipped me with electric cable. Sometimes I would bleed; I still have marks on my body.

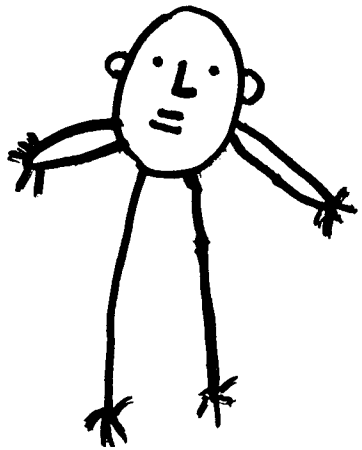
Once in 1992 I was late going to get the children from school; my mistress and her husband were furious with me and beat and then threw me out on the street. I had nowhere to go; I didn't understand anything, and I wandered on the streets. After some time her husband found me and took me back to their house. There they stripped me naked, tied my hands behind my back, and began to whip me with a wire attached to a broomstick. Both of them were beating me at the same time. I was bleeding a lot and screaming, but they continued to beat me. Then she rubbed chili pepper into my wounds and stuck it in my vagina. I lost consciousness.

Sometime later one of the children came and untied me. I lay on the floor where they had left me for several days. The pain was terrible but no one treated my wounds. When I was able to stand I had to start work again, but after this I was always locked in the apartment. They continued to beat me.

Seba was finally freed when a neighbor, after hearing the sounds of abuse and beating, managed to talk to her. Seeing her scars and wounds, the neighbor called the police and the French Committee against Modern Slavery (CCEM), who brought a case and took Seba into their care. Medical examinations confirmed that she had been tortured.

Today Seba is well cared for, living with a volunteer family. She is receiving counseling and is learning to read and write. Recovery will take years, but she is a remarkably strong young woman. What amazed me was how far Seba still needs to go. As we talked I realized that though she was twenty-two and intelligent, her understanding of the world was

less developed than the average five-year-old's. For example, until she was freed she had little understanding of time—no knowledge of weeks, months, or years. For Seba there was only the endless round of work and sleep. She knew that there were hot days and cold days, but never learned that the seasons follow a pattern. If she ever knew her birthday she had forgotten it, and she did not know her age. She is baffled by the idea of "choice." Her volunteer family tries to help her make choices, but she still can't grasp it. I asked Seba to draw the best picture of a person that she could. She told me it was the first time she had ever tried to draw a person. This was the result:



If Seba's case were unique it would be shocking enough, but Seba is one of perhaps 3,000 household slaves in Paris. Nor is such slavery unique to that city. In London, New York, Zurich, Los Angeles, and across the world, children are brutalized as household slaves. And they are just one small group of the world's slaves.

Slavery is not a horror safely consigned to the past; it continues to exist throughout the world, even in developed countries like France and the United States. Across the world slaves work and sweat and build and suffer. Slaves in Pakistan may have made the shoes you are wearing and the carpet you stand on. Slaves in the Caribbean may have

put sugar in your kitchen and toys in the hands of your children. In India they may have sewn the shirt on your back and polished the ring on your finger. They are paid nothing.

Slaves touch your life indirectly as well. They made the bricks for the factory that made the TV you watch. In Brazil slaves made the charcoal that tempered the steel that made the springs in your car and the blade on your lawnmower. Slaves grew the rice that fed the woman that wove the lovely cloth you've put up as curtains. Your investment portfolio and your mutual fund pension own stock in companies using slave labor in the developing world. Slaves keep your costs low and returns on your investments high.

Slavery is a booming business and the number of slaves is increasing. People get rich by using slaves. And when they've finished with their slaves, they just throw these people away. This is the new slavery, which focuses on big profits and cheap lives. It is not about owning people in the traditional sense of the old slavery, but about controlling them completely. People become completely disposable tools for making money.

On more than ten occasions I woke early in the morning to find the corpse of a young girl floating in the water by the barge. Nobody bothered to bury the girls. They just threw their bodies in the river to be eaten by the fish.[1]

This was the fate of young girls enslaved as prostitutes in the gold mining towns of the Amazon, explained Antonia Pinto, who worked there as a cook and a procurer. While the developed world bemoans the destruction of the rain forests, few people realize that slave labor is used to destroy them. Men are lured to the region by promises of riches in gold dust, and girls as young as eleven are offered jobs in the offices and restaurants that serve the mines. When they arrive in the remote mining areas, the men are locked up and forced to work in the mines; the girls are beaten, raped, and put to work as prostitutes. Their "recruitment agents" are paid a small amount for each body, perhaps $150. The "recruits" have become slaves—not through legal ownership, but through the final authority of violence. The local police act as enforcers to control the slaves. As one young woman explained, "Here the brothel owners send the police to beat us . . . if we flee they go after us, if they find us they kill us, or if they don't kill us they beat us all the way back to the brothel."[2]

The brothels are incredibly lucrative. The girl who "cost" $150 can be sold for sex up to ten times a night and bring in $10,000 per month. The only expenses are payments to the police and a pittance for food. If a girl is a troublemaker, runs away, or gets sick, she is easy to get rid of and replace. Antonia Pinto described what happened to an eleven-year-old girl when she refused to have sex with a miner: "After decapitating her with his machete, the miner drove around in his speedboat, showing off her head to the other miners, who clapped and shouted their approval."[3]

As the story of these girls shows, slavery has not, as most of us have been led to believe, ended. To be sure, the word *slavery* continues to be used to mean all sorts of things,[4] and all too often it has been applied as an easy metaphor. Having just enough money to get by, receiving wages that barely keep you alive, may be called wage slavery, but it is not slavery. Sharecroppers have a hard life, but they are not slaves. Child labor is terrible, but it is not necessarily slavery.

We might think slavery is a matter of ownership, but that depends on what we mean by *ownership*. In the past, slavery entailed one person legally owning another person, but modern slavery is different. Today slavery is illegal everywhere, and there is no more *legal* ownership of human beings. When people buy slaves today they don't ask for a receipt or ownership papers, but they do gain *control*—and they use violence to maintain this control. Slaveholders have all of the benefits of ownership without the legalities. Indeed, for the slaveholders, not having legal ownership is an improvement because they get total control without any responsibility for what they own. For that reason I tend to use the term slave*holder* instead of slave*owner*.

In spite of this difference between the new and the old slavery, I think everyone would agree that what I am talking about is slavery: the total control of one person by another for the purpose of economic exploitation. Modern slavery hides behind different masks, using clever lawyers and legal smoke screens, but when we strip away the lies, we find someone controlled by violence and denied all of their personal freedom to make money for someone else. As I traveled around the world to study the new slavery, I looked behind the legal masks and I saw people in chains. Of course, many people think there is no such thing as slavery anymore, and I was one of those people just a few years ago.

First Come, First Served

I first encountered the vestiges of the old slavery when I was four years old. What happened is one of my strongest memories. It was the 1950s in the American South and my family was having dinner in a cafeteria. As we started down the serving line I saw another family standing behind a chain, waiting as others moved through with their trays. With the certainty of a four-year-old, I knew that they had arrived first and should be ahead of us. The *fairness* of first come, first served had been drummed into me. So I unhooked the chain and said, "You were here first, you should go ahead." The father of this African American family looked down at me with eyes full of feeling, just as my own father came up and put his hand on my shoulder. Suddenly the atmosphere was thick with unspoken emotion. Tension mixed with bittersweet approval as both fathers grappled with the innocent ignorance of a child who had never heard of segregation. No one spoke, until finally the black father said, "That's OK, we're waiting on someone; go ahead."

My parents were not radicals, but they had taught me the value of fairness and equal treatment. They believed that the idea of our equality was one of the best things about America, and they never approved

of the racism of segregation. But sometimes it takes a child's simplicity to cut through the weight of custom. The intensity of that moment stayed with me, though it was years before I began to understand what those two sets of parents were feeling. As I grew up I was glad to see such blatant segregation coming to an end. The idea that there might still be actual slavery—quite apart from segregation—never crossed my mind. Everyone knew that in the United States slavery had ended in 1865.

Of course, the gross inequalities in American society brought the slavery of the past to mind. I realized that the United States, once a large-scale slave society, was still suffering from a botched emancipation program. Soon after Abraham Lincoln's celebrated proclamation, Jim Crow laws and oppression took over to keep ex-slaves from economic and political power. I came to understand that emancipation was a *process*, not an event—a process that still had a way to go. As a young social researcher, I generally held jobs concerned with the residue of this unfinished process: I studied bad housing, health differences between the races, problems in integrated schools, and racism in the legal system. But I still saw all this as the vestiges of slavery, as problems that were tough but not intractable.

It was only after I moved to England in the early 1980s that I became aware of real slavery. At a large public event I came across a small table set up by Anti-Slavery International. I picked up some leaflets in passing, and I was amazed by what I read. There was no flash-of-light experience, but I developed a gnawing desire to find out more. I was perplexed that this most fundamental human right was still not assured—and that no one seemed to know or care about it. Millions of people were actively working against the nuclear threat, against apartheid in South Africa, against famine in Ethiopia, yet *slavery* wasn't even on the map. The more this realization dug into me, the more I knew I had to do something. Slavery is an obscenity. It is not just stealing someone's labor; it is the theft of an entire life. It is more closely related to the concentration camp than to questions of bad working conditions.

There seems nothing to debate about slavery: it must stop. My question became: What can I do to bring an end to slavery? I decided to use my skills as a social researcher, and I embarked on the project that led to this book.

How Many Slaves?

For several years I collected every scrap of information I could find about modern slavery. I went to the United Nations and the British Library; I trawled through the International Labour Office and visited human rights organizations and charities. I talked to anthropologists and economists. Getting useful, reliable information on slavery is very difficult. Even when shown photographs and affidavits, nations' officials deny its existence. Human rights organizations, in contrast, want to expose the existence of slavery. They report what they are told by the victims of slavery, and it is their business to counter government denials with evidence of widespread slavery. Who and what can we believe?

My approach was to pull together all the evidence I could find, country by country. When someone gave reasons why a number of people were in slavery, I took note. When two people independently stated they had good reasons to think that there was a certain amount of slavery, I began to feel more convinced. Sometimes I found that researchers were working on slavery in two different parts of the same country without knowing about each other. I looked at every report I could find and asked, "What can I feel sure about? Which numbers do I trust?" Then I added up what I had found, taking care to be conservative. If I had any doubts about a report, I left it out of my calculations. It's important to remember that slavery is a shadowy, illegal enterprise, so statistics are hard to come by. I can only make a good guess at the numbers.

My best estimate of the number of slaves in the world today is 27 million.

This number is much smaller than the estimates put forward by some activists, who give a range as high as 200 million, but it is the number I feel I can trust; it is also the number that fits my strict definition of slavery. The biggest part of that 27 million, perhaps 15 to 20 million, is represented by *bonded labor* in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal. Bonded labor or debt bondage happens when people give themselves into slavery as security against a loan or when they inherit a debt from a relative (we'll look at this more closely later). Otherwise slavery tends to be concentrated in Southeast Asia, northern and western Africa, and parts of South America (but there are some slaves in almost every country in the world, including the United States, Japan, and many European countries). There are more slaves alive today than all the people stolen from Africa in the time of the transatlantic slave trade. Put another way, today's slave population is greater than the population of Canada, and six times greater than the population of Israel.

These slaves tend to be used in simple, nontechnological, and traditional work. The largest group work in agriculture. But slaves are used in many other kinds of labor: brickmaking, mining or quarrying, prostitution, gem working and jewelry making, cloth and carpet making, and domestic service; they clear forests, make charcoal, and work in shops. Much of this work is aimed at local sale and consumption, but slave-made goods reach into homes around the world. Carpets, fireworks, jewelry, and metal goods made by slave labor, as well as grains, sugar, and other foods harvested by slaves, are imported directly to North America and Europe. In addition, large international corporations, acting through subsidiaries in the developing world, take advantage of slave labor to improve their bottom line and increase the dividends to their shareholders.

But the value of slaves lies not so much in the particular products they make as in their sweat, in the volume of work squeezed out of them. Slaves are often forced to sleep next to their looms or brick kilns; some are even chained to their work tables. All their waking hours may be turned into working hours. In our global economy one of the standard explanations that multinational corporations give for closing factories in the "first world" and opening them in the "third world"

is the lower labor cost. Slavery can constitute a significant part of these savings. No paid workers, no matter how efficient, can compete economically with unpaid workers—slaves.

What Does Race Have to Do with It?

In the new slavery race means little. In the past, ethnic and racial differences were used to explain and excuse slavery. These differences allowed slaveholders to make up reasons why slavery was acceptable, or even a good thing for the slaves. The *otherness* of the slaves made it easier to employ the violence and cruelty necessary for total control. This otherness could be defined in almost any way—a different religion, tribe, skin color, language, custom, or economic class. Any of these differences could be and were used to separate the slaves from the slaveholders. Maintaining these differences required tremendous investment in some very irrational ideas—and the crazier the justifying idea, the more vehemently it was insisted upon. The American Founding Fathers had to go through moral, linguistic, and political contortions to explain why their "land of the free" was only for white people.[5] Many of them knew that by allowing slavery they were betraying their most cherished ideals. They were driven to it because slavery was worth a lot of money to a lot of people in North America at the time. But they went to the trouble of devising legal and political excuses because they felt they had to justify their economic decisions morally.

Today the morality of money overrides other concerns. Most slaveholders feel no need to explain or defend their chosen method of labor recruitment and management. Slavery is a very profitable business, and a good bottom line is justification enough. Freed of ideas that restrict the status of slave to *others*, modern slaveholders use other criteria to choose slaves. Indeed, they enjoy a great advantage: being able to enslave people from one's own country helps keep costs down. Slaves in the American South in the nineteenth century were very expensive, in

part because they originally had to be shipped thousands of miles from Africa. When slaves can be gotten from the next town or region, transportation costs fall. The question isn't "Are they the right color to be slaves?" but "Are they vulnerable enough to be enslaved?" The criteria of enslavement today do not concern color, tribe, or religion; they focus on weakness, gullibility, and deprivation.

It is true that in some countries there are ethnic or religious differences between slaves and slaveholders. In Pakistan, for example, many enslaved brickmakers are Christians while the slaveholders are Muslim. In India slave and slaveholder may be from different castes. In Thailand they may come from different regions of the country and are much more likely to be women. But in Pakistan there are Christians who are not slaves, in India members of the same caste who are free. Their caste or religion simply reflects their vulnerability to enslavement; it doesn't cause it. Only in one country, Mauritania, does the racism of the old slavery persist—there black slaves are held by Arab slaveholders, and race is a key division. To be sure, some cultures are more divided along racial lines than others. Japanese culture strongly distinguishes the Japanese as different from everyone else, and so enslaved prostitutes in Japan are more likely to be Thai, Philippine, or European women—although they may be Japanese. Even here, the key difference is not racial but economic: Japanese women are not nearly so vulnerable and desperate as Thais or Filipinas. And the Thai women are available for shipment to Japan because Thais are enslaving Thais. The same pattern occurs in the oil-rich states of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, where Muslim Arabs promiscuously enslave Sri Lankan Hindus, Filipino Christians, and Nigerian Muslims. The common denominator is poverty, not color. Behind every assertion of ethnic difference is the reality of economic disparity. If all left-handed people in the world became destitute tomorrow, there would soon be slaveholders taking advantage of them. Modern slaveholders are predators keenly aware of weakness; they are rapidly adapting an ancient practice to the new global economy.

The Rise of the New Slavery

For thousands of years people have been enslaved. Slavery echoes through the great epics of the distant past. Ancient Egypt, ancient Greece, and the Roman Empire all made slavery integral to their social systems.[6] Right through the American and Brazilian slave economies of the last century, legal, old-style slavery persisted in what is now called the developed world. But slavery never disappeared; instead, it took a different form. The basic fact of one person totally controlling another remains the same, but slavery has changed in some crucial ways.

Two factors are critical in the shift from the old slavery to the explosive spread of the new. The first is the dramatic increase in world population following World War II. Since 1945 the world population has almost tripled, increasing from about 2 billion people to more than 5.7 billion. The greatest growth has been in those countries where slavery is most prevalent today. Across Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, Africa, and the Arab countries, populations have more than tripled and countries are flooded with children. Over half the population in some of these countries is under the age of fifteen. In countries that were already poor, the sheer weight of numbers overwhelms the resources at hand. Without work and with increasing fear as resources diminish, people become desperate and life becomes cheap. Especially in those areas where slavery had persisted or was part of the historical culture, the population explosion radically increased the supply of potential slaves and drove down their price.

The second crucial factor is that at the same time that the population was exploding, these countries were undergoing rapid social and economic change. In many developing countries modernization brought immense wealth to the elite and continued or increased the impoverishment of the poor majority. Throughout Africa and Asia the last fifty years have been scarred by civil war and the wholesale looting of resources by home-grown dictators, often supported by one of the superpowers. To hold on to power, the ruling kleptocrats have paid enormous

sums for weaponry, money raised by mortaging their countries. Meanwhile traditional ways of life and subsistence have been sacrificed to the cash crop and quick profit. Poor families have lost their old ways of meeting a crisis. Traditional societies, while sometimes oppressive, generally relied on ties of responsibility and kinship that could usually carry people through a crisis such as the death of the breadwinner, serious illness, or a bad harvest. Modernization and the globalization of the world economy have shattered these traditional families and the small-scale subsistence farming that supported them. The forced shift from subsistence to cash-crop agriculture, the loss of common land, and government policies that suppress farm income in favor of cheap food for the cities have all helped bankrupt millions of peasants and drive them from their land—sometimes into slavery.

Although modernization has had good effects, bringing improvements in health care and education, the concentration of land in the hands of an elite and its use of land to produce cash crops for export have made the poor more vulnerable. Because the political elites in the developing world focus on economic growth, which is not just in their collective self-interest but required by global financial institutions, little attention is paid to sustainable livelihoods for the majority. So while the rich of the developing world have grown richer, the poor have fewer and fewer options. Amid the disruption of rapid social change, one of those options is slavery.

The end of the cold war only made matters worse. William Greider explains it well:

> One of the striking qualities of the post–Cold War globalization is how easily business and government in the capitalist democracies have abandoned the values they putatively espoused for forty years during the struggle against communism—individual liberties and political legitimacy based on free elections. Concern for human rights, including freedom of assembly for workers wishing to speak for themselves, has been pushed aside by commercial opportunity. Multinationals plunge confidently into new markets, from Vietnam

to China, where governments routinely control and abuse their own citizens.

In fact, some of these countries *enslave* their own citizens, and others turn a blind eye to the slavery that generates such enormous profits.

THE OLD SLAVERY VERSUS THE NEW SLAVERY Government corruption, plus the vast increase in the number of people and their ongoing impoverishment, has led to the new slavery. For the first time in human history there is an absolute glut of potential slaves. It is a dramatic illustration of the laws of supply and demand: with so many possible slaves, their value has plummeted. Slaves are now so cheap that they have become cost-effective in many new kinds of work, completely changing how they are seen and used. Think about computers. Forty years ago there were only a handful of computers, and they cost hundreds of thousands of dollars; only big companies and the government could afford them. Today there are millions of personal computers. Anyone can buy a used, but quite serviceable, model for $100. Use that $100 computer for a year or two, and when it breaks down, don't bother to fix it—just throw it away.

The same thing happens in the new slavery. Buying a slave is no longer a major investment, like buying a car or a house (as it was in the old slavery); it is more like buying an inexpensive bicycle or a cheap computer. Slaveholders get all the work they can out of their slaves, and then throw them away. The nature of the relationship between slaves and slaveholders has fundamentally altered. The new disposability has dramatically increased the amount of profit to be made from a slave, decreased the length of time a person would normally be enslaved, and made the question of legal ownership less important. When slaves cost a great deal of money, that investment had to be safeguarded through clear and legally documented ownership. Slaves of the past were worth stealing and worth chasing down if they escaped. Today slaves cost so little that it is not worth the hassle of securing permanent, "legal" ownership. Slaves are disposable.

Around the world today the length of time a slave spends in bondage varies enormously. Where old-style slavery is still practiced, bondage lasts forever. A Mauritanian woman born into slavery has a good chance of remaining so for the rest of her life. Her children, if she has any, will also be slaves, and so on down the generations. But today most slaves are temporary; some are enslaved for only a few months. It is simply not profitable to keep them when they are not immediately useful. Under these circumstances, there is no reason to invest heavily in their upkeep and indeed little reason to ensure that they survive their enslavement. While slaves in the American South were often horribly treated, there was nevertheless a strong incentive to keep them alive for many years. Slaves were like valuable livestock: the plantation owner needed to make back his investment. There was also pressure to breed them and produce more slaves, since it was usually cheaper to raise new slaves oneself than to buy adults. Today no slaveholder wants to spend money supporting useless infants, so female slaves, especially those forced into prostitution, are prevented from conceiving. And there is no reason to protect slaves from disease or injury—medicine costs money, and it's cheaper to let them die.

The key differences between the old and new slavery break down like this:

Old Slavery	*New Slavery*
Legal ownership asserted	Legal ownership avoided
High purchase cost	Very low purchase cost
Low profits	Very high profits
Shortage of potential slaves	Surplus of potential slaves
Long-term relationship	Short-term relationship
Slaves maintained	Slaves disposable
Ethnic differences important	Ethnic differences not important

Looking at a specific example will clarify these differences. Perhaps the best studied and best understood form of old slavery was the system in

the American South before 1860.[8] Slaves were at a premium, and the demand for them was high because European immigrants were able to find other work or even start their own farms in the ever-expanding West. This demand for slaves was reflected in their price. By 1850 an average field laborer sold for $1,000 to $1,800. This was three to six times the average yearly wage of an American worker at the time, perhaps equivalent to around $50,000 to $100,000 today. Despite their high cost, slaves generated, on average, profits of only about 5 percent each year. If the cotton market went up, a plantation owner might make a very good return on his slaves, but if the price of cotton fell, he might be forced to sell slaves to stay in business. Ownership was clearly demonstrated by bills of sale and titles of ownership, and slaves could be used as collateral for loans or used to pay off debts. Slaves were often brutalized to keep them under control, but they were also recognized and treated as sizable investments. A final distinctive element was the extreme racial differentiation between slaveholder and slave, so strong that a very small genetic difference—normally set at being only one-eighth black—still meant lifelong enslavement.[9]

In comparison, consider the agricultural slave in debt bondage in India now. There land rather than labor is at a premium today. India's population has boomed, currently totaling three times that of the United States in a country with one-third the space. The glut of potential workers means that free labor must regularly compete with slave, and the resulting pressure on agricultural wages pushes free laborers toward bondage. When free farmers run out of money, when a crop fails or a member of the family becomes ill and needs medicine, they have few choices. Faced with a crisis, they borrow enough money from a local landowner to meet the crisis, but having no other possessions, they must use their own lives as collateral. The debt against which a person is bonded—that is, the price of a laborer—might be 500 to 1,000 rupees (about $12 to $23). The bond is completely open-ended; the slave must work for the slaveholder until the slaveholder decides the debt is repaid. It may carry over into a second and third generation,

growing under fraudulent accounting by the slaveholder, who may also seize and sell the children of the bonded laborer against the debt. The functional reality is one of slavery, but its differences from the old slavery reflect five of the seven points listed above.

First, no one tries to assert legal ownership of the bonded laborer. The slave is held under threat of violence, and often physically locked up, but no one asserts that he or she is in fact "property." Second, the bonded laborer is made responsible for his or her own upkeep, thus lowering the slaveholder's costs. The slaves may scrape together their subsistence in a number of ways: eking it out from the foodstuffs produced for the slaveholder, using their "spare time" to do whatever is necessary to bring in food, or receiving some foodstuffs or money from the slaveholder. The slaveholders save by providing no regular maintenance, and they can cut off food and all support when the bonded laborer is unable to work or is no longer needed.

Third, if a bonded laborer is not able to work, perhaps because of illness or injury, or is not needed for work, he or she can be abandoned or disposed of by the slaveholder, who bears no responsibility for the slave's upkeep. Often the slaveholder keeps an entirely fraudulent legal document, which the bonded laborer has "signed" under duress. This document violates several current Indian laws and relies on others that either never existed or have not existed for decades, yet it is normally used to justify holding the bonded laborer. It also excuses the abandonment of ill or injured slaves, for it specifies responsibilities only on the part of the bonded laborer; there are none on the part of the slaveholder. Fourth, the ethnic differentiation is not nearly so rigid as that of the old slavery. As already noted, bonded laborers may well belong to a lower caste than the slaveholder—but this is not always the case. The key distinction lies in wealth and power, not caste.

Finally, a major difference between the old and new slavery is in the profits produced by an enslaved laborer. Agricultural bonded laborers in India generate not 5 percent, as did slaves in the American South, but over 50 percent profit per year for the slaveholder. This high profit

is due, in part, to the low cost of the slave (i.e., the small loan advanced), but even so it reflects the low returns on old-fashioned small-scale agriculture: indeed, almost all other forms of modern slavery are much more profitable.

Agricultural debt bondage in India still has some characteristics of the old slavery, such as the holding of slaves for long periods. A better example of the new slavery is provided by the young women lured into "contract" slavery and put to work in prostitution in Thailand. A population explosion in Thailand has ensured a surplus of potential slaves, while rapid economic change has led to new poverty and desperation. The girls are often initially drawn from rural areas with the promise of work in restaurants or factories. There is no ethnic difference—these are Thai girls enslaved by Thai brothel owners; the distinction between them, if any, is that the former are rural and the latter urban. The girls might be sold by their parents to a broker, or tricked by an agent; once away from their homes they are brutalized and enslaved, then sold to a brothel owner. The brothel owners place the girls in debt bondage and tell them they must pay back their purchase price, plus interest, through prostitution. They might use the legal ruse of a contract—which often specifies some completely unrelated job, such as factory work—but that isn't usually necessary. The calculation of the debt and the interest is, of course, completely in the hands of the brothel owners and so is manipulated to show whatever they like. Using that trick, they can keep a girl as long as they want, and they don't need to demonstrate any legal ownership. The brothel does have to feed the girl and keep her presentable, but if she becomes ill or injured or too old, she is disposed of. In Thailand today, the girl is often discarded when she tests positive for HIV.

This form of contract debt bondage is extremely profitable. A girl between twelve and fifteen years old can be purchased for $800 to $2,000, and the costs of running a brothel and feeding the girls are relatively low. The profit is often as high as 800 percent a year. This kind

of return can be made on a girl for five to ten years. After that, especially if she becomes ill or HIV-positive, the girl is dumped.

THE FORMS OF THE NEW SLAVERY Charted on paper in neat categories, the new slavery seems to be very clear and distinct. In fact, it is as inconveniently sloppy, dynamic, changeable, and confusing as any other kind of relation between humans. We can no more expect there to be one kind of slavery than we can expect there to be one kind of marriage. People are inventive and flexible, and the permutations of human violence and exploitation are infinite. The best we can do with slavery is to set down its dimensions and then test any particular example against them.

One critical dimension is violence—all types of slavery depend on violence, which holds the slave in place. Yet, for one slave, there may be only the threat of violence while, with another, threats may escalate into terrible abuse. Another dimension is the length of enslavement. Short-term enslavement is typical of the new slavery, but "short" may mean ten weeks or ten years. Still another aspect is the slave's loss of control over his or her life and ongoing "obligation" to the slaveholder. The actual way in which this obligation is enforced varies a great deal, yet it is possible to use this dimension to outline three basic forms of slavery:

1. *Chattel slavery* is the form closest to the old slavery. A person is captured, born, or sold into permanent servitude, and ownership is often asserted. The slave's children are normally treated as property as well and can be sold by the slaveholder. Occasionally, these slaves are kept as items of conspicuous consumption. This form is most often found in northern and western Africa and some Arab countries, but it represents a very small proportion of slaves in the modern world. We will look at chattel slavery in Mauritania in chapter 3.

2. *Debt bondage* is the most common form of slavery in the world. A

person pledges him- or herself against a loan of money, but the length and nature of the service are not defined and the labor does not reduce the original debt. The debt can be passed down to subsequent generations, thus enslaving offspring; moreover, "defaulting" can be punished by seizing or selling children into further debt bonds. Ownership is not normally asserted, but there is complete physical control of the bonded laborer. Debt bondage is most common on the Indian subcontinent. We will look at it in Pakistan and India in chapters 5 and 6.

3. *Contract slavery* shows how modern labor relations are used to hide the new slavery. Contracts are offered that guarantee employment, perhaps in a workshop or factory, but when the workers are taken to their place of work they find themselves enslaved. The contract is used as an enticement to trick an individual into slavery, as well as a way of making the slavery look legitimate. If legal questions are raised, the contract can be produced, but the reality is that the "contract worker" is a slave, threatened by violence, lacking any freedom of movement, and paid nothing. The most rapidly growing form of slavery, this is the second-largest form today. Contract slavery is most often found in Southeast Asia, Brazil, some Arab states, and some parts of the Indian subcontinent. We will look at contract slavery in Thailand and Brazil in chapters 2 and 4.

These types are not mutually exclusive. Contracts may be issued to chattel slaves in order to conceal their enslavement. Girls trapped into prostitution by debt bondage will sometimes have contracts that specify their obligations. The important thing to remember is that *people are enslaved by violence and held against their wills for purposes of exploitation.* The categories just outlined are simply a way to help us track the patterns of enslavement, to clarify how slavery might be attacked.

A small percentage of slaves fall into a number of other readily identifiable kinds of slavery. These tend to be specific to particular geographical regions or political situations. A good example of slavery linked to politics is what is often called *war slavery*; this includes

government-sponsored slavery. In Burma today, there is widespread capture and enslavement of civilians by the government and the army. Tens of thousands of men, women, and children are used as laborers or bearers in military campaigns against indigenous peoples or on government construction projects. The Burmese military dictatorship doesn't suggest that it owns the people it has enslaved—in fact, it denies enslaving anyone—but the U.S. State Department and human rights organizations confirm that violence is used to hold a large number of people in bondage. Once again, the motive is economic gain: not to generate profits but to save transportation or production costs in the war effort, or labor costs in construction projects. One major project is the natural gas pipeline that Burma is building in partnership with the U.S. oil company Unocal, the French oil company Total, and the Thai company PTT Exploration and Production. These three companies are often featured in international and global mutual investment funds. The Thai company, which is owned in part by the Thai government, is recommended by one mutual fund as a "family" investment. In the pipeline project thousands of enslaved workers, including old men, pregnant women, and children, are forced at gunpoint to clear land and build a railway next to the pipeline.[10] War slavery is unique: this is slavery committed *by* the government, whereas most slavery happens in spite of the government.

In some parts of the Caribbean and in western Africa, children are given or sold into domestic service. They are sometimes called "restavecs." Ownership is not asserted, but strict control, enforced by violence, is maintained over the child. The domestic services performed by the enslaved child provide a sizable return on the investment in "upkeep." It is a culturally approved way of dealing with "extra" children; some are treated well, but for most it is a kind of slavery that lasts until adulthood.[11]

Slavery can also be linked to religion, as with the Indian *devadasi* women we will meet in chapter 6, or the children who are ritual slaves in Ghana.[12] Several thousand girls and young women are given by their

families as slaves to local fetish priests in southeastern Ghana, Togo, Benin, and southwestern Nigeria. In a custom very alien to Western sensibilities the girls are enslaved in order to atone for sins committed by members of their families, often rape. The girls may, in fact, be the products of rape, and their slavery is seen as a way of appeasing the gods for that or other crimes committed by their male relatives. A girl, who *must* be a virgin, is given to the local priest as a slave when she is about ten years old. The girl then stays with the priest—cooking, cleaning, farming, and serving him sexually—until he frees her, usually after she has borne several children. At that point the slave's family must provide another young girl to replace her. Ghana's constitution forbids slavery, but the practice is justified on religious grounds by villagers and priests.

As can be seen from these cases, slavery comes in many forms. Moreover, slavery can be found in virtually every country. A recent investigation in Great Britain found young girls held in slavery and forced to be prostitutes in Birmingham and Manchester.[13] Enslaved domestic workers have been found and freed in London and Paris. In the United States farmworkers have been found locked inside barracks and working under armed guards as field slaves. Enslaved Thai and Philippine women have been freed from brothels in New York, Seattle, and Los Angeles.[14] This list could go on and on. Almost all of the countries where slavery "cannot" exist have slaves inside their borders—but, it must be said, in very small numbers compared to the Indian subcontinent and the Far East. The important point is that slaves constitute a vast workforce supporting the global economy we all depend upon.

The New Slavery and the Global Economy

Just how much does slave labor contribute to the global economy? Inevitably, determining the exact contribution of slaves to the world economy is very difficult because no reliable information is available

for most types of slavery. Nevertheless, a few rough calculations are possible.

Agricultural bonded laborers, after an initial loan (think of this as the purchase price) of around $50, generate up to 100 percent net profit for the slaveholders. If there are an estimated 18 million such workers, the annual profit generated would be on the order of $860 million, though this might be distributed to as many as 5 million slaveholders. If 200,000 women and children are enslaved as prostitutes, a not unreasonable guess, and if the financial breakdown found in Thai prostitution is used as a guide, then these slaves would generate a total annual profit of $10.5 billion.

If these sums are averaged to reflect a world population of 27 million slaves, the total yearly profit generated by slaves would be on the order of $13 billion. This is a very rough estimate. But we might put this sum into global perspective by noting that $13 billion is approximately equal to the amount the Dutch spent last year on tourism, or substantially less than the personal worth of Microsoft founder Bill Gates.

Although the direct value of slave labor in the world economy may seem relatively small, the indirect value is much greater. For example, slave-produced charcoal is crucial to making steel in Brazil. Much of this steel is then made into the cars, car parts, and other metal goods that make up a quarter of all Brazil's exports. Britain alone imports $1.6 billion in goods from Brazil each year, the United States significantly more.[15] Slavery lowers a factory's production costs; these savings can be passed up the economic stream, ultimately reaching shops of Europe and North America as lower prices or higher profits for retailers. Goods directly produced by slaves are also exported, and follow the same pattern. It is most likely that slave-produced goods and goods assembled from slave-made components have the effect of increasing profits rather than just lowering consumer prices, as they are mixed into the flow of other products. I'd like to believe that most Western consumers, if they could identify slave-produced goods, would avoid them despite their lower price. But consumers do look for bargains,

and they don't usually stop to ask why a product is so cheap. We have to face facts: by always looking for the best deal, we may be choosing slave-made goods without knowing what we are buying. And the impact of slavery reverberates through the world economy in ways even harder to escape. Workers making computer parts or televisions in India can be paid low wages in part because food produced by slave labor is so cheap. This lowers the cost of the goods they make, and factories unable to compete with their prices close in North America and Europe. Slave labor anywhere threatens real jobs everywhere.

That slavery is an international economic activity suggests something about the way it is, and the way it isn't, being combated: there are almost no economic controls on slaveholding and the slave trade. Consider, in contrast, the pursuit of Colombian cocaine barons. Rarely are these men arrested for making or distributing drugs. Time after time they are caught for financial wrongdoing—tax avoidance, money laundering, or fraud and the falsification of records. In late 1996 one drug cartel lost $36 million, which was confiscated on money-laundering charges by the U.S. Justice Department. Bringing down criminals by investigating their finances and enforcing economic sanctions has been shown to be effective, yet these techniques are rarely applied to the crime of slavery. The power of a great range of organizations—the World Bank, national regulatory agencies, trade organizations, regional customs and excise units, individual companies, consumer groups—could be harnessed to break the profits of slavers. We will look more closely at this potential in the final chapter. But we need to understand how the new slavery works if we are going to do anything to stop it.

WHY BUY THE COW?—CONTROL WITHOUT OWNERSHIP One of the drawbacks of the old slavery was the cost of maintaining slaves who were too young or too old. Careful analysis of both American cotton plantations and Brazilian coffee farms in the 1800s shows that the productivity of slaves was linked to their age.[16] Children did not bring in more than they cost until the age of ten or twelve, though they were put to work

as early as possible. Productivity and profits to be made from a slave peaked at about age thirty and fell off sharply when a slave was fifty or more. Slavery was profitable, but the profitability was diminished by the cost of keeping infants, small children, and unproductive old people. The new slavery avoids this extra cost and so increases its profits.

The new slavery mimics the world economy by shifting away from ownership and fixed asset management, concentrating instead on control and use of resources or processes. Put another way, it is like the shift from the "ownership" of colonies in the last century to the economic exploitation of those same countries today without the cost and trouble of maintaining colonies. Transnational companies today do what European empires did in the last century—exploit natural resources and take advantage of low-cost labor—but without needing to take over and govern the entire country. Similarly, the new slavery appropriates the economic value of individuals while keeping them under complete coercive control—but without asserting ownership or accepting responsibility for their survival. The result is much greater economic efficiency: useless and unprofitable infants, the elderly, and the sick or injured are dumped. Seasonal tasks are met with seasonal enslavement, as in the case of Haitian sugarcane cutters.[17] In the new slavery, the slave is a consumable item, added to the production process when needed, but no longer carrying a high capital cost.

This shift from ownership to control and appropriation applies to virtually all modern slavery across national or cultural boundaries, whether the slave is cutting cane in the Caribbean, making bricks in the Punjab, mining in Brazil, or being kept as a prostitute in Thailand. Mirroring modern economic practice, slavery in this respect is being transformed from culturally specific forms to an emerging standardized or globalized form. The world shrinks through increasingly easy communication. The slaveholders in Pakistan or Brazil watch television just like everyone else. When they see that industries in many countries are switching to a "just in time" system for the delivery of raw materials or necessary labor, they draw the same conclusions about profitability

as did those corporations. As jobs for life disappear from the world economy, so too does slavery for life. The economic advantages of short-term enslavement far outweigh the costs of buying new slaves when needed.

LEGAL FICTIONS Today accepted systems of labor relations are used to legitimate and conceal slavery. Much modern slavery is hidden behind a mask of fraudulent labor contracts, which are most common in the fastest-growing areas of slavery. The contracts have two main uses for the slaveholder—entrapment and concealment. The use of false contracts is part of the globalization of slavery; the basic process of recruitment into slavery by fraudulent contract is the same from Brazil to Thailand. It allows slaves to be taken both into countries where their enslavement is relatively easily achieved (e.g., Filipinas taken to Saudi Arabia) and into countries where their enslavement would not normally be allowed. It is estimated, for example, that there are up to 1,000 domestic slaves in London,[18] all of whom are covered by a contract of employment and by the recognition of that contract by British immigration control staff on their arrival.

False contracts work on several levels. Shown to people desperate for paid work, these contracts are a powerful incentive to get into the back of the truck that carries them into slavery. Among the rural poor of many countries, the well-spoken and well-dressed recruitment agent with the official and legal-looking document commands attention. Assured that the contract guarantees good treatment, that it sets clear legal rights and wages for the worker, the potential slave signs happily and places him- or herself in the hands of the slaver. After being used to entice workers into slavery, after bringing them far enough from their homes that violence can be used to control them, the contract can be thrown away. But it is more likely that it will be kept, for it has other uses for the slaveholder.

Since slavery is illegal in all countries, it must be concealed. Even in places where the police work hand in hand with the slaveholders

and share in their profits, no one wants to advertise the fact that he or she is a slaveholder. It may be that local custom and culture support slavery and that most of the population knows of its existence, but admitting it is something else again. Here false contracts conceal slavery. Slaveholders can easily force their slaves to sign anything: mortgages, loan agreements, indentures, or labor contracts. If questions are raised, signed contracts are produced and corrupt law enforcement looks the other way. Even in countries with mostly honest and conscientious police, the contracts hide slavery. In Britain, domestic servants brought into the country depend for their livelihood and immigration status on their employer, whose name is added to their passport when they enter the country; in other words, the law reinforces the dependence of the servant on the master. Under a concession in British immigration law, foreigners moving to or visiting the United Kingdom as well as returning British nationals have been allowed to bring their domestic servants. Immigration staff are supposed to make sure that these servants are at least seventeen years old and have been employed as servants for at least a year. Yet the system can readily be abused. Most of the servants do not speak English and are told how and what they must answer if questioned by immigration officials. False contracts can be shown that date employment to more than a year previous. But most important, none of the existing checks can uncover a slave of long standing, brought as a servant with a family group. Neither do they protect a servant once he or she is in the country. The story of Laxmi Swami, taken from Bridget Anderson's *Britain's Secret Slaves*, is typical:

> Born in India, Laxmi Swami came to Britain via Kuwait under the Home Office Concession as the servant to two half-sisters of the Emir of Kuwait. The princesses regularly spent six months of the year in Bayswater, central London, taking their servants with them. They subjected these women to extreme cruelty, both physical and mental: beatings, whether with a broomstick, a knotted electric flex or a horsewhip, were routine; Laxmi's eyes were damaged when they threw a bunch of keys at her face; they yanked out two

gold teeth. They told her that one of her four children had been killed in a motorcycle accident, and beat her when she broke down and cried. It was only years later that she discovered they were lying.

While in London the princesses frequently went out at 8pm and returned home at two or three o'clock in the morning. While they were away Laxmi had to stand by the door exactly where they had left her. On their return she had to massage their hands and feet and, should they be in a bad mood, suffer kicks while she did so. She slept, rarely for more than two hours a night, on the floor outside the locked kitchen, drinking forbidden water from the bath tap. She was permanently hungry and often denied food altogether for days at a time. There was plenty of food, but it was in the dustbin and deliberately spoiled so that she could not eat it even if she managed to put her hands between the bars on the windows and reach it.[19]

One day, by chance, the front door was left unlocked and Laxmi managed to escape. When she reached the Indian High Commission they sent her back to the princesses because she could not afford the airfare home. To add legal insult to her injuries, as soon as Laxmi ran away from her "employers" she was in violation of the immigration rules that tied her to them, and she was liable for immediate deportation. An investigation by Anti-Slavery International held "the effects of the Immigration Acts as they touch upon overseas domestic workers, the non-issuance of work permits to these workers, and the effective treatment of these workers as appendages of the employer rather than individuals in their own right, to be responsible for the servitude these domestics suffer in Britain. The Home Office, however inadvertently, is supporting slavery."[20]

If governments in countries such as Britain that abjure slavery can be duped, imagine how easily those who profit from slavery can be convinced to ignore it. In Thailand the government has always been ambivalent about the commercial sex trade and not particularly interested in making those involved with it comply with laws that would markedly

reduce the incomes of many police officials. The extreme profitability of slavery means that slaveholders can buy political power and acceptance. In Thailand, Pakistan, India, and Brazil, local police act as enforcers of the "contracts" that conceal slavery. These police are the muscle for hire that can be sent after a runaway slave. Their availability and use by slaveholders point to another central theme in the new slavery: its emergence when the social order breaks down.

THE WILD WEST SYNDROME It is the hallmark of a civilized society that the government has a monopoly over armed violence. That is not to say that violence does not occur in advanced democracies, but when it does the force of the state is brought to bear and attempts are made to lock up the violent person. In our minds, lawlessness means fearing violence at every moment, as chaos and brutality reign. Order and safety mean that there are laws that most people obey most of the time, and legal force backs up those laws. For those who have always lived in a society where the police are usually honest, where criminals are usually locked up, where disagreements end in bad feelings and not death, it is hard to imagine the lawlessness in much of the developing world. The old Wild West has the reputation of having been lawless, in a dusty past when gunslingers could terrorize whole towns, but even then a sheriff or a U.S. marshal was ready to clean up Deadwood come morning. The reality in parts of the developing world today is much, much worse.

In Europe and North America the police fight organized crime; in Thailand the police *are* organized crime. The same holds true for many parts of Africa and Asia: the state's monopoly on violence, the monopoly that should protect citizens, has been turned against them. This disintegration of civil order often occurs in times of rapid social and political change. A community under stress, whether caused by disease, natural disaster, economic depression, or war, can break up and descend into the horror of "might makes right." These are the conditions found in areas of rapid development such as the frontier areas of Brazil or at the rural/urban interface in Thailand. There, transitional

economies drive farming families off the land and leave them destitute, while fostering a demand for unskilled labor in the cities. With destitution, traditional systems of family or community support for the vulnerable collapse—and in these countries they are not replaced with any effective state welfare measures. Without protection or alternatives, the poor become powerless, and the violent, without state intervention, become supremely powerful.

Slavery blossoms in these circumstances. To control their slaves, slaveholders must be able to use violence as much and as often as they choose. Without permanent access to violence, they are impotent. The old slavery often regulated the violence a master could use against a slave. Though often ignored, the slave codes of the American South, which prohibited the teaching of reading and writing and recommended a program of strict discipline, also protected slaves from murder and mutilation and set minimum standards of food and clothing.[21] However, the codes gave the master, as his legal right, a complete monopoly on violence short of murder. If the master needed it, the law and the power of the state would back him up, for the state *was* allowed to murder (execute) slaves. Today, the monopoly of violence is often decentralized. It resides not in national law but in the hands and weapons of local police or soldiers. In fact, we can say that this transfer of the monopoly of violence from central government to local thugs is essential if the new slavery is to take root and flourish. What normally brings it about is the head-on collision of the modern and traditional ways of life.

Transition zones where the world's industrial economy meets the traditional culture of peasant farming are found throughout the developing world. At the interface there are often bloody struggles over the control of natural resources. In the Amazon a small but terrible war continues over the region's mineral wealth and timber as the line of exploitation advances. The Amazonian Indians have little to fight with, and they are pushed back repeatedly, killed wholesale, and sometimes enslaved. The new open mines ripped from the forests are hundreds of

miles from direct government control. Here those with the most firepower run the show, and those without weapons obey orders or disappear. The few local police have a choice: cooperate with the thugs and make a profit, or attempt to enforce the law and die. The result is the lawlessness and terror that Antonia Pinto described at the beginning of this chapter. In a mining village that does not expect the government to interfere anytime soon, the choice is clear and a brutal social order asserts itself. The situation in Brazil is dramatic, but the same trend appears from rural Ghana to the slums of Bangkok, from the highlands of Pakistan to the villages of the Philippines—and this Wild West syndrome strongly affects what can be done to end slavery.

From Knowledge to Freedom

Looking at the nature of the new slavery we see obvious themes: slaves are cheap and disposable; control continues without legal ownership; slavery is hidden behind contracts; and slavery flourishes in communities under stress. Those social conditions have to exist side by side with an economy that fosters slavery. Order sometimes breaks down in European or American communities, but slavery doesn't take hold. This is because very, very few people live in the kind of destitution that makes them good candidates for slavery. In most Western countries the extreme differential in power needed to enslave doesn't exist, and the idea of slavery is abhorrent. When most of the population has a reasonable standard of living and some financial security (whether their own or assured by government safety nets), slavery can't thrive.

Slavery grows best in extreme poverty, so we can identify its *economic* as well as social preconditions. Most obviously, there have to be people, perhaps nonnative to an area, who can be enslaved as well as a demand for slave labor. Slaveholders must have the resources to fund the purchase, capture, or enticement of slaves and the power to control them after enslavement. The cost of keeping a slave has to be less than or equal to the cost of hiring free labor. And there must be a demand

for slave products at a price that makes slaveholding profitable. Moreover, the potential slave must lack perceived alternatives to enslavement. Being poor, homeless, a refugee, or abandoned can all lead to the desperation that opens the door to slavery, making it easy for the slaver to lay an attractive trap. And when slaves are kidnapped, they must lack sufficient power to defend themselves against that violent enslavement.

It may seem that I am too insistent on setting out these conditions and themes in the new slavery. But the new slavery is like a new disease for which no vaccine exists. Until we really understand it, until we really know what makes it work, we have little chance of stopping it. And this disease is spreading. As the new slavery increases, the number of people enslaved grows every day. We're facing an epidemic of slavery that is tied through the global economy to our own lives.

These conditions also suggest why some of the current strategies might not stop the new slavery. Legal remedies that enforce prohibitions against ownership are ineffective, since enslavement and control are achieved without ownership.[22] When ownership is not required for slavery, it can be concealed or legitimated within normal labor contracts. For laws against slavery to work, there must be clear violations that can be prosecuted. To be sure, other laws make it a violation to take away basic human rights, to restrict movement, to take labor without pay, or to force people to work in dangerous conditions. Slavery is unquestionably the ultimate human rights violation short of murder, but to uncover such violations requires two things: political will and an ability to protect the victim. If a government has no motivation to guarantee human rights within its borders, those rights can disappear. If those whose rights are violated cannot find protection, they are unlikely to accuse and fight those with guns and power. Such is the case in many of the countries where slavery exists today.

This lack of protection is the main problem in trying to stop the new slavery. The United Nations calls on national governments to protect their citizens and enforce their laws. But if the governments choose to

ignore the UN, there is little that the UN can do. In 1986 the United Nations received reports of families being kidnapped into slavery in Sudan. In 1996, ten years after being asked to address the problem, the government of Sudan finally announced an official inquiry. Its deadline for announcing the results of the inquiry, August 1996, passed without any comment; meanwhile new reports indicate that Dinka women and children in the Sudan are still being kidnapped and forced into slavery by government-backed militias. If slavery continues because national governments turn a blind eye, cooperate with slaveholders, or even enslave people themselves, then the diplomatic approach will have little impact.

That is why it is necessary to ask two questions: What can make (or help) these governments protect their own citizens? And what do we know about the new slavery that can help us put a stop to it, if national governments won't? Both have economic answers. If we have learned one thing from the end of apartheid in South Africa, it is that hitting a government in the pocketbook hard enough can make it change its ways. If slavery stops being profitable, there is little motivation to enslave. But what do we really know about the economics of the new slavery? The answer, I'm afraid, is almost nothing. That is the reason I began this journey. In Thailand, Mauritania, Brazil, Pakistan, and India (all countries that have signed the United Nations agreements on slavery and bonded labor), I investigated local slavery. In each case I looked hard into how slavery worked as a *business*, and how the surrounding community protected slavery by custom or ignored it in fear. When you have met the slaves I met and come to understand their lives, when you have heard the justifications of the slaveholders and the government officials, then you will know the new slavery and, I hope, how we can work to stop it.