

# **Human Trafficking**

## **Contribution by CAPP USA**

### *1. Introduction*

In preparation for the 2017 FCAPP International Conference at the Vatican, the US branch of the *Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice* Foundation (CAPP-USA) sponsored a Consultation on Human Trafficking at Fordham University in New York City on Thursday, 23 February 2017. The consultation was made possible by the generous financial support of the Cassamarca Foundation.

After noting that the international conference in May 2017 would be hosting a session on “The Fight against Human Smuggling and Economic Crime,” CAPP-USA chose the topic of human trafficking for their February 2017 consultation. By choosing this topic they also hoped to respond to the Holy Father’s call to raise awareness and to engage in action to end human trafficking.

*“One of the most troubling of those open wounds is the trade in human beings, a modern form of slavery, which violates the God-given dignity of so many of our brothers and sisters and constitutes a true crime against humanity. While much has been accomplished in acknowledging its gravity and extent, much more needs to be done on the level of raising public consciousness and effecting a better coordination of efforts by governments, the judiciary, law enforcement officials and social workers.” - Pope Francis, July 2016<sup>1</sup>*

The consultation brought together stakeholders from academia, law enforcement, civil society, and the Church for an evening of discussion and coalition building. The consultation also honored Archbishop Bernardito C. Auza as the inaugural Cassamarca Foundation Chair in Migration and Globalization at Fordham University’s Graduate Program in International Political Economy and Development. Archbishop Auza is currently the Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations. Technical experts joined the conversation to contextualize human trafficking as a local issue affecting New York and the broader United States, and in particular migrant communities from Latin America. Sharing experiences from diverse professional backgrounds, the audience strategized around opportunities for collaborative action across universities, parishes, and government to end human trafficking.

The first and public part of the consultation consisted of Archbishop Auza’s keynote speech, followed by the comments of two discussants and concluded with some questions and answers. Slightly more than 100 people attended the public portion of the consultation.

### *2. Archbishop’s Auza’s Keynote Speech*

Archbishop Auza’s keynote speech on “The Holy See and the Fight against Human Trafficking” set the scene for the evening’s discussion, describing a vast, complex and violent phenomenon

that ensnares 40 million people worldwide. Preying upon the marginalized and voiceless, traffickers exploit situations of conflict and poverty for profit by funneling victims into slave labor, sex work, the drug trade, and forced organ donation. As the global refugee crisis has called attention to the vulnerability of migrants, United Nations members have begun negotiations on a framework to criminalize human trafficking, but have failed to find consensus.

Besides giving a statistical overview, providing some explanations of why people are trafficked and commenting on the work of the United Nations, Archbishop Auza also described what previous Popes, the Holy See and the Catholic Church have been doing. He also described the anti-human trafficking efforts of the Permanent Observation Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations. And he clearly noted the strong leadership of Pope Francis on this issue.

The full text of Archbishop Auza's speech is reproduced in our complete report on the *Fordham Consultation on Human Trafficking*.

### 3. *Discussants*

Ms. Jayne Bigelson, Director of Anti-Human Trafficking Initiatives at Covenant House, and Michael Osborn, Assistant Special Agent in Charge of the Violent Crimes against Children Unit at the New York Field Office of the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation, joined the Archbishop in conversation to bring a local dimension to this global problem.

Covenant House serves homeless youth in Manhattan, sheltering over 200 young people nightly and providing education, job training, and health care to those in need. Recognizing that homeless youth are uniquely vulnerable to trafficking, Ms. Bigelson, a Fordham alumna, applied her background in Applied Development Psychology to conduct a prevalence study and develop tools to identify trafficking victims. Hearing over and over that "a place to stay, someone who cared, job training and education" could have prevented trafficking, Ms. Bigelson and Covenant House worked with a local group of nuns to create a program to provide comprehensive care and counselling for survivors. Recalling her conversations with victims, Ms. Bigelson urged the audience to individual action. "What's the best way to combat trafficking? Be a good mentor or a good foster parent." She also called for advocacy to reform state-level trafficking legislation and to shut-down Backpage.com, a classified advertising website which has been criticized for permitting listings of sexual services.

Mr. Osborn's statement echoed the need for legal reform, specifically highlighting the California penal code which classifies 'human trafficking involving a minor' as a nonviolent felony. With the FBI's Innocence Lost National Initiative, Mr. Osborn is working to increase awareness of the vulnerability of children to traffickers by training law enforcement and judges to identify and report potential victims. He also collaborates with NGOs across the country to develop preventative measures and protect at-risk youth before they become victims. He encouraged audience members to get involved, "As a society, we need your energy, your contacts, and your focus on this issue. If we don't take action, we will lose generations of children around the world to human trafficking."

#### *4. Questions and Answers*

Responding to a question from the audience on the debate over the legitimacy of the term ‘sex worker,’ the panel expressed opposition to legalizing prostitution. Archbishop Auza recalled the story of a human trafficking victim who has become one of the central leaders of the anti-legalization movement in Europe and an advocate for the ‘Nordic Model,’ which recognizes prostitutes as victims of sexual exploitation and “puts the full weight of the law on clients and pimps.” Calling the legalization debate “the question that has torn the anti-trafficking movement apart,” Ms. Bigelson asked people on both sides of the debate to put aside their differences, “The feud doesn’t help us. Let’s focus on the things we agree on to pass legislation.”

While many international efforts are focused on the supply side of trafficking, Archbishop Auza advocated for a more comprehensive approach stating, “Human trafficking is lucrative because there is a huge demand and huge profit margins. Fighting demand is the key to ending human trafficking.” Mr. Osborn concurred, “We need to be creative to attack all three prongs of the issue: supply, demand, and facilitators.” Crediting President Obama’s 2012 speech on trafficking for bringing the issue to national attention, Mr. Osborn called upon local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies to collaborate and work strategically to support each other.

#### *5. Working Dinner Consultation*

Following the public presentations, nineteen members of CAPP-USA had dinner with our keynote speaker, discussants, several members of the Fordham community, and several staff members from the Holy See Mission to the United Nations.

After dinner the consultation continued. Archbishop Auza, Ms. Bigelson, and Mr. Osborn were joined by a panel that included: Ms. Kelly Agnew-Barjas, Director of Refugee Resettlement at the Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York; Dr. Carole Cox, Professor in the Graduate School of Social Service at Fordham University; Dr. Amelio D’Onofrio, Clinical Professor and Director of the Psychological Services Institute in the Graduate School of Education at Fordham University; Dr. Marcianna Popescu, Associate Professor in the Graduate School of Social Service at Fordham University; and Dr. Diane Rodriguez, Associate Professor in the Graduate School of Education at Fordham University. The panel was deftly moderated by Dr. Jonathan Crystal, Associate Vice President and Associate Chief Academic Officer at Fordham University.

The discussion was wide-ranging. Panelists described instances of human trafficking from across the world--Albania, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Italy, Mexico, New York--underlining the truly global nature of the crisis. One panelist, as a board member on a migrant Head Start program, highlighted the expense of being smuggled--and the fine line between “smuggling” and “trafficking.” A Cuban national might start her journey by flying to Peru, and then traveling to Colombia, and flying to Panama. With each move the cost increases. Eventually she arrives in Mexico, where the cost of being smuggled into the United States is enormous, reaching toward \$10,000. This debt amplifies the migrant’s vulnerability. When she arrives, if the debt isn’t paid, smuggling can quickly morph into human trafficking. In the current political climate--particularly in the United States--smugglers and human traffickers stand to benefit.

Panelists highlighted both the trauma inflicted upon survivors of human trafficking, as well as the resilience they embody in charting a path forward. It's incredibly important to be sensitive to that trauma. As an example, if an individual was trafficked in domestic servitude, domestic work could re-traumatize her. In the case of sex trafficking, victims are often experiencing secondary trauma from being trafficked; the primary trauma often results from being abused in the home. As one panelist noted, the degree of incest in these cases "shatters the soul."

Raising awareness among individuals and communities regarding the scope of human trafficking and the many forms in which it occurs is crucial. One way to accomplish this is to provide training to volunteers who may be in a position to identify instances of trafficking, but do not have the tools to do so. The media also plays a role in raising awareness. Unfortunately, current coverage doesn't provide a true reflection of the victims of trafficking or the scale of the issue. At its core, trafficking is a women's issue, and in a patriarchal society, it's not given the attention it deserves. When the issue is covered, a media outlet might seek out a story "their viewers can relate to." In practice this means covering a story about a white, suburban, teenage girl. While in reality a victim of human trafficking is much more likely to be poor and a person of color.

The panelists continued to return to the issue of cooperation and coordination. In order to effectively combat human trafficking, social organizations--both domestic and international--need to work together, and resist the tendency to "compete," or squabble over semantics when human lives are in the balance. Policy--at the international, national, and local level--must be coordinated, and take into consideration the unintended consequences of strict labels and quotas established for the purpose of earning political points. An example was given from Austria. If a person labeled as a refugee can only earn an income through "self-employment," she may be at greater risk for being pulled into sex trafficking.

Archbishop Auza returned to the question, "Why are people trafficked?" He argued that the most common explanation and the biggest root cause is poverty. A person experiencing, or trapped in, or mired in poverty is vulnerable on many levels. Poverty drives one to consider options they otherwise never would. If a woman could provide for her children, would she risk everything to leave her community? Would she consider being smuggled, and put herself at risk of becoming a victim of human trafficking?

## *6. Conclusion*

In summary the following themes emerged from the consultation:

- The scale of the issue of human trafficking is immense, with a consequent need to meet the challenge with a matching level of resources and commitment.
- There is a need for cohesion and cooperation, as opposed to infighting and division, among the many entities attempting to combat human trafficking.
- There are multiple entities with different viewpoints and roles to play in addressing the deep human pain of human trafficking: governmental policy, law enforcement, and non-governmental organizations (NGO).
- Human trafficking is "under our noses" and "in our backyards."

- The current political climate (anti-refugee/immigrant/migrant) benefits traffickers.
- Poverty is a root cause.
- The fact that this is largely a crime against women and children.
- There has been a failure of the media to constructively raise awareness.

*This paper has been prepared at the request of the Centesimus Annus pro Pontifice Foundation. The paper will be circulated under the authors' responsibility to elicit comments and to encourage debate; the views therein expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the CAPP Foundation.*

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<sup>i</sup> Pope Francis' Address to the Religious in Europe Networking Against Trafficking and Exploitation, 2<sup>nd</sup> European Assembly, Rome, 11 July 2016.