

THE IMPACT OF HISTORICAL OPPRESSION ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING

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#CARE4SELF CARE4OTHERS

WE CAN'T CARE FOR OTHERS IF
WE DON'T CARE FOR OURSELVES



GETTING STARTED

What role models do you
look up to who are the
same gender, ethnicity,
sexual orientation, etc. as
you?



GETTING STARTED

In many ways, the United States and other governments face human trafficking challenges and trends today that reflect the living legacy of the systemic racism and colonization globalized during the transatlantic slave trade through chattel slavery and regional practices of indigenous dispossession. U.S. and global data show human traffickers disproportionately target those in positions of socioeconomic or political vulnerability due to discriminatory policies, who are often people of color or part of a racial minority. While U.S. efforts to combat human trafficking have grown in magnitude and sophistication over the years, the United States still struggles with how to address the disparate effects of human trafficking on racial minority communities. To be truly effective, a comprehensive approach to prosecution, protection, and—most of all—prevention must embed racial justice and equity across its policies and programs. ~ US Department of State

U.S. Department of State (2021). Acknowledging Historical and Ongoing Harm: The Connections Between Systems Racism and Human Trafficking. <https://www.state.gov/acknowledging-historical-and-ongoing-harm-the-connections-between-systems-racism-and-human-trafficking/>



“VICTIM” STATUS

How does gender, ethnicity, etc. impact society's idea of who is victimized in trafficking?



“VICTIM” STATUS

The debates, however, presume that all minors are afforded “victim” status where their morality and lack of agency are uncontested, and that implementing support services is a non-issue. This couldn't be further from the truth. Not only is victimhood racially coded, but the debates surrounding consent in the adult prostitution context spill over in the juvenile realm. ~ Jasmine Philips

Philips, J. (2018). Black Girls and the (Im)possibilities of a Victim Trope: The Intersectional Failures of Legal and Advocacy Interventions in the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Minors in the United States. *UCLA Law Review*, 106(2). Retrieved from https://www.cslawreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Philips_106_2_Trap.pdf and her citations



INTERSECTIONALITY

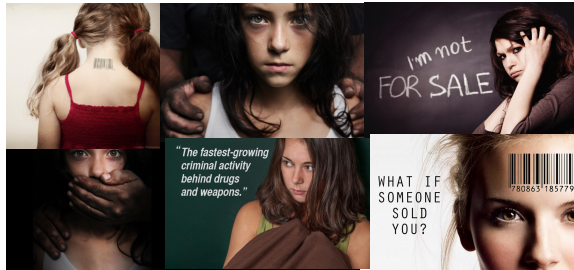
“Because the overwhelming majority of trafficked persons are women, trafficking is usually considered to be a gender issue and the result of discrimination on the basis of sex. It is rarely analyzed from the perspective of race discrimination. There has been little discussion of whether race, or other forms of discrimination, contribute to the likelihood of women and girls becoming victims of trafficking.”

United Nations (2011). World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. Retrieved from http://www.un.org/RC/othidocs/whdtrfing_a.pdf



INTERSECTIONALITY

Overrepresentation of youth of color who are CSEC victims yet...



INTERSECTIONALITY

“Race and racism have played a role in creating the epidemic of sex trafficking in the United States and have undermined effective legal and policy responses. Race intersects with other forms of subordination including gender, class, and age to push people of color disproportionately into prostitution and keep them trapped in the commercial sex industry. This intersectional oppression is fueled by the persistence of myths about minority teen sexuality, which in turn encourages risky sexual behavior.” ~ Cheryl Nelson Butler

Nelson Butler, C. (2017). The Racial Roots of Human Trafficking. CCSA Law Review, 52, 1044-1014, p. 1054



A TIME TO KILL



WHO EXPLOITS?

How does
intersectionality
impact society's idea
of who exploits youth?



WHO EXPLOITS?

Instead of adopting strategies to increase social support and the development of community-based responses in low-income communities, anti-trafficking advocates place overwhelming emphasis on developing stronger methods of gathering evidence, capturing traffickers, and lengthening prison terms. Relying primarily on punitive criminal justice interventions does not comprehensively address the needs of youth involved in the sex trade nor does it make communities of color safer. Punitive policies produce disparate outcomes for low-income communities, particularly Black communities, where Black men are disproportionately policed and prosecuted as exploiters. ~ Jasmine Philips

21. 22 see also in Philips, J. (2019). Black Girls and the Un/possibilities of a Victim-Image: The Intersectional Politics of Legal and Advocacy Interventions in the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Minors in the United States. UCLA Law Review, 1962. Retrieved from https://www.law.ucla.edu/sites/default/files/2019/08/Philips_Book_8_15.pdf and her citations



WHO EXPLOITS?

Researchers in San Diego interviewed exploiters who were currently incarcerated and noted . . . “We encountered roughly equal numbers of White (34%) and Black (32%) facilitators of sex trafficking during interviews in the jails, with Hispanics coming in third (24%). In fact, the ratio of white to minority facilitators may be higher than is reported here given that our data does not account for the over-representation of Black and Hispanic inmates in California jails.”

Corcoran, A., & Gies, J. (2016). The Nature and Extent of Gang Involvement in Sex Trafficking in San Diego County, p. 13. Retrieved from <https://www.crimprofiles.org/works/248837.pdf>



HISTORICAL OPPRESSION OF AFRICAN AMERICANS

➤ Black female sexuality during slavery

- Black females were over-sexualized and represented as “symbol[s] of lust, sexual immorality, ‘innate wickedness,’ and even ‘disobedience to God’”
 - Justified the sexual abuse of Black women by White men because Black women and girls had an “insatiable appetite for free and loose sex”
 - Justified the economic gain of using “Black women as breeders of slave children”
 - Sexual exploitation became a “weapon of political terror”
- Led to White women being seen as superior and the association of womanhood with whiteness

Carey, A.D. (2015). Three Strategies of Scholarly Engagement: California Madonnas' Ethical Entrenchment, Transformational Politics, and Personal Commitment. 46: *Texas Law Review*, 46(1), 25. as cited in: Nelson Butler, C. (2015). *The Racial Roots of Sex Trafficking*. *UCLA Law Review* 62(1484-1514, p. 1484. Nelson Butler, C. (2015). *The Racial Roots of Human Trafficking*. *UCLA Law Review* 62(1484-1514, p. 1484.



HISTORICAL OPPRESSION OF AFRICAN AMERICANS

Black In Europe and the US, black women were historically viewed as community property. A black woman's body was there for others' power, pleasure and profit. As slaves in the 1800s, they were reduced to nothing more than “breeders”, and were frequently raped by slave owners. What's more, “Black women were / are blamed for the sexual violence committed against them because of stereotypical beliefs that they invited this behavior.”

Carey, (2015). *Wages of Sin: Race and Sex in the Slave South*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.



HISTORICAL OPPRESSION OF AFRICAN AMERICANS

Many people have said that prostitution is tolerated in the Black community. They are wrong. We do not tolerate prostitution; it has been imposed upon us. I have been imposed upon us since the days of slavery, when the master came out to the field and chose whichever Black women he wanted to have sex with. Light-skinned slaves known as “fancy girls,” were sold at high prices in the marketplace and later “rented out” or sold to brothels. Today, middle-class white men from the suburbs drive through the ghettos of America to pick out whichever Black women or girls they want to have sex with, as if our cities were their own private plantation.

Nelson, K. (1993). Prostitution: Where Racism & Sexism Intersect. *Michigan Journal of Gender & Law*, 1(1), 81-88.



HISTORICAL OPPRESSION OF AFRICAN AMERICANS

➤ Black male sexuality during slavery

- Black males were seen as “sexual deviants” and also experienced sexual abuse and exploitation
- “Black men were stereotyped as ‘particularly sexual, prone to sensual indulgence, and desiring’”
- Black males were forced to breed slave children and were referred to as ‘stock men’ or ‘bulls’
 - Denied Black males the opportunity to father their children
 - Prohibited Black males from committing to one woman

Forbes, T. A. (2011). The Sexual Abuse of Black Men Under American Slavery. *30 Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 445-467-52 (2011), as cited in: Nelson-Ricci, C. (2015). *The Racial Roots of Human Trafficking*. *USCA Law Review*, 42, 484-519.



IMPACT OF TRAUMA

The powerful Western image of childhood innocence does not seem to benefit Black children. Black children are born guilty.

Roberts, D. E. (1994). The Value of Black Children's Work. *Connecticut Law Review*, 26, 871-877, as cited in: Davis, P. A. (2012). *Stealing Childhood: Examining the Racialized Construction of Childhood and Innocence in the Treatment of Sexually Exploited Minors*. *USCA Law Review* (32), 1380-1393, p. 1388.



HISTORICAL OPPRESSION OF AFRICAN AMERICANS

- The lasting impact of slavery
 - Black males are stereotyped as sexual predators and criminals
 - Black females are stereotyped as “consenting prostitutes”

Hale, C.D. (2010). *Tell with This Like a Woman: African American Women, Justice, and Politics* in New York, 1890-1935, as cited in: Nelson Butler, C. (2010). *The Racial Roots of Human Trafficking*. UCLA Law Review, 42, p. 1049-1074, p. 1064. Nelson Butler, C. (2010). *The Racial Roots of Human Trafficking*. UCLA Law Review, 42, p. 1049-1074, p. 1064.



HISTORICAL OPPRESSION OF AFRICAN AMERICANS

- During colonization
 - Native women were stereotyped as sexually loose, mercenary, and innately immoral
 - Native men were seen as ineffective and lazy
 - Native women became “secondary wives” with no legal rights and were abandoned when European women arrive
 - US military justified the rape, murder, and sexual mutilation of Native women because they were “breeders”

Pharris, M. (2010). *The History of Slavery: A Journey for Children*. Los Angeles Times. Retrieved from <https://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-slavery-history-20100204-story.html> on February 22, 2023. Pharris, M. (2010). *Studied Slavery: The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of American Indian Women and Girls in Minnesota*. Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center. Retrieved from <https://www.mnrc.org/sites/default/files/2017/02/Slavery%20Study.pdf> on March 1, 2019.



HISTORICAL OPPRESSION OF NATIVE AMERICANS

Loss of land

Loss of traditions

Loss of religion

Loss of identity

Loss of culture

Loss of relatives





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Asian women are packaged as products for men, raw materials for multi-billion-dollar profits: china dolls, geishas, Japanese schoolgirls, and willing, subservient girlfriends. Their small stature and “childlike” features are fetishized in porn and brothels everywhere. ~ Nordic Model Now



HISTORICAL OPPRESSION OF ASIAN AMERICANS

I came to realize just how pervasive this “white savior” narrative is in the retelling of this horrifying chapter of Asian American history. In the archival material, press accounts and biographies I came across, the stories of white Christian women were invariably placed front and center, with barely a mention of their Asian colleagues who often did much of the work behind the scenes. This is a pervasive problem in many historical narratives — making the white experience the central theme in accounts of people of color. The problem is compounded by widespread racist cultural stereotypes from the era that persist today that paint Asian women as either passive helpers or tragic victims, rather than as radicals or crucial central figures.

~ Julia Flynn Siler

Piper Blau, J. (2019). Cop-Eat Asian Women Fought the World's Slave Trade. And Then They Were Written Out of History. Los Angeles Times. Retrieved from <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-cop-eat-asian-women-2019-08-02-story.html>



HISTORICAL OPPRESSION OF LATINOS

➤ “Reed Camps”

- Females were kidnapped and lured from Mexico to have sex with agriculture workers
- In 2001, 50 men (traffickers and buyers) were arrested and avoided prosecution “because their child victims were too afraid to testify against them, and most of the victims were deported.”

Nelson Butler, C. (2019). The Harsh Reality of Human Trafficking. UCLA Law Review, 62, 1480-1514. Licensed Under: About the Child Rape Camps of San Diego County, California: A Crime Against Humanity Inside the U.S.A., <http://www.bornwithadvice.org/LAFC/>



IMPLICATIONS TODAY

The bombastic, seductive, hot-blooded, quick-tempered, and passionate Latina stereotype evolved during the mid-20th century as part of a US foreign policy drive to improve relations with Latin America in the war against Communism. To cement their status as allies, the American government committed to helping boost local tourism and filmmaking. Central to this, they supported the construction of the stereotype of the exotic Latina bombshell to make Latin Americans seem fun and friendly to foreigners.

Grassie, L. (2019). Experience of Racism and Racial Trauma Among African American Women Impacted by Commercial Sexual Exploitation in Practice: A Qualitative Study. Violence Against Women



IMPLICATIONS TODAY

This exoticism and fetishizing of Latina women's bodies transforms them into mere objects. They become less human and more like prizes to be won and showcased.

Chavez, (2022) <https://www.scribd.com/document/911111111/Chavez-2022>



IMPLICATIONS TODAY

By overlooking race, the TVPA and antitrafficking advocates do not anticipate and remedy the complexity of applying a victim standard to Black girls and other marginalized youth . . . Rather, interventions to address the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) have put forth a limited narrative—magnifying sensationalized depictions of violence and force—and focus primarily on strengthening law enforcement apparatuses, which reinforce racial profiling and over surveillance in low-income communities of color.

Grassett, L. (2019). Experiences of Racism and Racial Trauma Among African American Women Impacted by Commercial Sexual Exploitation in Practice: A Qualitative Study. Violence Against Women.



IMPLICATIONS TODAY

► Experiences of African American women

- Preferential treatment to Caucasian clients
- AA women felt more ostracized
- Providers tended to deescalate situations, reinforce guidelines, etc. rather than addressing underlying racial tension at the root of the problem

Grassett, L. (2019). Experiences of Racism and Racial Trauma Among African American Women Impacted by Commercial Sexual Exploitation in Practice: A Qualitative Study. Violence Against Women.



IMPLICATIONS TODAY

A government who does not adequately provide for American communities of color instead exposes them to traffickers who take advantage of those with little to no societal protection. The situations that predispose black and brown people to traffickers stem from a system who has done little to protect, preserve, or benefit their lives... Traffickers target women of color with a lower socioeconomic status. Thus, the victimization of black women is intrinsically linked to policies that kept black families poor in the past and continue to limit their opportunities in the present.

Heaven, E. (2022). The link between system racism and human trafficking. December. <https://www.exploitation.org/2022/12/01/the-link-between-system-racism-and-human-trafficking/>



RESILIENCY

What are some examples of resiliency with these ethnic groups?



WHAT CAN WE DO

- Remember the larger context of change, which includes racism, historical trauma, cultural identity, discrimination, etc.
- Include discussions about race, gender, etc. in conversations about trafficking
- Provide culturally responsive services
- Talk with youth and their families about experiences of discrimination/perceived discrimination
- Stay attuned to how your gender and/or race/ethnicity can impact your work with CSE-identified youth as well as their families



WHAT CAN WE DO

- Increase diversity within your agency . . . and not just with direct care staff but also with leadership, including board members
- Provide positive examples of people from the youth's culture
- Talk with your supervisor about your biases and stereotypes and how they may come into play with the youth on your caseload



CLOSING



#CARE4SELF CARE4OTHERS

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