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Book Review: *Enslaved: The New British Slavery* (Author: Rahila Gupta)

Reviewed by

Amber L. Hulsey, A.B.D.

International Development Doctoral Program,
The University of Southern Mississippi

and

David L. Butler, PhD

Department of Political Science, International Development and
International Affairs, The University of Southern Mississippi

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Enslaved: The New British Slavery

Author: Rahila Gupta

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Thematic Overview

In July 2014, the authors were in London. During one afternoon, one of the authors walked from North London through the central district across the Thames River to the Southbank. During this walk, the author found a vibrant city with trade, tourists and culture all engaged in a hive of activity. During one sleepless evening, the author took the same walk between the hours of 2am-5am. The city of London was transformed at this time. Instead of vendors and tourists engaging in a silent capitalist dance, there were drug dealers, gangs, prostitutes, pimps, and law enforcement in clusters around the city. The transformation from a tourist and financial mecca to that of a haven for vices and criminal activity by the movement of the hands on tower clock that houses Big Ben was eye opening. The fact that London has a robust seedy underbelly that emerged as prominent as the Beefeaters in the Tower of London would not shock anyone who has read Rahila Gupta's *Enslaved: The New British Slavery*. Gupta is a writer, journalist and member of the Management Committee of Southall Black Sisters (SBS), a not-for-profit organization servicing the needs of black and minority ethnic women. She is the author or co-author of at least half a dozen additional books.

Enslaved is one of a score of books related to modern-day slavery that has been published since 2006. The attention that modern-day slavery is receiving on the research and publishing front is indicative of the growing awareness of this topic, bringing to light the fact that slavery exists, and thrives, in our modern cities and societies.

Gupta's main argument is two-fold. One, immigration policy of the UK (and EU) is driving the current enslavement of persons trafficked from less developed nations to more developed nations in the West. Two, the solution to the immigration policy problem is to allow an open immigration so that all persons who emigrate would have rights and be able to work in the viable economy and not forced into the black or grey economy due to their immigration status.

The book *Enslaved* is composed of seven chapters, five of which are case studies each representing an enslaved person in the UK. There is an introduction and two chapters that conclude the book, which position the five case studies into a larger context. Within each case study, the transcripts of interviews with the enslaved persons dominate the text with the author's questions or explanatories showing up in italics when necessary. The five case studies include four women and one man. Each of these enslaved persons is from a different country and entered London by different means. The ages of the enslaved range from 17 years to 42 years and each has a unique story as to how they became enslaved in London.

The first case study is of 32 year-old Farhia Nur, who is from Somalia and underwent female genital mutilation at age 8. After the the Somali Civil War erupted, Farhai Nur's family were part of the internal migration of persons escaping the fighting. From a compound as a servant, cook and nanny where she was first raped and then beaten by family members, she arrives in the UK, where she applied for asylum multiple times and appealed without success.

Natasha, the second case study, was an underage abused teenager in Russia who answered an advertisement in a local paper about working overseas. This ad was a front to take young Russian women and make them sex slaves in Western Europe, forced to service 6-7 men each night and then taken back to the flat to be raped by her pimp; she was trafficked to the UK for more prostitution. A police raid of the massage parlor enabled her the opportunity to offer evidence against her pimp. She applied for asylum in the UK with multiple appeals.

Sierra Leone is where Naomi Conte is from and is the focus of the third case study. Orphaned young during the war and left to beg on the streets, a Lebanese woman picked her up and brought her to a compound to be a servant. Naomi was taken to the UK as part of the woman's entourage, on business. In the UK, she ran away from the house into the arms of an older man who took her in, raped her, and then began to pimp her out. She is now pregnant, young, in a foreign country, and does not know the father of her child. She is protected in the UK since she is under the age of 18, but when she turns 18 her status may change.

Lui Bao Ren is from Fujain Provence in southwest China. Being Buddhist, Lui Bao Ren was on the watch list of the Chinese government. Instead of facing impending imprisonment in China, he hired human smugglers (snake heads) to take him to Hungary then the UK. Because he is in the UK illegally, his captors

require him to work manual labor at below market rates while at the same time they continue to extract cash from him and his sponsors back in China. He now has legal status and has brought his family to the UK but his injuries and other factors limit his ability to compete economically on a level playing field in the UK.

After an arranged marriage in India, Amber Lobepreet ends up with her new husband in the UK along with his extended family. After her family had much money, concessions and future earnings extracted by her husband's family, Amber was taken to the UK where her status was quickly moved from that of a spouse to a low servant for all in the house, including the husband's mother and sister. She was eventually saved from the home in which she was enslaved and kept her status of legal resident, unlike the other enslaved persons highlighted in the chapter. Amber has a starting base of legality from which she can begin her life anew.

Critical Reflection including Strengths and Weaknesses

Each case study in *Enslaved* is compelling in its own unique way, providing evidence for the widespread enslavement through human trafficking in the UK. Though there are many definitions of "slavery" that the author addresses, simply put, enslavement is the almost total control of one person over another where choice is removed. In each case study the person's freedom of choice was reduced or eliminated starting with the journey and ending in the UK.

Enslaved is well written and the case studies are broad and diverse enough to encompass a wide variety of enslavement. The author periodically interrupts the chapters composed mostly of the voice of the enslaved with comments in italics. These comments are timely and give context to a statement the interviewee made almost like as a footnote within the text. At other times, the longer comments distract from the flow of the personal interview narrative and take away some of the potential for emotional impact.

The key strength to this book is the compelling nature of the case studies where the "voices" of the subjects emerge and speak from the pages in their own words. This makes each case study unique and also informs the reader about the myriad of points-of-view of that of enslaved persons. The key weakness in this book is the author's attempt to connect all of the case studies with a single thread. The single thread is the need for immigration reform in the UK and how this brings about both enslavement and the lack of rights of the enslaved who are brought to the UK against their will.

Any reader of this book who agrees with Gupta's premise that enslavement is robust in western nations ought to be morally outraged by this fact. In the West, we pride ourselves on our enlightenment, we brag on this at every opportunity and hold ourselves up internationally as a model for the rest of the world to follow.

Modern-day slavery is not just about the large number of persons enslaved. In fact, if only one individual is enslaved, there should be a rallying call and actions to stop such acts, but that is not yet the case. There are vast industries and institutions that underpin slavery and little action is taken to stop such activities. The removal of a person's choice, making them enslaved, is inhuman, immoral, and is something that no nation or its people should tolerate within its borders. We are all better than this.

Literature Context

Enslaved is one of a number of books that captures case studies or vignettes of those persons enslaved. Other books include, but are not limited to, *Enslaved: True Stories of Modern Day Slavery* (Sage and Kasten 2008), *A Crime So Monstrous: Face-to-Face with Modern-Day Slavery* (Skinner 2009) and *Hidden Girl: The True Story of a Modern-Day Child Slave* (Hall and Wysocky 2015). Emerging research, such as that on human trafficking and/or enslaved persons, begins with scores of books with case studies building up a storehouse of narratives and data from individuals. As the research matures, more systematic studies emerge that build upon these case study foundations while additional case studies continue to be added to the total scholarship.

Suggested Audience

The reviewers of this book recommend that everyone read this book to have their eyes opened, as the authors of this book review were, to this event going on in our countries. It is clear that law enforcement and government agencies are aware of this problem; yet why has it not risen to prominence in the public discourse? How can citizens tolerate such actions within their own nations, which make them, in part, complicit, to this action? Slavery existed before the transatlantic slave trade began, funded and operated, in large measure, through the UK. And though a specific type of institutional slavery was outlawed in the 1800s, enslavement has continued to this day. Every effort should be made to stop enslavement, wherever it is occurring, and allow all humans the dignity of choice.

In conclusion, Rahila Gupta's *Enslaved: The New British Slavery*, is an excellent entry point from which to begin to understand the humanness behind modern-day slavery. Each case study is both touching and informative of a variety of types of enslavement. Additionally, Gupta brings the legal and institutional challenges associated with persons claiming asylum in the UK after having been freed.

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— Amber L. Hulsey, A.B.D., International Development Doctoral Program, The University of Southern Mississippi. amber.hulsey@eagles.usm.edu

— David L. Butler, Ph.D., Department of Political Science, International Development and International Affairs, The University of Southern Mississippi. david.butler@usm.edu