



University of  
**Nottingham**  
Rights Lab

# Report

## The Role of Survivors in the Historical Antislavery Movement

An Antislavery Usable Past (ASUP) Report  
for the Survivor Alliance

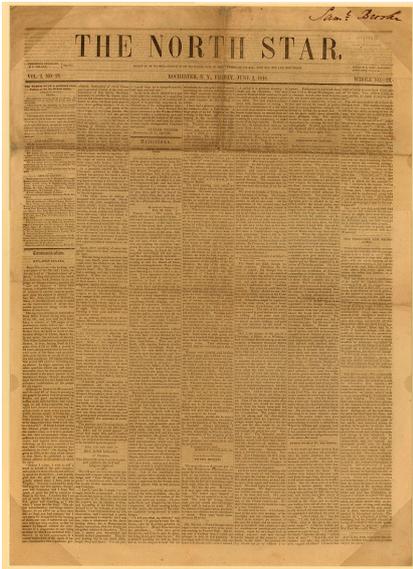
Dr. Hannah-Rose Murray, ASUP and Rights Lab Research Fellow

June 2019

**Trigger warning:** the following report contains descriptions of violence, torture, and trauma.

## Introduction

“The man who has *suffered the wrong* is the man to *demand redress*, — that the man STRUCK is the man to CRY OUT — and that he who has *endured the cruel pangs of Slavery* is the man to *advocate Liberty*. It is evident we must be our own representatives and advocates, not exclusively, but peculiarly—not distinct from, but in connection with our white friends.” **Frederick Douglass, *The North Star*, 1847**



*The North Star*, 2 June 1848

Frederick Douglass remains the most famous formerly enslaved individual in transatlantic history. Born enslaved in Maryland in 1818, he escaped to become the most prominent survivor leader in the movement against American slavery, Jim Crow laws, and white domestic terrorism, including lynching. While white abolitionists advocated equality between the races, it became increasingly evident that many of these reformers wanted to put Douglass on a pedestal, solely advocating for him to “stick to the facts, we will take care of the philosophy.” There were few spaces for survivor leaders in the antislavery movement, bar the short time on a platform within an antislavery meeting. He, like other formerly enslaved individuals, were tokenized: called upon to tell their story, with few realising that their experiences made up only one part of their identity. In response, Douglass stated that he did not just feel like recounting wrongs, he felt like “denouncing them”, and he began to create his own ‘philosophy’, one which decreed that survivors should be their “own representatives and advocates.”

The purpose of this report is to highlight the importance of historical survivors, and their role in the antislavery movement, to organisations such as NGOs, antislavery charities, local authorities, as well as survivors of slavery and human trafficking themselves. The debates we have in contemporary society surrounding definitions of slavery, consumer choice, survivor welfare, and survivor involvement in policy or practice are shaped by abolitionists from the past. It is important to build on their successes, learn from their failures and be continually inspired by their activism.

This report will be structured as follows: it will begin with an executive summary, and then move to a short history of the antislavery movement in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, followed by several case studies from survivor testimony in the contemporary movement:

### Introduction

#### 1. Understanding the Historical Movement

- a) Written Testimony
- b) Oratory
- c) Boycotts
- d) Abolition: What Next

#### 2. The Contemporary Antislavery Movement

- a) Case Studies

## Executive Summary

Throughout history, formerly enslaved people have spoken out, shared their testimony, educated the public and supported their communities. However, the historical movement often tokenized and marginalized survivor voices, preferring them simply to 'tell their traumatic story.' Thus, understanding the historical movement can shine new light on contemporary abolition. Survivors today often face similar conditions of marginalization, and allies must help to create conditions where the voices of survivors can lead, inform and direct the contemporary antislavery movement. Hence:

- Survivors **must** be at the forefront of the antislavery movement, as their testimony and insight into the world of slavery is unparalleled
- Allies must work together to ensure survivor voices or testimony is not marginalized or sidelined
- We must recognize the importance of the historical movement – and learn from historical survivors in particular – as this will shape contemporary abolition in new and diverse ways
- Today, as in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, formerly enslaved people use their testimony and expertise to drive the antislavery movement
- Survivor testimony in both the US and the UK took many different forms, from slave narratives, to oratory, to visual art, poetry and letters.
- Historical survivors understood that their escape from slavery did not mean they were completely 'free'

# 1. Understanding the Historical Movement

Testimony from formerly enslaved individuals formed the heart of the historic antislavery movement.

## a) Written Testimony

In the late eighteenth-century, one of the most prominent abolitionists was Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa. Born in Nigeria, Equiano was captured and sold at the age of 11 and transported via the horrific Middle Passage to the Caribbean. In 1766, he was able to purchase his own freedom, and became a sailor, travelling across the world, including the Arctic to find a trade route to India. He travelled to Britain, and became a member of the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade: it was Equiano who galvanized white abolitionists such as Granville Sharp, particularly over the slave ship *Zong* massacre which had occurred in 1781.



In 1789, Equiano (left) published *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*. The book was an instant bestseller and went through multiple editions during his lifetime: it is considered the first slave narrative, and is notable for its horrific description of the Middle Passage and Equiano's call for an end to the slave trade. Equiano wrote:

“Tortures, murder, and every other imaginable barbarity and iniquity, are practised upon the poor slaves with impunity. I hope the slave trade will be abolished. I pray it may be an event at hand. The great body of manufacturers, uniting in the cause, will considerably facilitate and expedite it; and, as I have already stated, it is most substantially their interest and advantage, and as such the nation's at large, (except those persons concerned in the manufacturing neck-yokes, collars, chains, hand-cuffs, leg-bolts, drags, thumb-screws, iron muzzles, and coffins; cats, scourges, and other instruments of torture used in the slave trade). In a short

time one sentiment alone will prevail, from motives of interest as well as justice and humanity... I have only therefore to request the reader's indulgence and conclude. I am far from the vanity of thinking there is any merit in this narrative: I hope censure will be suspended, when it is considered that it was written by one who was as unwilling as unable to adorn the plainness of truth by the colouring of imagination. My life and fortune have been extremely chequered, and my adventures various. Even those I have related are considerably abridged. If any incident in this little work should appear uninteresting and trifling to most readers, I can only say, as my excuse for mentioning it, that almost every event of my life made an impression on my mind and influenced my conduct.”

**Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of The Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa*, (London, 1789), 268-271.**

Equiano worked in conjunction with white abolitionists to campaign for the end of slavery. Key figures such as William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson, Granville Sharp, and Elizabeth Heydrick were essential in pushing the antislavery agenda before the British public and in parliament. Clarkson in particular travelled over 35,000 miles on horseback around the country to the point of exhaustion, in order to organize petitions, collect information on the slave trade, and in general, educate the British public about slavery. These early abolitionists faced a mountain of opposition, particularly from slaveowners and merchants who had grown rich from the production and distribution of sugar. The cultivation of sugar was highly dangerous and lethal for the enslaved, who died rapidly as a consequence of European consumerism.

The abolitionist movement was often dominated by men, but women also played a significant and essential role in its success, too.

In 1831, Mary Prince – a formerly enslaved woman from Jamaica – published *A History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave* alongside a white amanuensis, Susannah Strickland. This was the first account published by a West Indian enslaved woman and remains the only one since. In her work, she describes the brutal separation of her family at the auction block:

“We followed my mother to the market-place. At length the vendue master, who was to offer us for sale like sheep or cattle, arrived, and asked my mother which was the eldest. She said nothing, but pointed to me. He took me by the hand, and led me out into the middle of the street, and, turning me slowly round, exposed me to the view of those who attended the vendue. I was soon surrounded by strange men, who examined and handled me in the same manner that a butcher would a calf or a lamb he was about to purchase. The bidding started at a few pounds, and gradually rose to 57. The people who stood by said that I had fetched a great sum for so young a slave. I then saw my sisters led forth, and sold to different owners. When the sale was over, my mother hugged and kissed us, and mourned over us, begging us to keep a good heart. It was a sad parting; one went one way, one another...”

Despite the book’s success, Prince was marginalized in the abolitionist movement because of her race, gender and class. Regardless, figures such as Prince and Equiano were essential in the campaign for the abolition of the slave trade in Britain in 1807, and subsequently slavery in the British Empire in 1833.

Perhaps the most famous slave narrative, however, was by formerly enslaved African American Frederick Douglass, who escaped in 1838 to become the leading voice against slavery. He lectured across the US, and travelled to Britain in 1845 to lecture against American slavery after the publication of his book, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. This was an immediate bestseller and sold over 4,000 copies in just a few months. In blistering and searing language, Douglass demanded that the “the slave-holder [be] surrounded, as by a wall of anti-slavery fire so that he may see the condemnation of himself and his system glaring down in letters of light.”

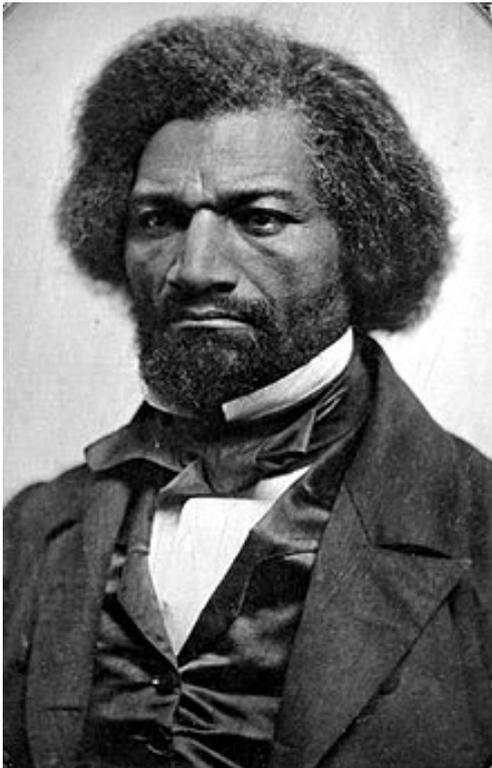
Douglass was part of an international survivor movement. On both sides of the Atlantic, survivors of slavery lectured in large cities and tiny fishing villages, wrote and published narratives, stayed with influential reformers and ensured millions of words were written about them in the newspapers. They appealed to different classes, races, and genders, with no discrimination against profession, religion, or age. These women and men exhibited whips and chains (and sometimes even their scars); read runaway slave advertisements from southern newspapers; created visual panoramas, and used fiery rhetoric to tell their stories. In doing so, survivors challenged their tokenization on the antislavery circuit.

## b) Oratory

Eighteenth and nineteenth century survivors of slavery wrote letters to the government, published memoirs and slave narratives, and lectured about their experiences across the transatlantic. Oratory was a powerful tool against slaveholders and pro-slavery defenders, as numerous formerly enslaved women and men exposed the realities of slavery to international audiences. Because of their testimony, slaveholders could not hide the brutal nature of slavery.

Frederick Douglass (below) was one of the most famous orators of his generation. His blistering attacks against slavery and all the institutions that upheld it were inspiring to behold: fellow black activist William Allen described Douglass as waving a “magic wand” over his audiences, his “grand” and “majestic” language captivating spellbound audiences. Until his death in 1895, Douglass spoke out against slavery and its numerous legacies, including racism, lynching and Jim Crow laws. He maintained that slavery was a “cancer that was eating into [America’s] vitals” and declared that “all

their vaunted independence was a lie.” In 1846, he led a searing attack against churches in the south that upheld slavery:



“Whips, chains, gags, blood-hounds, thumb-screws, and all the bloody paraphernalia of slavery lie right under the drippings of the sanctuary, and instead of being corroded and rusted by its influence, they are kept in a state of preservation. Ministers of religion defend slavery from the Bible – ministers of religion own any number of slaves – bishops trade in human flesh – churches may be said to be literally built up in human skulls, and their very walls cemented with human blood – women are sold at the public block to support a minister, to support a church – human beings sold to buy sacramental services, and all, of course, with the sanction of the religion of the land.”

Other antislavery activists such as Moses Roper, Sojourner Truth, William Wells Brown, Henry Highland Garnet and William and Ellen Craft wrote narratives, lectured or campaigned against slavery in numerous ways. Harriet Tubman was one of the most courageous activists, who voluntarily travelled back down to the southern states where slavery existed to rescue her friends and family members who were still enslaved. She was a conductor on the Underground Railroad, a series of safe houses where fugitive slaves were transported to the northern states or

Canada, and she famously declared that she “never lost a passenger.” Ultimately, Tubman believed that “there are two things I’ve got a right to, and these are Death or Liberty – one or the other I mean to have.”

### c) Boycotts

Historical survivors also urged boycotts of slave-produced goods. In 1854, James Watkins declared to a British audience that if they “could hear the groans of the slaves, and witness for a moment their sufferings” they would “never again touch Savannah rice – you would feel you were eating the blood and bones of the negroes.” The products of slavery were consumed on a daily basis by Britons who refused to acknowledge or were ignorant of the origins of products such as rice and cotton. A few years before in 1851, Henry Highland Garnet urged his audiences to avoid anything that was slave-produced such as cotton, rice, sugar and tobacco and argued “by ascertaining the price of cotton in Manchester, [I] could at any time form a pretty correct estimate of the price of slaves in America.”

Both Watkins and Garnet accused their transatlantic audiences of failing to organize a boycott of slave-produced goods. At the very least, people should be educated, aware and thoughtful about the type of products they bought and consumed.

Regardless of the means they chose, survivors challenged slavery in all corners of the globe. In 1838, formerly enslaved African American Moses Roper stated to his audience: “many will say “This is the slaves’ side of the question. The slave-holders would tell a different story.” You have heard the slave-holders’ story 250 years ago. Now, I think it is time for the slaves to speak.” In 1847, Douglass contributed to Roper’s testimony and declared that the slaveholder could no longer hide what slavery truly was, for “the slave now broke loose from his chains and went forth to tell his own story, and to make known the wrongs of his brethren.” In 1850, William Wells Brown argued it was right and “proper that some one should speak in favour of the slave,” and, instead of relying on slaveholder’s testimony, he decided “to send his own representative, one who had himself worn the

chains of slavery.” And in 1863, Julia Jackson declared it was her right “to make a few remarks on slavery” as she herself had witnessed it. All were united in their desire to tell their own stories, to share their testimony and challenge slavery.

#### d) Abolition: What Next

Despite the end of the bloody Civil War and the onset of the legal abolition of slavery in the US in 1865, survivors continued to be the vanguard for defying former slaveholders, racism, lynching and white supremacy in postbellum society. They implored the public to understand not only that U.S. abolition was a failure, but also that slavery had never actually died. Historical survivors continued to fight for their rights, their voices and their lives in a culture which continued to deny their humanity. They persisted in writing slave narratives, autobiographies, letters and pamphlets that were published on both sides of the Atlantic.

**Unfortunately, many abolitionists from the nineteenth century (who were not survivors) believed that a survivor’s physical journey from slavery to freedom, meant quite literally, that the individual was completely ‘free’ from the shackles of the past.**

Survivors have shown us that the journey from slavery to freedom is not as simple as this. In fact, the road to recovery involves the closure of one difficult chapter, and the opening of another. In 1842, Frederick Douglass lamented “I would I could make visible the wounds of this system upon my soul”, a few years later writing “the grim horrors of slavery rise in all their ghastly terror before me, the wails of millions pierce my heart and chill my blood.” In 1846, he wrote “I looked so ugly that I hated to see myself in a glass. There was no living for me...”

In the past as well as the present, survivors of slavery suffered and continue to suffer from complex PTSD and other mental health problems as they try and cope with their experiences. So far, there has been little research into how to provide survivors with the best form of aftercare, particularly because such strategies may vary according to person and/or country. Regardless, survivor mental health must be prioritized in order to aid them in the long road to recovery.

## 2) The Contemporary Antislavery Movement

**Today as in the 19th century, formerly enslaved people use their stories as tools for abolition.**

Historical and contemporary survivors of slavery have told their stories in acts of self-liberation, to educate and raise awareness, and to inform communities, governments and even entire nations. Some tell their stories in order to raise general awareness of slavery today, while others are seeking specific changes. Many contemporary slave narratives are explicit about the desire to effect change with story-telling; the texts are a form of protest literature. Now as in the 19th century, the narrators are engaged in a process of self-making. They make themselves subjects of a story instead of objects for sale, and assert their humanity in the wake of dehumanising treatment.

For the first time, over 800 contemporary narratives have been collected together as part of the Antislavery Usable Past Project, based at the University of Nottingham. ([www.antislavery.ac.uk/narratives](http://www.antislavery.ac.uk/narratives)) These narratives have been collected by Professor Zoe Trodd, research associate Rosemary Pearce, and PhD student Lauren Eglon, from the University of Nottingham. Survivors are represented from numerous countries including the UK, US, India, China, Italy, Albania, Romania, France, Nigeria, Egypt, Malawi, Kenya, Central African Republic, Uganda, Iraq, Brazil, Venezuela, Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, North Korea, Indonesia, Philippines, Australia and New Zealand, to name a few. While the narratives vary in length, the database is groundbreaking for the sheer scope of testimony on sexual slavery, forced marriage, labour exploitation, debt bondage and child soldiers.

For example, out of 800 narratives, at least 140 are from women who have experienced either early, child or forced marriage. These cutting-edge findings transform our understanding of slavery: in this extensive narrative corpus that places great emphasis on survivor voices, survivors share their own definitions; what forced marriage looks like within their own respective country; whether it is accompanied by FGM or if there was some form of marriage 'ceremony' involved. The narratives reveal that we must pay closer attention to survivor voices to fully grasp and understand the sheer scope of forced marriage around the world, considering this problem affects women under, as well as over, the age of 18.

The following case studies highlight the breadth of survivor narratives from around the world.



Shawn Dunwoody, Rochester, 2014.

## Case Studies: Contemporary Survivor Narratives

### Choti (India)

*In 2000, some of the 220 residents of Sonebarsa, a quarrying village in Uttar Pradesh, India, revolted against their slaveholders. About 40 families lived in Sonebarsa, all of them Kols, an ethnic group near the bottom of India's steep ladder of caste and discrimination, and all locked into hereditary debt bondage. Children worked from the age of three or four, and infant mortality was high. Choti was one of the slaves who rebelled. The villagers had begun meeting with organizers from Sankalp, a grassroots NGO that has so far helped 4,000 slaves to free themselves from slavery in the stone quarries of Uttar Pradesh. Seeyawati, who works for Sankalp, explained that organizers offered the villagers two things initially: "an example of another village where we'd been able to get some progress done," and the question: "how long could they live this life as a slave?" Bala, who also works for Sankalp, added: "Earlier on there was no hope at all amongst the people. They didn't believe they could be free. We gave them a new hope, and said to them: 'What has happened has happened. The past is past. But it's up to you to make a change, because it's your life and the lives of your children.'" The enslaved population began to organize. Women were particularly central to this process of self-liberation, as Bala explained: "When one of the slave owners came to a house and raped a man's wife, 15 females came out of their houses and said 'No more,' formed their own self-help group and joined us in the movement." The narratives focus on the role of women in the process of self-liberation: Choti observes that the women "played a very big role' in getting revolution.*

*The enslaved population called a mass meeting, and were joined by 3,500 people from 60 villages. Slaveholders interrupted the meeting, attacked the villagers, and shot guns into the air. The villagers retaliated by throwing stones and one of the contractors was killed. His friends set fire to Sonebarsa—"not a thing was left, everything was gone," recounts Choti. Eight men from the village were scapegoated and jailed, including Choti's husband. After the burning of Sonebarsa, Sankalp assisted the 40 refugee families and helped them form micro-credit unions. The villagers pooled their money, and petitioned for a mining lease. But the Allahabad Mining Corporation wouldn't allow leases and so the villagers moved onto unoccupied land in Uttar Pradesh and began mining it. Authorities protested this in court, but a judge ruled that no unauthorized work was being done and signed leases. Today the villagers continue to build their community, which they have named Azad Nagar, "the land which is free."*

My name is Choti. I think I'm about 20 years old. When I was getting married, I took a loan from the slave owners. At that point I ended up becoming a bonded laborer. Before my marriage I was not a slave. I was free. I would work in the fields, but I was a field worker. I think I got a loan of about 5000 rupees [\$100], for ceremonies, the guests, the miscellaneous expenses of my marriage. But I took 5000 and I repaid 10,000 [\$200] for a long, long time. From the time when my kids were tiny to the time when they could work, that's the amount of time I was a bonded laborer. I would go back and ask them: "Is the debt over? Have I repaid it all?" They would say: "No, no, now it increased. It was 10,000. Now it is 20,000." Then: "No, no it is not 20,000 anymore, now it is 30,000." I was not earning anything. I was barely earning some grain, some rice. How was I to repay the loan? I had no idea. This carried on and carried on and carried on.

Life was very tough. I was made to work in the fields the whole day, whether the children were crying or not, or when anyone was sick. I was not allowed to go home. Every single day, for long hours, I was expected to be working very hard. Not only were we made to work in the fields, we were also made to work in the stone quarry, to break up the stones and make them into tiny pieces. For all our effort we were hardly paid. Once the breaking of stones was over, we were also forced to lift them up and load them onto the truck. I was very scared of the slave owners because they would issue directions: "Go and work here. Go break the stones." You could not refuse because the next step was: "I'll burn your house." That's it, every day. The threat was so strong, and I knew they

could carry it out. Therefore I had no choice. We had to go and work. Life under the slave owners was complete hell.

The females were especially harassed. The men would go off to work, either to the fields or the stone quarries, and the slave owners would come to our house, show us a huge knife and compel us to work. If you would refuse, saying the males had already gone, they would just drag us by the hair and compel us to work. Things got so bad that when the slave owners came to one woman's house and she refused, he had a huge knife and he just killed her. We never knew when a tractor would come and just drive over us and kill us. And once in the night, the contractor came to a woman's house and raped her. There were no rights, nothing.

One day a girl had gone to work in the fields and when she came back, the contractor wanted to misbehave with her. She tried running away and as she was running he burned down her house. He burned down a lot of houses and a girl was burnt right inside. They burned our houses, our food, our clothes. Everything was burned down. It seemed certain that they would lock us inside the house and burn us. They almost did. Sacks of grain were burned, everything was completely destroyed. We had to run away. Not a thing was left, everything was gone, completely evaporated. We had to all come out and move to a village. We were left to live below plastic sheets. No walls, no roof, nothing. It was very tough. That's what we had come down to. The basic utensils weren't there, the utensils on which we cook chapati weren't there. Nothing.

The night that the houses burned down, not only were my eyes weeping, my very soul was torn, shattered. We saw crying and wailing. It was sheer agony. My husband was in prison and my son died during that time. But I did think things would get better because the interaction with Sankalp had begun. So I knew there was a ray of hope. There was an expectation that something would give and change would come about. My children were homeless. But something was going to happen. I knew it.

The females played a very big role in getting revolution. When we had initial meetings with the local authorities and with Sankalp, they told us to coordinate with each other. That didn't mean very much to us at that point. But slowly, when we had a couple of meetings here and a couple of meetings there, things began to sink in, and we came to realize we were doing all the work. We are the ones who are cutting the stones, we are the ones loading the lorries every single day and not getting any assistance or any monetary benefit. That's when we all met the Sankalp members and took action into our hands. Initially when Sankalp would come down to the village and interact with us, the contractors did not like the idea: "You motherfuckers," is what they would scream at us, "What are you doing?" So on and so forth. Seeing this just got our enthusiasm more aroused, and that's when we started taking Sankalp more seriously.

The Sankalp people said: "Look, you have food that you grow yourself, you have labor that you do by yourself." They made us aware of the fact that it was possible for us to be self-sufficient, for us to be able to sell and buy our own food grains, for us to be able to educate our children. They made us realize that we were exploited and that we were under the control of the slave owners. We knew that, of course. We were aware that there was an evil person who would come and beat us up, but they made us aware there was something we could do about it, that it was possible for us to get together move toward the cities and the towns and then bring about a revolution. The Sankalp people helped us a lot after the burning. They came together and gave us a vessel on which to cook our food, they gave us medical help and assistance for our children.

I love my life now. I just simply love it. My children are going to school. I have food in my stomach. Ever since I held the hand of Sankalp, I love my life. There is so much happening in it now, so many good things. I've got a lease on a house, I'm free, there's education, my children are happy, I'm happy.

My dream for my children is that they grow up, they become people who can read, who can write, who can live in the cities and have a job. They shouldn't be like us, any of us. They should not be

working to break stones, they should not be dying like we do, day in and day out, under the hot sun. They should be people who live a life in the cities, big people. That's my dream.

I have five kids and I don't work now. Before, when my children woke up, they would be rubbing their eyes and I would be far, far away in some field, working under the slave owners. Now I don't work. I get up, I feed my kids and send them to school. They come back. I relax in the afternoon. In the evening I make sure they're okay. You know, a regular wife. That's what I do now. That's my life. All I want is that nobody remains bonded anymore. That every child is free, free to study, free to learn, free to live their own life.

*Narrative as told to Peggy Callahan for Free the Slaves, November 2, 2004, in Azad Nagar, Uttar Pradesh, India.*



Joel Bergner, 'Overcoming', 2016.

## **Jean-Robert (Haiti)**

*Jean-Robert Cadet, a former child slave in Haiti, confronts the problem of freedom. His enslaved experience is not over for him: "nightmares...haunt me well into my adulthood...the trauma lasts a lifetime." His childhood can "never be recovered," and he will "feel its absence for the rest of my life." The narrative quotes his wife's observation that sometimes the "reality from decades ago is up on us again."*

*As a restavek (Creole for "stay with"), Jean-Robert was one of thousands of Haitian children who are sent by their poor rural families to stay with wealthier families. Supposedly they will be treated like one of the family and enrolled in school, in exchange for domestic labor. But this rarely happens. Instead they work 14 hours a day for no compensation and are frequently abused. Slavery was supposedly abolished in Haiti after the revolt of 1794-1804, when African slaves fought and overthrew their French masters, and declared the colony of Saint-Domingue on the island of Hispaniola an independent republic. But as Haiti's economy collapsed, and the country became the poorest nation in the western hemisphere, the restavek system exploded. The Haitian government estimates that 90,000-120,000 children are enslaved as restaveks, but the UN puts this number at 300,000—or one in ten children in Haiti. Some are as young as four years old, and 75 percent are girls, many of whom are sexually exploited.*

Anyone of you sitting here at this very moment can go to Haiti and ask for a child to live with you. All you need to do is to find a family with too many mouths to feed and promise that you will send the child to school and she is yours. You can treat her the same way slaves were treated under the French colonists. You do not have to make her a part of the family, learn her name, send her to

school, provide her with health care, buy her clothes, give her affection, or treat her like a human being. You can make her sleep outside, torture her to death and dump her body in the trash, and no one will question you, and there will be no government investigation to find out the cause of death. In fact, the same specialized whips that were manufactured to torture the slaves during the 1700s can be purchased today on the streets of Port-au-Prince to torture children in domestic servitude. This practice is a violation of Haiti's Constitution, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which passed the UN General Assembly in 1989, as well as the ILO's Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999.

One of the worst forms of abuse facing Haiti's slave children is exclusion. Slave children in Haiti set tables for meals in which they cannot partake, fetch water that they cannot use for their own needs, are denied medical care when they are struck by illness, are forbidden to speak until spoken to, and stay outside when adults are inside. While these slave children are forced to be invisible, they must remain within the reach of their master's voice. Otherwise, severe doses of physical punishment will ensue without mercy. This is a reality which provoked nightmares that consumed my own childhood and still haunt me well into my adulthood.

At night, when I was a restavec child in Haiti, the adults installed themselves in the living room and I would go behind the house to watch television through the window screen, standing on a concrete block in the dark while mosquitoes feasted on my exposed legs and arms. I had to be constantly within the reach of the grown ups' voices in case they wanted to be served a cold beverage from the refrigerator within their reach. I then remained out of sight until everyone was in bed, arranged my bedding under the kitchen table and woke before everyone would get out of bed.

Today, in the year 2002, on any early morning in Port-au-Prince, children in tattered clothes are seen hand in hand with children in bright uniforms crossing the street. The ones in tattered clothes are restavecs who must return to their duties as domestic slaves after escorting their counterparts to school.

This daily exclusion from any community or family often leaves no visible scars but the trauma lasts a lifetime. These children all too frequently become victims of the abusive and institutionalized practice of domestic servitude. Since their most basic rights—to a family's love and protection, health and education—are denied, restavecs are invisible children, observers instead of participants in their own society.

As a slave child in Port-au-Prince, my day began at 5.30 in the morning and ended when the last adult went to sleep. I had to sweep the yard, water the plants, fill the tub for everyone's bath, empty and wash the chamber pots, hand wash diapers, boil baby bottles, wash the car twice a day, dust the furniture every day, serve people drinks in the front yard every evening, wash people's feet every evening, run errands, hand wash women's monthly napkins, fetch water from afar, be borrowed by the family's friends, and cook my own food. I worked seven days a week with no pay and no time to play. I was also excluded from all family activities such as meals, birthdays, attending school and church, Mother's Day, Christmas, New Year's celebrations, weddings, first communions, and even funerals. I could not speak unless spoken to. For any minor infraction, such as not answering quickly enough when my name was called, I was beaten without mercy. Like all restavec children, I was only an observer rather than a participant in my Haitian society and culture.

It was by a twist of fate that I came to the United States. In 1970, the family that owned me moved to the United States and later sent for me to resume the same duties that I used to perform in Haiti. My birth certificate was purchased on the black market, and I was listed as my virtual owner's son only to fool the United States Immigration officials.

In New York, my situation improved a great deal. My owners made sure that I wore shoes and clean clothes to hide the fact that they had a slave child living with them. However, by having to address everyone as Monsieur, Madame, Mademoiselle, they made sure that I did not forget my status as a restavec. I no longer had to wash their feet, fetch water or hand-wash feminine napkins every

month. But I continued my duties of washing dishes, cleaning the house, setting the table, babysitting three children and washing the car.

One day, a family friend who knew me in Haiti came to visit and told the family that it was against the law in the United States not to send a minor to school. I was taken to Spring Valley High School in New York and placed in the ninth grade. I was about 16 years old and I had the equivalent of a third grade education, with no English proficiency.

When the family realized that their children and I would be attending the same school, I was shown the door to fend for myself. However, the facts that I was attending school, participating in extra-curricular activities and eating in the cafeteria with my fellow students made me an integral part of American society. For the first time in my life, I could express my needs, feelings, and opinions. After four years in high school, I graduated and joined the United States Army for three years. I then completed my university studies and eventually wrote my autobiography Restavec, simply to raise international consciousness to the plight of Haiti's more than 300,000 slave children.

By looking at me, you cannot tell that I never had a childhood. It was stolen and the accomplice is Haiti's institutionalized practice of domestic servitude. Since it can never be recovered, I will feel its absence for the rest of my life. To give you an idea, what it is like to have never had a childhood, let me read parts of the foreword to my book that my wife Cindy wrote:

My days and nights reverberate with the truth of this story that my husband has written. I was not there to witness the circumstances of his birth, the horrors of his childhood or his surreal assimilation into American society that form the basis of his memoirs, but I lie beside him now each night as he sleeps. And when that sleep is fitful—when I hear his labouring breath, his muffled cry, or feel his arms tremble and his legs thrash about—I know that reality from decades ago is up on us again.

Four months ago, while I was in Haiti to distribute clothes to street children who once were slaves, a Haitian acquaintance invited me to spend a weekend as a guest in his family's house. It was a two-story yellow and white brick house in an upper-class suburb in Port-au-Prince, protected by an eight-foot wall and a large red iron gate. I was awakened from a light sleep at around four in the morning by the crowing of roosters. I went to sleep again, and I opened my eyes to daylight when I heard a noise coming from the yard. It was quarter to six. I got out of bed and I looked down from the balcony. It was the sound of Celita's large broom sweeping the cement yard. Everyone else in the house was still in bed.

Celita was an 11 year old slave girl who had been living with the family for the past two years. Her mother, who lived in the countryside, had handed Celita to the host family because she was no longer able to provide her daughter with what every child needs: three meals a day and a decent school. Celita was dressed in an oversized, sleeveless t-shirt and a skirt. Her small budding breasts were visible from the side each time she leaned forward.

She cleaned up after the dog, washed the yard with buckets of water and dried it with a rubber squeegee. Then she repeatedly carried water from a bucket upstairs to flush toilets and to fill-up bathtubs. After each of the four adults and one child bathed, she set the table and made a trip to the bakery, while the cook prepared breakfast. As everyone ate, Celita stood near the doorway with her hands behind her back, waiting for requests to pass the butter, the sugar, the salt, or whatever someone did not care to reach for. After breakfast, Celita cleared the table and ate the leftover food sitting on a cement block near the gate. Then she washed dishes and went upstairs to make the beds, dust the furniture and mop the rooms. While doing these tasks, she was interrupted with several requests, "Celita fetch my slippers, Celita bring me a comb, Celita bring my purse." Besides being the doer and the fetcher of everything for everyone, Celita also cared for the family's bright eyed nine-year old daughter Maida, whose face looked healthy and was always ready to smile. She was often praised and affectionately touched by her mother, father and grandfather, who spoke to her only in French. A large picture of her first communion in a gold frame graced the small coffee

table in the living room. Maida was Catholic, she had toys, and attended an expensive private school.

Celita was a dark skinned child with a thin, scarred and hardened face that did not seem able to smile. Her eyes were deep and dull. She was often criticized and threatened with the back of a hand. She had no picture of herself in the house. She did not go to school and her owners never took her to any church. She had no religion. She entertained Maida instead of playing with her. She obeyed Maida's every command.

As her owner began to back his brown car out of the driveway, he honked his horn and Celita ran at full speed to open the heavy iron gate that kept the house and everyone inside safe from intruders. As soon as Celita finished her other house-cleaning duties, she sat on a cement block and began to wash by hand a huge pile of clothes. And again, she was constantly interrupted, "Where is Celita, come wash this pot, Celita come dry the floor, Celita come flush the toilet, Celita come set the table." By late afternoon, the brown car returned again and the horn was honked again. Celita rushed to the front yard and pulled open the heavy iron gate. The car entered, and she pushed the gate shut. By late evening, the family sat on the front porch relaxing in the warm tropical breeze. Celita carried a bucket of water to the side of the house where the dog was tied. She bathed there, changed to an oversize dress and remained out of sight but within the reach of everyone's voice. Soon the requests began again until everyone went to bed. "Celita bring me a glass of water, Celita fetch my slippers." Celita's sole purpose was to slave. Her right to be a child ended the very moment she walked through the red iron gate. Her masters' comfort was her hell.

Haiti's institutionalized practice of using children as domestic slaves violates every article of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which passed the UN General Assembly unanimously, along with Haiti's ratification in 1989. Haiti is now making preparations to celebrate its 200<sup>th</sup> year of independence in 2004. Leaders of many nations will be invited to attend the ceremony, and every Haitian will take to the streets to celebrate, except the children forced into domestic slavery.

*Narrative as told to the International Institute for Labour Studies, November 2002, in Geneva, Switzerland.*

## **Leah (US)**

*In February 2016, at a hearing entitled Ending Modern Slavery: Now is the Time, "Leah" testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. She was enslaved in forced prostitution for seven years, and trafficked across the United States, in South Carolina, Florida, Texas, California, Louisiana, Arizona, Illinois, Ohio and Colorado.*

*"Leah" is now an advocate for A21, an organization working against modern slavery.*

First of all, I want to genuinely thank each and every one of you for the opportunity of letting me share my story in the hopes that something that has gone on for far too long will be recognized and totally eradicated from our society.

I was a typical teenager, came from a loving Christian family and had lots of close friends .... But one bad decision would ultimately change my life forever. I became addicted to drugs and the one person I thought was helping me break free of my addiction was in fact a trafficker of young women for the sex trade.

It seems strange to even use the term "Modern-day slavery" in our country, but it went from something I knew next to nothing about, to the way I was forced to live my life for seven years. I knew of slavery from what my history classes taught me, it ended. Unfortunately, for many people

today, this is just not the case. This is a way of life they are forced to live, how to think, when/where to eat, sleep and work. Slavery is alive and well today. Modern Day slavery, or as my pimp referred to it, "white slavery," is simply a way for monsters to make a very good living.

Throughout the seven years of being trafficked, I - along with other young women – were used as a commodity by one pimp and were bounced around from Myrtle Beach, SC; Miami, FL; Houston, TX, San Diego, CA; New Orleans, LA; Scottsdale, AZ; Chicago, IL; Columbus, OH and Denver, CO - for the sake of making money to enable our pimp to live the lavish lifestyle he wanted to live. We were used to glamorize and entice more young girls to ultimately feel a sense of initial comfort, only to be brainwashed into a dark cult of servitude. We were trained for one thing, to make him money. He was and still is, the most manipulative, calculated person I've ever encountered.

My heart bleeds for the victims that are still under the control of others, living similar lives. I was fortunate in that I had a loving and caring family and close friends who welcomed me back with open arms, helping me to find my new normal. This was all done with the assistance of A-21. Unfortunately, so many other victims are not so fortunate as I, coming from backgrounds that include abuse and neglect and may fall through the cracks of what limited social services may be available to them. With the absence of a strong support system, these survivors more likely than not, will find themselves back in similar or even worse situations...

Without A-21, I would not have been able to walk this road to healing. Without the constant support and dedication of A-21 I'm not sure exactly where I would be today. Cara Lee Murphy, who is the US aftercare manager has gone above and beyond to ensure that my past doesn't define my future. She continues to push me forward and to excel in whatever endeavor I choose. Without her, I could have just been another girl forgotten.

Today I want to stress the importance of education on human trafficking – it does exist and not only in third world countries. It is a way of life for criminals in the heartland of America. I owe my recovery to the A-21 campaign, which is not only for abolishing and educating our society on modern day slavery, but for the recovery of victims such as myself throughout the entire process. And when I tell you that it's a process, IT IS A SLOW, DAY-BY-DAY, PROCESS. Coming from a situation like I was in and getting thrown back into "normal" society, you have to find your new normal.

Now that we know the truth about human trafficking, we cannot turn our backs and pretend that this problem does not exist. Therefore, I cannot express to each of you in these few minutes, how important it is that we - concerned citizens, educators, legislators, non-profits, and law enforcement - educate our youth and communities on what human trafficking is, how pimps work and who they profile. It's a dirty secret in our society, but we can prevent others from falling prey to these predators. This was something I was never taught. This is a cancer, growing stronger each day and it is up to each of us to do our part to stop it.

I encourage you to take a serious look at this problem and do everything you can in your power to assist agencies like the A-21 Campaign. Thank you for your time and God bless you.

*Narrative as told to the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, February 24, 2016, Washington DC.*



Joel Bergner, Anti-Human Trafficking Mural, Siliguri, India, 2016.

### **Anita B (Kenya)**

*In 2016, the estimates of modern slavery in Sub-Saharan Africa accounted for approximately 13.6 percent of the world's total enslaved population. As evident from surveys conducted in Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa and Ethiopia by Walk Free Foundation, slavery in Sub-Saharan Africa takes the form of forced labour and forced marriage. In Ghana, survey results suggest that there are an estimated 103,300 people enslaved in that country, of which 85 percent are in forced labour, and 15 percent are in forced marriage. For forced labour, the main industries of concern are farming and fishing, retail sales and then manual labour and factory work. In Nigeria, survey results suggest that forced labour is predominantly within the domestic sector, although it was impossible to survey in three regions due to high conflict. In South Africa, the industries most reported in the survey include the commercial sex industry, manual labour industries such as construction, manufacturing and factory work, and drug trafficking.*

*Anita was 10 years old when she was forcibly circumcised and married off to a 55 year old man in her home country of Kenya. Subjected daily to beatings and sexual violence by her new husband, Anita was eventually able to run away.*

I was out grazing the cows one day when my father said it was time to get married. He said I was getting older and there was a man interested in me. A fortnight later, the elders and circumcisers were called and a big celebration planned. I was woken up early the next morning and taken outside to be circumcised. The elders said I'd been given to a man and that he was to be my husband. He was 55.

I was very confused. I was only 10. My mother tried to explain that I had to live like a woman now and not like a child. But what really worried me was knowing how my mother had suffered as a wife. She got beaten a lot in front of us, and I knew she wouldn't be able to protect me from my new husband.

He already had two wives, and as his third I was expected to look after his goats and cows. A new hut was built for me. Nine months later, because I had still not given him a baby, he began tasking me with all the difficult jobs.

I got the first beating after I lost one of his goats. The second was when he found me resting instead of grazing the cows. The third time was because I'd run away. The next morning, after I took his goats to graze, I decided I had to escape.

I ran into the forest, but had no idea where I was going. There was nothing to eat, and at night I had to sleep in the trees to avoid the animals. After seven days, I found a homestead and was taken in by the Catholic sisters, where I met other girls who had been through the same thing.

I started school in 2013. I have four brothers and four sisters, and none of them went to school; my parents never went to school, either. I hope to be a doctor and get a job to support my family, even though my father is still angry with me for leaving my husband – he had to return all the cows he'd been given as my dowry.

*Courtesy of The Guardian*

### **Park Ji-hyun (North Korea)**

*The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) is a source country for men, women and children who are subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking. Government oppression in the DPRK prompts many North Koreans to flee the country in ways that make them vulnerable to human trafficking in destination countries. Many of the estimated 10 000 North Korean women and girls who have migrated illegally to China to flee abuse and human rights violation are particularly vulnerable to trafficking. Some lure, drug, detain or kidnap North Korean women on their arrival, others offer jobs but subsequently force the women into prostitution, domestic service, or forced marriage. If found, Chinese authorities often repatriate victims back to the DPRK where they are subjected to harsh punishment including forced labour in labour camps or death.*

*In the 1990s North Korea experienced a wide scale famine that killed up to 1 million people. After her family was displaced, Ji-hyun was left to care for her dying father. To escape starvation, she and her brother left, travelling with traffickers into China. Ji-hyun was told that if she wanted to provide for her family, she must marry a Chinese man. After being in China for 6 years Ji-hyun was reported to the authorities., sent back to North Korea and placed in a correctional facility before being sent to Chongjin labour camp in Songpyong District. After becoming ill and unable to work, Ji-hyun was dismissed from the labour camp. Alone and homeless she arranged to be re-trafficked back to China in order to find the son she had left behind. Once reunited, they escaped with the help of a man who Ji-hyun fell in love with. They all now live as a family in the UK.*

A lot of people died between 1996 and 1998. The train station platforms were full of dead bodies. I remember witnessing a scene outside the train station, a man was carrying a young child on his back. He was holding his older son's hand and carrying the younger one on his back. A soldier gave him a piece of bread. He broke the piece of bread into two pieces. He gave a piece to his older son and tried to give the other one to his younger son. But the piece of bread fell on the ground. As he tried to bend down to pick up the bread, he realized the child was dead. He was dead from hunger.

Every morning, before going out to work, I would prepare a bowl of rice and put a blanket over it to keep it warm. I would ask my father to have the rice for his lunch. I would leave for work at 5 in the morning and when I got home in the evening, the bowl of rice would still be there, untouched. I'd ask my father why he didn't have any of it, and he'd say 'How can I bring myself to eat anything, when you're out shivering in the cold?' He'd go the whole day not eating anything and share the rice with me when I got home.

As my father's condition grew worse, he wasn't able to speak anymore. He could only gesture with his hands, telling me to go, to leave [North Korea]. My father kept gesturing to me to go. I couldn't be there for him when he passed away. I left him behind in that cold room. I left him a bowl of rice and a change of clothes. I left North Korea like that. I wasn't by my father's side when he passed away. Like a selfish child I left just to save my own skin.

We'd been in China about two weeks, when the people we were staying with said to me, if I wanted to ensure my family's wellbeing, I had to marry a Chinese man. My family would live on the money they got from selling me. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. The thought of marrying a foreigner on foreign soil hadn't even occurred to me. When I said I couldn't, they told me they would get my family deported. So, I agreed to go. I was at this other house for over a month. People would come to take a look at me. All sorts of people came, from children to the elderly. There were disabled people too. They would come and haggle over my price. It was no different from an animal being sold in the marketplace. I was eventually sold for 5000 yuan, which would be around £500 here in the UK.

When you get sold off, the person who bought you will say, 'I've paid for you, so now you must do whatever I tell you to do. If you disobey in the slightest, I could report you. Even if I killed you, no one's going to say anything, and no one will know what happened to you'. That's how they intimidate and threaten North Koreans into forced marriage.

When I first discovered I was pregnant, I felt helpless and alone. Life was hard enough as it was, I couldn't imagine bringing a child into this difficult situation. The village had a guard post up on a hill. The person in charge of the guard post told me I could stay there [while pregnant] if I wanted. I missed my mother, and I missed my sister so much. After suffering alone in that room for 11 hours, I gave birth to my son. Nobody came to check on us. I decided to name my son myself. For him to make it in this hostile world he needed to grow up strong and hardy. So I named him Chol, which means iron.

[After 6 years in China Ji-hyun was reported to the authorities]

My son and his father came with me as far as the police station, and then we got separated. I didn't get the chance to say anything to my son. I couldn't tell him I'd be back, and I didn't even get to hold his hand.

[Ji-hyun was sent back to North Korea and placed in a correctional facility]

Guards are called 'teachers' there. If the teacher is in a good mood, he lets us go and use the toilet. I found myself really having to go, and I rushed to the toilet without asking for permission. I was punished for that. I was instructed to unclog and clean the toilet with my bare hands. If you got caught trying to wash your sanitary towel, you were ordered to wear it on your head, dripping blood and all, and beg for forgiveness.

From here, those caught defecting to South Korea get sent to political prison camps, and don't ever get released. While other who left simply for economic reasons get sent to labour camps. Our working day began at 4.30 in the morning, before we could have anything to eat. In the summer, when the days are longer, we would work until 8 or 9 in the evening. We could only stop working when it got pitch dark. And the day doesn't end there. After eating we had to reflect on our day's performance, recite the Party's principles, and learn songs. By then it'd be close to midnight. We were worked harder than animals.

We went to a valley surrounded by mountains in Gudok, Ranam District. We had to clear the mountainside to create terraced fields. We cleared the land with our bare hands. Four women had to pull an oxcart, two in the front and two in the back. Carrying a ton of soil in the cart. We couldn't do this at a walking pace either. We had to run. In July, when we harvested potatoes, the very small ones would get eaten raw on the spot, with dirt still on them. Really, it was unspeakably bad. You

could say the whole of North Korea is one big prison. The people are all hungry. And now, there aren't even rats, snakes or wild plants left for them to eat.

[Ji-hyun contracted tetanus in her leg. Her condition worsened until she was unable to work, or even walk. The authorities discharged her from the labour camp. Now back in her hometown, Ji-hyun was sick, homeless and alone]

I prayed and prayed. Even when I was in pain, all I could think about was seeing my son again. And then at the end of that month, in late October, I got traffickers to take me to China. It was the only option I had, when I couldn't even walk properly. I couldn't tell them about my leg though. Again, I was being trafficked to China.

I told the traffickers about my son, and thankfully, they understood and were sympathetic. They said I could phone him. So I dialed the number I knew from memory and asked for my son. I asked to speak to him, and he came to the phone only to hang up on me. I called again the next day, and he hung up on me again. I kept calling and telling him I was his mother. Eventually, after a long pause, he say "Mummy..." and started crying before hanging up again. He was told that his mother had abandoned him and that she would never come back. I could not believe my eyes when I first saw him. His neck was covered with black dirt, his skin was completely flaking. I was so shocked. I asked him what happened. When autumn came, he was told that if he wanted to eat, he had to go out and bring back grains of rice; he would have to pick them up from the ground. He told me that his meals consisted of plain rice and soya sauce, nothing else. I had believed that at least in China, the child would not starve. But in fact his life was worse than the starving, begging children in North Korea.

It wasn't very safe for us to remain in China, so I arranged for us to leave China for Mongolia. There were nine of us headed for Mongolia, and we had to cross the border on foot. My son was still very young. There were wire fences, two on the China side and then another on the Mongolia side. The two on the China side were very high while the one in Mongolia was quite low. We had to climb over them without getting caught by the border guards who were patrolling. Everyone made it over the fences except for me and my son. I thought I saw Chinese police cars driving up to where we were. If I got caught again, I would be sent back to North Korea. I would lose my son again. I could see somebody in the distance running towards us. I thought it was the Chinese police officer and that it was all over. He grabbed my son and put him on his shoulders, took my hand and we started running. He cut the wires for us and that is how we finally managed to get into Mongolia. Only after we reached Mongolia, I realized that the stranger who saved our lives was also a man who'd previously bought us food.

[Ji-hyun fell in love with the man who saved her and her son at the Mongolia border. Now the couple live in Manchester, UK with their three children]

My first son found a father. He looks after my first son like his own child and for that I am grateful forever. In fact we haven't had an official wedding as of yet. My daughter is 5 years old. She too asks about our wedding. She says she wants to be the flower girl and scatter petals down the aisle. I told her the wedding will be really soon.

Courtesy of *Amnesty International UK*.