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Chinese Human Trafficking in the San Francisco Bay Area

Purpose

Slavery was not abolished in 1863. Ten thousand ethnic and national Chinese victims of human trafficking remain imprisoned throughout the United States.¹ The purpose of this research was to investigate the prevalence of and response to Chinese human trafficking in the San Francisco Bay area. By focusing on one region, my research provides a closer look at the trends in Chinese human trafficking within the U.S.



Methodology

For my research, I interviewed professionals who work with Chinese victims of human trafficking (CVHT), particularly law enforcement officers, lawyers, social workers, and health workers, in order to have a rounded view of Chinese human trafficking in the Bay area. I inquired after: who was being trafficked, by whom and what means they were being trafficked, into what forms of labor they were being trafficked, how they were rescued, and what happened to Chinese victims of human trafficking after escaping or being rescued.

◇ Pursued interviews with professionals who work with CVHT.

- ◇ Mayor's Office
- ◇ DA Kamala Harris
- ◇ Chinese Consulate
- ◇ ICE

- ◇ South Bay Coalition to End Human Trafficking
 - ◇ Asian Pacific Islanders Legal Outreach
 - ◇ San Jose Anti-Trafficking Task Force
 - ◇ Newcomers Health Program (San Francisco Department of Health)
 - ◇ San Francisco Mental Health Clients' Rights Advocacy



Findings

- ◇ Most adult CVHT enter the US legally on a visa. Child victims are frequently smuggled.
- ◇ CVHT are usually victimized by someone familiar.
- ◇ Ethnic and National CHVT are almost exclusively trafficked by National Chinese.
- ◇ Insufficient facilities and resources are available for assisting male CVHT.
- ◇ CVHT tend to be more resilient than people of other national and ethnic origins.
 - ◇ They tend to receive less attentive professional assistance because they do not fit the victim stereotype (e.g. weak, docile, helpless, etc.).
 - ◇ In trying to be resourceful, CVHT may be further victimized by false notaries and other individuals promising citizenship.
- ◇ "Loss of Face": the Chinese Community of San Francisco feels singled out for having a bad reputation for Human Trafficking and is therefore less willing to engage in anti-trafficking efforts.
 - ◇ Community members are more likely to testify in labor exploitation cases in which the CVHT was not victimized by a family member.
 - ◇ Community members are less likely to testify in cases of trafficking within families and/or sex trafficking.
- ◇ CVHT usually come forward five years after escaping exploitation.
 - ◇ Therefore, the statute of limitations for Human Trafficking expires before traffickers are prosecuted. Prosecutors may opt to prosecute traffickers for other crimes (e.g. pimping). While this may help the CVHT to get justice, it throws off legal statistics on the prevalence of Human Trafficking cases.

Areas of Future Research

- ◇ More detailed research on Chinese Human Trafficking in the Bay area:
 - ◇ as important ethnic research;
 - ◇ counting the number of victims (categorizing by age, gender, type of forced labor, place of origin).
- ◇ Parallel studies of Chinese Human Trafficking in other cities with large Chinese communities:
 - ◇ New York City, United States;
 - ◇ Los Angeles, United States;
 - ◇ Overseas Chinese Communities.
- ◇ The frequency of Human Trafficking cases prosecuted under different charges (e.g. labor fraud, pimping, etc.); and how appropriate the current Statute of Limitations is in regard to effective Human Trafficking prosecution.
 - ◇ Facilities, resource, and assistance discrepancies between male and female CVHT.
 - ◇ Culturally appropriate care models for CVHT.
 - ◇ How the Chinese-assumed caste of Asia plays out in Human Trafficking, particularly Trafficking to non-Asian countries.
 - ◇ Prevalence of Human Trafficking to and through other 'sanctuary cities.'
 - ◇ Building anti-Human Trafficking community alliances in Chinese communities: how to save face and protect victims.
 - ◇ Assistance and treatment care quality of victims who do not fit the victim stereotype:
 - ◇ Strong, resilient, resourceful CVHT;
 - ◇ Forced labor cases (where the victim has not been sexually abused).

Works Cited

1. Free the Slaves, Washinton, D.C., and Human Rights Center, University of California, Berkeley. "Forced Labor in the United States." Hidden Slaves (2004): 13. Print.

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