

# Disposable people, kevin bales

[History](#)



Book Review The book entitled Disposable People by Kevin Bales makes the shocking point that “slavery is not a horror safely consigned to the past” (Bales 3). Despite the comfort and wealth that most people in Europe and the United States enjoy at the present time, there is a dark underside to society in many parts of the world. The book makes the point that some people who live in the midst of all this prosperity suffer from a terrible fate that no one ever sees. This hidden phenomenon is the capture of children and young people and their enforced labor in conditions that can only be described as slavery. The book describes what this new slavery is like and traces the stories of individuals who have suffered this fate in recent years and who come from different parts of the world including Thailand, Mauritania, Brazil, Pakistan and India.

The author’s strategy is to tell the stories of individuals, describing what happened to them and how it has affected their lives. In each case there is a detailed description of a typical day under slavery, often using the person’s own words to relate tales of beatings and torture, as well as impossibly long working hours and inhuman living conditions. In the case of Siri from Thailand (34-38), for example, the young woman was forced to be a prostitute and her lifestyle is described in detail. This method is a way of giving voice to the suffering of people who would otherwise not be heard, and it allows the reader to form a realistic impression of the severity of the situation.

After the human stories have been related, the author goes on to analyse the bigger issues that contribute to the growing problem of new slavery. In the case of Mauritania, for example, which the author describes as “the easiest place to see slavery” (97) there appears to be a national institution of

slavery, in which the government not only condones, but actively supports slave labor in order to construct new cities on the cheap. The rigid class hierarchy in Mauritania is described, and the economic dependence of slaves upon their masters is illustrated in the case of Bilal, who dreams of receiving a proper salary, but is trapped in slavery because his master will never fulfil even this modest wish. Again, this personal story brings to life the desperation and hopelessness of slaves in a country where escaped slaves can be “hunted down and killed by their masters” (103) with impunity.

In the preface to the 12th edition the author states that in terms of research method he “wanted more than anecdotes” (xvii) and so he embarked on a series of research trips to different countries in order to find out for himself whether allegations large scale slavery in the modern world were true. Bales’ first-hand account, though often anecdotal, is convincing, because it reflects his own journey of discovery. He sets out with an attempt to understand what happens in the world, and increasingly explores possible responses to slavery such as organisations who work with former slaves, or who assist slaves to escape from their predicament. The author’s commitment in following up the discoveries in this book is evidence that he took his work seriously.

In conclusion, therefore, I was convinced by the integrity and authenticity of this book. There was a considerable emphasis on the violence and hopelessness of the slaves that Bales encountered, but I felt that this was necessary, even though it was hard to read at times. The book describes an extreme phenomenon, and in telling the stories in all their stark and hideous detail, the author makes his points forcefully and in a memorable way. This book has changed my views by informing me of these matters, and this is a <https://assignbuster.com/disposable-people-kevin-bales/>

clear sign that the author has achieved his aim of bring to light some of the most shameful exploitation of human beings that exists in the world today.

#### References

Bales, Kevin. Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy.

Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2012. Print.