Human trafficking analysis

“ To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity” (Mandela). Human rights can be defined by United Nations as rights inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. Victims of human trafficking have had their most basic form of rights taken away from them; rights that they were guaranteed from at the point of birth. This means that they have been stolen of their humanity, as if they were an object. Trafficking is a violation of human rights because it robs women and girls of the rights of freedom of: speech and expression, highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, education, and social interaction.

Primarily, human trafficking violates a victim’s intrinsic right of speech and expression through intimidation and force. In the First Amendment of the U. S. Constitution, it declares freedom of speech and expression to everyone, without discrimination. “ Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech…” (U. S. Constitution). This right was so important to the founding fathers that it was put into the most respected law of all the land: The Constitution. When someone is trafficked, they have these rights taken away from them because they are not able to give consent. “ Does a woman really choose to engage in sexual conduct when she consumes alcohol, or goes on a date, or fears what will happen if she attempts to fight rather than submit” (Cianciarulo)? Victims are subject to everything their traffickers do to them because of the unique power they have. Women are threatened, beaten, and deceived by their traffickers which render them unable to assert their own thoughts and take action. A

common example is when traffickers tell a woman that she “ owes him” for protecting her, feeding her, bringing her across a border, etc. In every trafficking situation, there are always huge limits on the victim’s freedom of speech and expression.

Secondly, modernized slavery defies the human right of the ability to have the highest standard of physical health. Traffickers treat their victims extremely poorly and this affects them in many ways. “ Victims of human trafficking often suffer physical damage due to beatings, hard labor and poor nutrition. Common physical injuries caused by rape include bruises, inflammation of the vulvo-vaginal area and anal bleeding. These injuries can affect their sexual life forever” (Casabainca). In order to assert dominance and to control women, traffickers beat them profusely, sometimes to the point of near death. These women are extremely overworked and are usually allowed very little sleep. The domestic work these sufferers do is also called modernized slavery because of the lack of pay and long days they work. They are fed very minimally, and in most situations only enough to keep them alive. If a woman survives, one of the most scarring of the physical effects of trafficking is the sexual abuse. An ex sex worker from Swaziland tells CNN “ to feed myself I have sex with twenty men in two weeks, but sometimes in a day I used to sleep with five or six men” (Eastwood). Sleeping with 5 or more men daily can cause long term injuries for a woman, and will most likely have detrimental effects on her sex life for the rest of her existence.

Next, trafficking also disables the guaranteed right of the ability to have the highest standard of mental health. Although physical injuries can be

disabling, mental scars can be far worse. “ It’s not uncommon for people exposed to human trafficking to suffer symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder—PTSD—with common nightmares, intrusive thoughts and flashbacks” (Casabianca). No human being should have to suffer through a lifetime of disturbed memories. Traffickers take away a victims right of living their life peacefully and to the fullest extent. Also, the chances are very high that after the victim is free they never receive psychological treatment, which makes the effects even worse. Another mental consequence of trafficking is self-doubt. “ They feel guilty and ashamed; they constantly wonder what they could have done differently to escape their circumstances. In many cases, they can’t even trust their own judgment anymore” (Jefferson). Typically with sexual abuse in particular, victims place a heavy amount of blame on themselves. Every human being should be free from haunting thoughts and misplaced guilt.

Consequently, human trafficking infringes upon a victims ability to receive an education. Victims held hostage by traffickers are unable to receive a proper education or knowledge of their rights. “ Wherever it has taken root in the developing world, education has been the key to better living standards, improved health care, and jobs. Education is integral to ending child labor, child marriage and pregnancy, and even child soldiers. It provides choices and alternatives” (Brown). As Brown stated, education is one of the most important building blocks to a successful future. Trafficking exists because of poverty, and where there is poverty, there most likely isn’t education. When trafficking situations arise from immigration, it is very likely that the victim does not speak the language of the new country and isn’t aware of the laws

protecting them. It is so important for women to be educated about trafficking so that they can take precautions to avoid a situation completely, or know how to escape one that's already occurred. Holding someone captive and feeding them constant deceit and lies takes away their right to an education.

Finally, traffickers impose upon a woman's human right of free social interaction with others. As mentioned before, it is not uncommon for a trafficker to hold a victim hostage without any communication with the outside world. " They may be locked into rooms, apartments or brothels, unable to leave or contact help. If a woman resists being prostituted, the trafficker may withhold food, assault and/or rape her" (Advocates for Human Rights). Traffickers use fear to control their victims and keep them from escaping. It is extremely mentally unhealthy to have stern restrictions on social interaction. " Good social interaction is a key part of living well. Study after study lists good friendships, family relationships and health as the most important things to have in order to be happy and fulfilled" (Register of Trauma Specialists). If a victim isn't given this essential component of happiness and overall health, they are being deprived of a basic human right.

" We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness" (Declaration of Independence). The Declaration of Independence states that these human rights are self-evident– an absurdity for these to be taken away. Human trafficking is a violation of many human rights and therefore should be in the

government’s control to give back what has been taken. Scholars at the University of Minnesota say that in order to combat human trafficking we must: promote and protect human rights, identify trafficked persons and traffickers, conduct research, ensure an adequate legal framework and law enforcement response, protect trafficked persons, and finally prevent it from happening in the first place.