

# Internet Research Projects

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## Chapter 4: The Development of Dominant-Minority Group Relations in Preindustrial America: The Origins of Slavery

### MODERN SLAVERY

Americans today might look at slavery as a distant relic of history, remote and bizarre. The idea that a person could be owned by another person, defined as a piece of property, and bought and sold like livestock probably seems alien to people who live in a culture devoted to individual happiness and personal well-being. Yet, as you saw in the “Applying Concepts” activity in this chapter, this ancient institution can still be found around the world, on every continent, in societies at every level of development, and in the United States.

In this project, you will use sources of information readily available on the Internet to gather facts and estimate the volume and scope of modern slavery. You will also collect some case studies or personal examples of slavery, analyze the nature of the practice today, compare it to American slavery, and find out what is being done to combat the practice. This project will also provide an opportunity to review some of the important points and ideas presented in this chapter.

To begin, consider the list of questions below. Next, visit the websites listed here and search for answers to the questions. Also, search the Internet on your own for additional sources that may help you develop an understanding of modern slavery. (*NOTE: Your instructor may have additional or different instructions for gathering information.*)

As you search the Internet, remember that you will need to practice a healthy skepticism about the information, ideas, and arguments that you find—including the information on the websites listed here. Of course, you should always be careful and critical when doing research, but, as you know, the Internet includes unregulated sites that present incomplete, deeply biased, or false information, and an extra note of caution is justified. Also, recognize at the outset that many of the facts you gather (e.g., the number of people currently enslaved) will be approximations and, in some cases, mere guesswork.

### Questions for Research and Discussion

1. What is the scope and volume of modern slavery? Note any important difference with the estimates provided in the “Applying Concepts” activity in this chapter develop the best answers possible to these questions:
  - a. How many people are enslaved?
  - b. What is the composition of the enslaved population in terms of gender, age, race, and nationality?
  - c. Where in the world are modern slaves most numerous?

- d. For the slave population that is transported across national lines, what are the major sending and receiving nations?
2. What are the experiences of modern slaves?
  - a. Describe the mechanisms and practices by which slave status is enforced. What is the role of debt bondage? How often are coercion and violence used? How do these practices vary across different types of slavery (e.g., sex trafficking versus involuntary labor)?
  - b. Find at least three to five case studies of people who have been victimized by modern slavery.
  - c. Sociologically, what do these people have in common? That is, what important social characteristics (age, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity) do they share?
3. What are the dynamics and causes of modern slavery?
  - a. American slavery was shaped by the level of development and labor-intensive subsistence technology of the colonial era. Can you find ways in which similar factors shape modern slavery?
  - b. Can you apply elements of the Noel hypothesis to modern slavery? Does ethnocentrism, prejudice, or sexism play a role? How? What resources and abilities do modern slaves have that make them the objects of competition? What role does power play in shaping and maintaining these practices?
4. How do labor markets operate in modern slavery? Do the “Laws of Supply and Demand” operate in these markets? How?
  - a. What roles do modern slaves play in the job market? What economic niches are being filled? Who profits? Who loses? Describe the minority-dominant group situations you find in your search for facts.
5. What are some of the enforcement efforts designed to stop slavery? What human rights are being violated?
  - a. Find at least three national and international programs aimed at stopping modern slavery and describe what they are doing.
  - b. What specific human rights are at stake here? Is slavery illegal? Where? By what authority?

#### **WEBSITES FOR THIS PROJECT**

1. <http://www.freetheslaves.net/>

The Home Page of “Free the Slaves” includes information, resources for teachers, and a description of the organization’s efforts to combat modern slavery.

2. <http://www.ijm.org/>

Home Page for the International Justice Mission, a Christian advocacy and activist group dedicated to combating slavery

3. <http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2013/>

U.S. Department of State's annual "Trafficking in Persons" report. The report can be downloaded in pdf format.

4. [http://www.ilo.org/washington/WCMS\\_182004/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/washington/WCMS_182004/lang--en/index.htm)

The International Labour Organization (an agency of the UN). Their annual report on involuntary labor can be downloaded in pdf format

*Optional Group Discussion:* Bring your findings to class and discuss with classmates. Focus your discussion on comparing and contrasting modern slavery and colonial American slavery, especially the roles of ethnocentrism and power, subsistence technology, demand and supply, human rights, and enforcement efforts. (*Your instructor may have more specific or different instructions*).