

Forum on Modern Slavery: 21st Century Solutions

AAUW-NJ was represented at Seton Hall University on September 27, 2019. As a member of the New Jersey Coalition Against Human Trafficking (NJCAHT), it was thrilling to be in attendance when Nadia Murad, the 2019 winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, was presented with an honorary doctorate degree from the Seton Hall University's School of Diplomacy and International Relations.

Dr. Murad was captured by ISIL five years ago. She was one of approximately 7,000 girls who were given as gifts to the ISIL soldiers as sex slaves. Five thousand have been rescued and 2,000 are missing or dead. Some of the girls who were rescued are living in various countries around the world, but most are still living in refugee camps. They cannot return home as their homes have been destroyed and their families scattered or killed.

Nadia received the Noble Peace Prize for her efforts to provide justice for the survivors and raising money to help them rebuild their lives. She is recognized as a humanitarian fighter, writer, and survivor. She had written a book about her ordeal, entitle "The Last Girl."

The conference was co-sponsored by the New Jersey Coalition Against Human Trafficking, the International Justice Project and Seton Hall University. The first plenary session reviewed the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 8.7, which focuses on the nature and extent of modern day slavery globally, progress toward achieving this goal, and the challenges to be met. Modern day slavery includes sex for hire, forced work and forced marriage. While some progress had been made in some areas of the globe, the statistics are still grim. It is estimated that 46 million people were enslaved as of 2016. Ten million of these are children. Seventy percent of those living as slaves are women and girls. Modern day slavery (human trafficking) generates \$150 billion in illegal profits each year.

Following the plenary session, two breakout sessions were held. One was "Schools and Modern Slavery: Education, Prevention and Activism." School children are the next generation of abolitionists or victims. The panel talked about what is being done to educate administrators, teachers, and students to protect the children. The other break out was "Visual Media and Modern Slavery." The discussion focused on the challenges and opportunities in creating films of less than 10 minutes that reveal the nature and effects of modern slavery and inspire the viewer to act to eradicate it. For example CNN has done a series of 10 minute programs since 2010 with titles such as: "Free the Slaves," "Disposable People," and "Innocence for Sale."

The second plenary session was a panel on "Modern Slavery in the United States," which focused of extent of the problem here, its causes and the challenges of eradicating it. It is estimated there are 400,000 people enslaved in the United States.

A third plenary session was entitled, "Modern Slavery and Armed Conflict." It focused on recent conflicts that have provided a new setting for an ancient crime, the enslavement of those caught up in these events: child soldiers, forced laborers, and sex slaves. In spite of the adoption of the Geneva Convention, this practice still exists.

The final session was the presentation of the degree to Dr. Nadia Murad. Through the use of an interpreter, a short interview helped to tell her story.

The eradication of modern day slavery requires awareness and recognition of the problem, enforcement and monitoring of existing laws, and the elimination of the conditions which lead to bondage. Look around: see something; say something; do something.

Submitted by Ginny Lyttle, AAUW-NJ Representative to the NJCAHT