

ROTARY ACTION GROUP AGAINST SLAVERY

RAGAS NEWSLETTER

<https://ragas.online/>

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RAGAS REFLECTS ON THE ERADICATION OF FORCED LABOUR IN UZBEK COTTON

Simon John, RAGAS Board Member

One of RAGAS' first ever campaigns was to raise awareness of modern slavery in the form of long standing forced labour in cotton production in Uzbekistan, a former part of the USSR.

Uzbekistan lies North of Afghanistan and is the fourth biggest exporter of cotton globally.

During the last 2 decades Government of Uzbekistan used one of the largest state-sponsored systems of forced labour to harvest its cotton. Every year the government forcibly mobilised over one million of its citizens including children to grow and harvest cotton.

The most recent (2018) edition of Global Slavery Index explained that garments were 2nd highest by value of products identified as being at risk of being made by slaves being imported into G20 countries.

Uzbekistan was in the worst tier of countries producing cotton with slavery in its footprint.

Thanks to global boycotting campaigns by organisations such as RAGAS over the last 13 years, on 10 March 2022, [Cotton Campaign announced that it had ended its call for a global boycott of cotton from Uzbekistan](#), which had been joined by 331 international brands.

The boycott's ending followed a report published by Uzbek Forum for Human Rights, which found no evidence of central government-imposed forced labour in the 2021 harvest period.

In his remarks (which can be viewed [here](#)), Bennett Freeman, Co-founder of Cotton Campaign, announced this to be "the most significant single country victory in the global battle against forced labour so far in the 21st century.

Mark Little founder of RAGAS commented that difficult though these campaigns may seem at the beginning, in time they can bear great fruit and alleviate forced labour, if we work at it.

Focus has now shifted to the Xinjiang region of China, where there's a good chance your cotton T-shirt was made by Uyghur slave labor. Much of the world's cotton comes from the Uyghur region, where the Chinese government is ethnically cleansing the local Muslim minority. Fashion conglomerates know this fact but have consistently turned a blind eye, reports The Guardian.

To stop perpetuating this abomination, and instead shop for ethical clothes and fashion check out Ethical Consumer: the alternative consumer organisation. A small subscription may be necessary.



HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE METAVERSE? HOW TO MAKE VIRTUAL REALITY A SAFE SPACE

Matt Friedman, RAGAS Board Member
Originally published in Post Magazine

"To women on social media it won't come as a surprise that sexual harassment occurs in the metaverse. Groups who fight it in the real world are concerned."

So reports our very own Matt Friedman, who recently wrote an article for the South China Morning Post about how new digital frontiers are rife with opportunity for traffickers if left unchecked.

Read the article in full [here](#).

The infographic is titled "YOU ASKED, AND HERE ARE THE ANSWERS!" and features a smartphone displaying a Facebook event for a "MYTH VS. FACT Q&A" on April 11, 2022, at 7:00PM MST. The event details include "Myth vs. Fact Facebook Live Q&A with Tim Ballard and Special Guests" and "Online event". A black arrow points from the text "We've compiled a list of your most-asked questions about common human trafficking myths and facts." to the smartphone screen. The infographic then lists four pairs of "MYTH" and "FACT" statements, each preceded by a yellow question mark icon.

MYTH	FACT
Human trafficking isn't in my neighborhood.	Human trafficking is reported in almost every country and all 50 U.S. states. While trafficking hubs may seem to concentrate in urban centers, the reality is that trafficking knows no geographical boundaries. Online recruitment accounted for 72% of trafficking recruitment in 2020 and continued to increase in 2021. (Polaris)
Human trafficking only happens to young women.	While young women account for a significant portion of trafficking victims, all genders are trafficked. Additionally, adults account for 57% of trafficking victims while minors account for 22% of victims. (Polaris)
Most human trafficking victims are kidnapped.	One of the most common myths is that all trafficking involves kidnapping or physically forcing someone into enslavement. The facts show that most human traffickers use more psychological methods to coerce or lure victims. This might be grooming or familial manipulation. (Human Trafficking Hotline)

Operation Underground Rescue will be conducting a Q&A about HT myths vs facts on Facebook live on Monday, April 11. The event will feature O.U.R. founder Tim Ballard and others. Click [here](#) for more information. (Photo: Operation Underground Rescue)



NORWICH CONFERENCE HEARS STORIES OF MODERN SLAVERY

Henry Joe - RAGAS Board Member

In March, the Rotary Club of Norwich St. Edmund heard from RAGAS founder Mark Little, MBE (pictured above); RAGAS member Carol Metzger; and others at a conference on modern slavery. The event took place at Norwich Cathedral.

Attendees heard harrowing firsthand accounts from at least one human trafficking survivor, and the conference also provided an update on the work of Caritas Bakhita House, which is a safe house for women who have been sexually exploited or endured modern slavery.

A full article about the conference can be found [here](#).

NEW EMAIL ADDRESS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT

Tim Sexton, Mina Chiang, & Henry Joe

RAGAS currently maintains social media channels on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. These have been managed and maintained by our committed volunteer network around the world. Now we're asking for your help in supporting these social channels!

We've setup a new email (below) that you can use to share newsworthy content, events, and articles related to human trafficking and our efforts to combat it. In addition, we welcome your original content, photos, and other media that you think could be valuable to the organization. This content will be reviewed, edited and available for use in RAGAS newsletters, event updates, social media, marketing, website, etc. (Please only submit media (photo/video) that you have created or is otherwise not copyrighted. Links to other articles are OK!)

The intent is to complement our current social media managers with your new efforts, ideas, voices, and media and my hope is that everyone engaged with RAGAS is able to share their perspective and voices towards our growing online audience.

Please send any content to newsfeed@rotaryactiongroupagainstslavery.org to be considered for the action group's social media.



RI CONVENTION 2022 - JOIN US AT THE HOUSE OF FRIENDSHIP!

Dave McCleary - RAGAS Board Chair

RAGAS has BIG plans for the Rotary International Convention in Houston June 4th - 8th.

This is RI's first in-person convention in two years we can't wait to meet you in person! As you know our RI President Shekhar initiative is Empowering Girls and RI PE Jennifer Jones will continue working to empower girls next year at RAGAS we work to empower girls/women every day.

We are also excited about next year's theme "Imagine Rotary" because we at RAGAS strive to **Imagine a world without human trafficking/modern-slavery.**



JOIN US FOR THE RAGAS BREAKOUT! YOU CAN STOP HUMAN TRAFFICKING WITH EDUCATION/PREVENTION

Dave McCleary - RAGAS Board Chair

Inside every Rotarian is a Superhero - All You Need is a CAPE!

Calling all Rotary superheroes! Join the Rotary Action Group Against Slavery (RAGAS) as they share their new Community Awareness & Prevention Education (CAPE) strategic action plan and how every day Rotarians can be superheroes with a CAPE.

Join us for a panel including: RAGAS Global Chairman, Dave McCleary; a survivor of sex trafficking; Bill Woolf of Anti Trafficking International; Ashley Bryant, 3 Strands Global Foundation; and our own superhero, Amelia Stansell, as we share this actionable plan.

The CAPE plan provides a roadmap to help Rotarians navigate from sparking a passion through how to implement a successful anti-human trafficking/modern slavery community awareness project as well as how to implement prevention curriculum.

You will hear examples of successful programs and have the opportunity to ask questions. Not every super hero has a mask - but they all have a CAPE! Do you have yours?

Breakout: Monday June 6th, 2:00pm-3:00pm

Location: George R. Brown Convention Center (GRB), Room 372

We are expecting a large crowd, so get there early to secure your seat.

ROTARY INTERNATIONAL APPROVES RESOLUTION 21R-28

Dave McCleary - RAGAS Board Chair

I am delighted to report the RI BOARD DECISION on Resolution 21R-28 was favorable.

RI "encourages clubs to collaborate with the Action Group for assistance with designing programs that address the root causes of modern slavery and to support survivors' transition to a safe and stable environment."

This was what the RI Board said:

"B-9-I. 2021 Council on Resolutions: To Consider Encouraging all Rotarians to Oppose the Growing Problem of Modern-day Slavery;

DECISION: The Board

1. thanks the 2021 Council on Resolutions for its resolution 21R-28 encouraging all Rotarians to become more familiar with the growing problem of modern-day slavery, to be vigilant and report suspicious activity in this regard, and to work towards solutions to end the practice in all its forms;
2. agrees modern-day slavery remains a pressing concern around the world;
3. expresses its appreciation for the efforts undertaken by the Rotary Action Group Against Slavery and encourages clubs to collaborate with the Action Group for assistance with designing programs that address the root causes of modern slavery and to support survivors' transition to a safe and stable environment;
4. requests the general secretary to inform the resolution's proposer, District 6000 (USA), of the Board's decision."

RAGAS SOCIAL MEDIA

RAGAS communication

You can receive the information by following us on social media!

- [RAGAS Facebook](#)
- [RAGAS LinkedIn](#)
- [RAGAS Twitter](#)
- [RAGAS Instagram](#)
- [RAGAS YouTube](#)

TAKE ACTION

We are not defined by who we are, but by our actions. To contribute to ending modern slavery, you can:

- Become a RAGAS member from [here](#).
- Donate to RAGAS, or organisations working on ending modern slavery.
- [Contact your local Coordinator](#) to volunteer for RAGAS.
- Invite a RAGAS speaker to your local club meeting talking about modern slavery.
- Initiate a Global Grant project to fight against modern slavery.
- Engage with Rotary clubs that dedicate to ending modern slavery, including District 5950 [Rotary eClub to End Human Trafficking](#) and District 5710 [Rotary eClub of Community Action Against Human Trafficking](#).

