

Preface

After my third research trip into the global sex trafficking industry, I brooded for twenty-four hours on a flight from Mumbai to Los Angeles, wondering how to write this book. Countless faces of torture, savagery, and abject slavery swirled in my mind. I did not know how I would convey these stories; I knew only that the truths of the scores of sex slaves I met in brothels, massage parlors, street corners, and apartments across the world must be told, however unpalatable those truths may be. Though I originally intended this book as a systematic narration of my journey into the sex trafficking industry, a much broader intention began to form in my mind. I realized I wanted to recount a life-altering journey, one that motivated in me a newfound mission to contribute to more successful international efforts to abolish sex trafficking and all other forms of contemporary slavery.

That slavery still exists may surprise some readers, but the practice of violently coerced labor continues to thrive in every corner of the globe. There were 28.4 million slaves in the world at the end of 2006, and there will most likely be a greater number by the time you read this book (see table A.1 for detail). Some are child slaves in India, stolen from their homes and worked sixteen hours a day to harvest the tea that middle-class consumers drink or sew the carpets that adorn their sitting rooms. Others

are bonded laborers in South Asia, Latin America, and Africa, who accrue or inherit debts that can never be repaid, no matter how long they work. Slaves in the United States harvest agricultural products: onions, avocados, and corn in Texas, California, Florida, and the Carolinas. Up to 5 percent of the world's cocoa beans are picked by slave hands in the Ivory Coast. Slaves continue to harvest coffee in Kenya and Ethiopia, and they burn wood in hellish furnaces in Brazil to produce charcoal that is used to temper the steel in everything from garden shears to car axles. Approximately 1.2 million of these 28.4 million slaves are young women and children, who were deceived, abducted, seduced, or sold by families to be prostituted across the globe. These sex slaves are forced to service hundreds, often thousands of men before they are discarded, forming the backbone of one of the most profitable illicit enterprises in the world. Drug trafficking generates greater dollar revenues, but trafficked women are far more profitable: Unlike a drug, a human female does not have to be grown, cultivated, distilled, or packaged. Unlike a drug, a human female can be used by the customer again and again.

The brutalities associated with sex slavery are perverse, violent, and utterly destructive. Whips, cigarette burns, broken bones, starvation—every slave has suffered these tortures, but sex slaves suffer each of these as well as innumerable counts of rape - ten, fifteen, twenty or more times a day. In brothels across the globe, I met women and children who suffered unspeakable acts of barbarity. Meeting these victims was not easy. With each interview, I became increasingly filled with heartbreak, sorrow, and rage. Nothing I write can possibly convey the sensation of peering into the moribund eyes of a broken child who has been forced to have sex with hundreds of men before the age of sixteen.

I am often asked how I first became “interested” in the topic of sex trafficking. The seeds of my research were sown years ago, in Winter 1994, when I was a junior at Duke University. A story on CNN spotlighted a young Croatian girl, fourteen years old, from a well-to-do family in Zagreb. She was breaking swimming records across Europe and intended to swim for Croatia in the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta. Hopes were high that she would bring home more than one gold medal to the fledgling country. One night, as she slept, a bomb sent shrapnel flying into her bedroom, shattering her legs. She would never swim again.

As I watched this story in the midst of stressful first-semester examinations, I was filled with indignation. This young girl's talent had put her

in the top 0.001 percent of swimmers in the world, and mindless violence ruined her life. Who was I to bemoan having too many papers to write when there were far more exceptional individuals than I whose lives were destroyed at the age of fourteen? I resolved to travel to the former Yugoslavia and do what I could to help. I joined forces with two Duke graduate students and procured a faculty sponsor, interviewed a handful of students to join us, found one student at Duke from the former Yugoslavia and met weekly to learn Bosnian from her, procured a grant from the Duke board of directors, contacted the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to get placements in refugee camps, and spent eight weeks volunteering in those camps in Summer 1995.

My camp was located in Novo Mesto, Slovenia, about sixty kilometers west of the Croatian border. The camp was populated by five hundred former occupants of a town in northwest Bosnia called Velika Kladusa. In late 1991, Serb soldiers raided the village, executed the men, burned down the homes, and told the survivors—mostly elderly and children—that they would kill them if they stayed. The survivors walked for days to reach the Croatian border, where UN personnel sent them to the camp in Slovenia. They were not sent to camps in Croatia, which were much closer, because those camps were full.

In the Novo Mesto camp, the refugees lived six to a room, shared the same filthy outdoor toilets, and were served two meals a day of stale bread, oily soup, and rotting brown salad. We three Duke students lived just as the refugees did. That summer, I lost eighteen pounds, struggled to have any sort of positive effect on the refugees' lives, and learned that all they really wanted was to have someone listen. So I listened—to a father who was once an engineer for Boeing in Sarajevo, who spoke of the destruction of his home and the sorrow that his children had not been in school for almost four years; to the elderly women who had outlived their children and watched their grandchildren rot from malnourishment; to the teenagers who drowned their sorrows in alcohol and self-hatred. Last, but far from least, I heard stories of Serb soldiers who raped and trafficked young Bosnian Muslim women by the truckloads to brothels across Europe.

It took me a few years to process my experiences in Slovenia. In early 2000, I was in the midst of an MBA degree at Columbia University when the stories of the trafficked women in Bosnia resurfaced in my mind. I had little appetite for a return to corporate life, but I was equally unsure

what to do with the trafficking tales I had heard in the refugee camp. I considered the paths before me and made a radical decision: The time had come to tell this story.

The research that commenced that summer proved the single greatest challenge of my life. When I began, few people knew what sex trafficking was, so I decided the only way to find out was to go into the field and learn for myself. Beginning in Summer 2000, I used the money saved from my business career to take three separate trips to visit brothels, shelters, towns, borders, and villages in India, Nepal, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, Italy, Moldova, Albania, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Mexico, and the United States. I was slowed only by the necessity of getting a job and saving more money to take more research trips. I conducted over 150 interviews with sex trafficking victims in brothels and shelters. I conducted another 120 interviews with the families of victims, the men who purchased them, shelter and NGO workers, trafficking police, trafficking attorneys, one brothel owner, and one trafficker. I walked into brothels, massage parlors, and sex clubs to see for myself how the industry functioned. I journeyed to the villages and towns from which the victims originated to understand the conditions that gave rise to their exploitation. I traveled to borders between India and Nepal, Nepal and China, Moldova and Transdnestr, Moldova and Romania, Italy and Austria, Italy and Slovenia, Albania and the Adriatic Sea, Albania and Serbia, the United States and Mexico, Thailand and Burma, Thailand and Laos, and Vietnam and China to understand how the movement of victims was accomplished. I interviewed victims who had been trafficked for purposes other than sexual exploitation, and I interviewed over two hundred individuals in other forms of contemporary slavery, including bonded laborers, forced laborers, and child slaves.

I conducted more research in India than other countries, as I could get by with rudimentary Hindi and was familiar with the lay of the land. In other countries, I hired guides and translators to help. I stayed in hostels, slept in village huts, and journeyed by plane, train, bus, car, motorbike, bullock cart, and on foot through steaming jungles to arrive at my destinations. Word of mouth and hustling with locals were my best tools for finding the sex trafficking underbelly in each country. In cities like Chiang Mai or Mumbai, finding sex slaves was easy—the brothels were in plain view, even though they were illegal. In Moldova, sex clubs were numerous and prostitutes came right to my hotel door the evening I arrived. In other countries, such as Italy, where the laws against illegal

brothels are more strictly enforced, it took time to track down sex slaves. Eventually, I learned that in most countries, taxi drivers almost always knew where to find cheap sex, and cheap sex was almost always provided by slaves.

Most of my interviews were conducted in one of two venues: inside a sex establishment or at a shelter for trafficking victims. The interviews inside sex establishments were extremely hit or miss. I searched out individuals who appeared to speak English and might be willing to converse. I never took a tape recorder or camera into a brothel because patrons were often searched and I did not want to put myself or the slaves at risk. For the same reasons, I never went back to the same brothel more than once, whether I managed to interview someone or not. When soliciting conversations, I had to make a split-second judgment as to whether a request might lead to harm to the slave. Brothels owners and pimps often devised ways to test the loyalties of their slaves, who in turn received positive treatment if they passed or severe punishments if they failed. These tests, such as planting a fake human-rights worker promising freedom for information, created overwhelming distrust in the victims. As a result, most conversations I attempted ended very quickly. I was always honest about who I was, but most slaves did not trust me. Of the numerous victims' stories shared in this book, only a handful derive from successful conversations inside a sex establishment, and those represent a small fraction of conversations I attempted in such venues.

Conditions were more favorable in shelters and I was able to record or transcribe most of my interviews. When I first began my research, many shelters allowed supervised interviews with victims, but within a few years, they rightfully began declining such interviews, as the individuals felt forced to discuss matters they would rather forget and many interviewers carelessly published information without protecting the identity and security of the former slave. Thankfully, I had spent considerable time establishing trust with shelters in various countries and could conduct interviews with volunteers, gather data, and speak with victims who were willing to speak. Most sex trafficking victims, however, did not want to speak. They did not want to relive their agonies and feared the shame that would be forced upon them if people in their home towns learned of their ordeals. They feared that their families would be harmed by traffickers, who had warned them never to utter a word, and they feared deportation. Most victims I interviewed were under the age of twenty-five, and most suffered debilitating physical injuries, malnutrition, psychological

traumas, posttraumatic stress disorder, and infection by a scourge of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. On more than one occasion, I had to reschedule a conversation because the individual could not continue. The memories were painful and the courage required to relive them was extraordinary. Three victims in this book shared their stories for the first time during my interview. One of them was a child.

Because of the extreme sensitivity and potential danger in discussing trafficking ordeals, I established two ground rules to ensure that I never, ever made a victim's life worse than it already was. First, I was determined to do no harm. I never forced a conversation and I never solicited one where the victim would have suffered for speaking to me. In shelters, I did not approach interviewees with a list of questions that I expected to be answered; each encounter was a conversation. I informed the individual that she could share whatever information she desired. The results were often long, honest, detailed discussions, in which the victims poured their hearts out. Second, when visiting sex establishments, I was always equipped with information on nearby shelters and health services, just in case a sex slave requested assistance. In most cases, I did not offer the information unless asked, as many sex slaves had convinced themselves that they were not slaves and suggesting otherwise could only distress them. Nevertheless, I occasionally left the information behind, hoping it would prove beneficial to someone, at some point.

After conducting three research trips in and out of brothels and shelters across the globe, it became clear to me that sex trafficking is a heinous crime against humanity. It generates immense profits through the vulgar and wanton destruction of female lives. Attempting to describe that destruction was not easy for me. The first drafts of this book were composed as a narrative journey, into which I wove a general description of the functioning of contemporary sex trafficking. This initial approach did not work. It was better suited to capture a broad readership, but it did not serve the more crucial imperative of portraying with as much accuracy as possible the origins of the sex trafficking industry, how it operates worldwide, and how best to eradicate it. To accomplish these ends, the first chapter became dedicated to an analytical exposition of the key aspects of the contemporary sex trafficking industry, concluding with an argument on how to abolish it. The final chapter explores this argument in full, which can be summarized as follows: the most effective measures to eradicate the global sex trafficking industry are those that reduce the aggregate demand for sex slaves by slave owners and consumers

through an attack on the industry's immense profitability. A new brand of global abolitionist movement is suggested, wherein governments, non-profit organizations, key international organizations, and individual citizens alike take more surgical steps designed to dismantle the business of sex trafficking. This book is a call to such action, motivated by my personal witness of unconscionable suffering, to be conveyed in a less restrained tone during the narrative chapters of this book. I promise you, the reader, that if you will carry through the foundational analysis in Chapter 1, you will be all the better equipped to undertake the transnational journey into the global sex trafficking industry that follows. Along the way, you will meet numerous slaves as well as a handful of courageous people dedicated to the abolition of sex trafficking and the assistance of its victims. I hope that this book will motivate greater efforts to help them.

1 Sex Trafficking

An Overview

Men can co-exist on condition that they recognize each other as being all equally, though differently, human, but they can also co-exist by denying each other a comparable degree of humanity, and thus establishing a system of subordination.

—Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*

Untamed Desire

My father once told me the story of how the world was created. In between each cycle of time, he said, there is emptiness. The god Brahma slumbers and another god, Shiva, meditates over why the world of man invariably degrades from a realm of “generosity, self-restraint, gentleness, and truth” into a miasma of “greed, lust, violence, and deceit.” Because Shiva must swallow this poisonous cosmos at the end of time, he meditates on a way to prevent man’s degradation. At the cusp of the answer, he is disturbed by Brahma, who grows restless and prematurely seeks to initiate creation by taking the form of a bull and mounting his own daughter. Furious, Shiva hurls his trident at the god-bull, who pulls out of his daughter in an effort to dodge the weapon. In doing so, Brahma’s seed spills across the heavens, and Shiva’s trident strikes the seed where it lands, thereby igniting creation. At that moment, Shiva drops his head in sorrow. He recognizes that once again, the world of man will be suffused with greed, suffering, and pain, for it has been initiated upon the seed of untamed desire. The sequence is undeniable—desire leads to suffering, suffering leads to anger, anger leads to violence, and violence destroys the world.¹

I never truly understood this story until I first laid my eyes on Maya. Gaunt and distressed, she was nineteen when I interviewed her, after almost four years as a sex slave in each of Mumbai's two main red-light districts, Kamathipura and Falkland Road. She was born in the Sindhupalchok region of Nepal, one of the poorest stretches of land on the planet, with an annual per capita income of \$180, or fifty cents per day. Desperate to make ends meet, her parents sold her to a local agent for \$55 on the promise that she would have a good job at a carpet factory, from which she could send home up to \$10 per month. The night Maya left home, the agent resold her to a *dalal* (trafficker), who took her to Butwal, a border town with India, where they spent the night with another girl. The next day, Maya, the other girl, and the *dalal* crossed the border into India by foot. A few days later, they were in Mumbai.

This is what Maya told me happened next:

Once I came to Mumbai, the *dalal* sold me to a *malik* [brothel boss] in Kamathipura. The *malik* told me I owed him thirty-five thousand rupees [\$780], and I must have sex with any man who chooses me until this debt is repaid. I refused, and his men raped me and did not feed me. When I agreed to do sex, they gave me medicines because I had a urine infection. I was in that bungalow two years and made sex to twenty men each day. There were hundreds of girls in this bungalow, many from Nepal. One time I tried to escape. I complained to the police, but they did nothing. A few days later the *malik's* men found me on the streets and took me back to the brothel. The *malik* put chili paste on a broomstick and pushed it inside me. Then he broke my ribs with his fist. The *gharwali* [house manager, madam] tended my wounds for a short time, and after this time I went with clients again, even though my ribs pained very badly. The *gharwali* gave me opium to make the pain less. After two years, the *malik* sold me to another *malik* on Falkland Road. During this time I lived in a *pinjara* [cage] with one other woman. It was very small and it was on the street, so it was very noisy at night. I was pregnant two times, and the *gharwali* gave me pills to kill the baby. The second time I became very ill. When I was strong I ran away. I went to a shelter near Falkland Road. They told me I have HIV. They helped me contact my father, but he told me not to come home. He said I can never be married and because I have HIV, I can only bring shame.

Maya's story is emblematic of the hundreds of thousands of women and children trafficked and forced into prostitution each year. As with each victim in this book, I have not used Maya's real name, and in a few instances in which discussing precise geographic locations might result in danger to the individual, I have provided an alternate setting. Like most sex trafficking victims, Maya and her family were vulnerable to deceit due to economic desperation. Once Maya arrived at the brothel, she was swiftly broken down through physical and psychological torture. While her journey to Mumbai was direct, other victims endure multiple stops in several countries, where they are exploited, resold, and tortured. At each destination, victims are told they must work off the "debt" of trafficking them by having sex with up to twenty men per day. The accounting of these debts is invariably exploitive, involving deductions for food, clothing, rent, alcohol, and exorbitant interest rates. The false promise of attaining freedom is a powerful tool that brothel owners utilize to control their victims. As time passes, some slaves accept their fates, and in a Stockholm Syndrome-like transformation, they might be "freed" to serve as working prostitutes who mentor new slaves upon arrival. In Maya's case, when her brothel owner decided she had worked off her debt, she was resold and given a new debt. If she had not escaped, the cycle of slavery might never have ended.

Civilization at a Crossroads

The global magnitude of victimization of young women like Maya is staggering. Every minute of every day, the most vulnerable women and children in the world are raped for profit with impunity, yet efforts to combat sex trafficking remain woefully inadequate and misdirected. There are several reasons for this insufficiency. First, despite increased media attention, sex trafficking remains poorly understood. Second, the organizations dedicated to combating sex trafficking are underfunded and uncoordinated internationally. Third, the laws against sex trafficking are overwhelmingly anemic and poorly enforced. Finally, despite numerous studies and reports, a systematic business and economic analysis of the industry, conducted to identify strategic points of intervention, has not yet been undertaken.

This book is dedicated to the task of addressing each of these key impediments to an effective global response to sex trafficking. The book's

central argument is that the enormity and pervasiveness of sex trafficking is a direct result of the immense profits to be derived from selling inexpensive sex around the world. The structures of Western capitalism, as spread through the process of economic globalization, contribute greatly to the destruction of lives this profitability entails. Sex trafficking is one of the ugliest contemporary actualizations of global capitalism because it was directly produced by the harmful inequalities spread by the process of economic globalization: deepening of rural poverty, increased economic disenfranchisement of the poor, the net extraction of wealth and resources from poor economies into richer ones, and the broad-based erosion of real human freedoms across the developing world.² Ending sex trafficking requires an attack on the industry's immense profitability and a radical shift in the conduct of economic globalization.

What Is Sex Trafficking?

Many policy makers are still debating what the term “trafficking” means. The 2000 United Nations Trafficking Protocol established a generally accepted definition of trafficking as the following:

the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power, or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

The primary confusion relates to whether the definition of trafficking, as the process of “recruitment, transportation, [and] transfer . . . for the purpose of exploitation” includes the exploitation itself.³ The wording connotes only the movement portion of the trafficking chain, which explains why so many laws and programs against trafficking focus on movement more than exploitation. However, trafficking is not about movement; it is about slavery. The transatlantic slave trade from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries involved the trafficking of eleven million

Africans across thousands of miles to work as slaves on plantations.⁴ Why is this historical practice termed a slave trade and the same practice today termed trafficking? This linguistic attenuation scrambles global attention and blunts abolitionist policies. More focus is placed on thwarting movement across borders than on shutting down the modern plantations to which those individuals are being moved. Such tactics have proved overwhelmingly futile because the modes of transport are numerous (by ship, vehicle, plane, train, foot), the costs of transport are miniscule, and the sources of potential slave labor are nearly limitless. Despite the shifts in ease and inexpensiveness of human transportation, current anti-trafficking efforts primarily seek to crack down on modern-day slave traders, resulting in little more than adjustments in routes, larger bribes to border guards, and the procurement of false travel documents. Such minor increases in costs make a very small economic dent in today's slave trade. A much clearer understanding of sex trafficking is required—wherein the movement and the purpose of the movement are disaggregated as criminal acts—to achieve greater abolitionist effectiveness. To promote this understanding, I offer two definitions that should prove more useful when formulating policies and initiatives intended to abolish acts of sex trafficking. *Slave trading* can be defined as the process of acquiring, recruiting, harboring, receiving, or transporting an individual, through any means and for any distance, into a condition of slavery or slave-like exploitation. *Slavery* can be defined as the process of coercing labor or other services from a captive individual, through any means, including exploitation of bodies or body parts.⁵ These definitions are not meant to replace the long-established, more complex articulations of the crimes, but a disaggregation of the criminal acts constituent to sex trafficking should prove more effective when formulating efforts to combat those crimes.

Anatomy of Sex Trafficking

All sex trafficking crimes have two components: slave trading and slavery. Slave trading represents the supply side of the sex trafficking industry. Slavery represents the demand side. Within these two components, there are three steps: acquisition, movement, and exploitation. The interrelationship among these elements reveals the anatomy of sex trafficking, as figure 1.1 shows:

A Child Named Aye

Before I end this book, there is one more person I would like you to meet. She was not a sex slave, but a child slave, named Aye. In all my travels, I experienced no emotion more devastating than peering into the eyes of an enslaved human child. Where one expects to see the spark of innocence, one discovers instead the abyss of humankind's most savage cruelty. I met scores of child slaves during my research, but none was more haunting than Aye.

I cannot explain why meeting Aye was so difficult for me. Perhaps because our meeting was toward the end of my final research trip. Perhaps because even though she was fifteen, the depraved exploitation she suffered stunted her development, so that she behaved like a meek, five-year-old child. Or perhaps it was because after she suffered ten years of slavery, I was the first person with whom she shared her story.

Aye was a member of the Shan hill tribe of Burma. When she was four years old, she and her mother fled government soldiers who destroyed their village. From the ages of four to fourteen, she was a slave near

Chiang Mai. When we met at her shelter, Aye entered the interview room with a severe hunch. She constantly plucked the skin from her fingers, and she spoke in a voice just barely above a whisper. Because she had been virtually starved for years, she did not understand that she would receive three meals a day in the shelter, so she often overate and had to be taken to the hospital to avoid a ruptured stomach. Her story revealed the darkest cruelties of humankind—callous exploitation and unconscionable violence committed against a child, solely for the sake of profit. As Aye shared her story, the bleakness in her eyes shook me to my core.

When I was four years old, soldiers came to our village late in the night. They shot people and burned our homes. My mother and I ran into the forest for many days, until we came to Thailand.

We were hungry, and my mother looked for work. We came to a factory in a town called Sarapee, in Chiang Mai district. A Burmese husband and wife owned this factory. We thought we would be safe with them. They said my mother could work and I could be kept with her because I was too young to be on my own. The wife said we must call her Jay, which is a term for a rich woman. Two hundred people worked in her factory. They were all Shan Burmese.

The next day we came to the factory and the owners beat me very badly. They pulled out my hair and I was bleeding. They told my mother if she did not work, they would beat me again. They separated me from my mother and also made me work. Even though we worked in the same factory, I never saw my mother. The work was very bad. We woke at four in the morning and worked until one in the morning. I do not remember sleeping. I would separate good fruits from bad fruits; I would mash dry peppers; I would cut bamboo shoots. Every day, a truck came and took the goods to a market in Chiang Mai. I also had to clean the toilets and wipe the spit on the floor from men who chewed betel nut. I was so tired doing this work. I would try to sleep on the staircase for a few minutes when the owners were not watching. We were not given beds, so I slept with my head on one step and my body on the step below. We were also not given food. Sometimes I would go two days without eating, only water.

Every night, the owner's wife would make me massage her until she fell asleep. Sometimes I would fall asleep, and if she woke up and found me, she would beat me on the shoulders with a bamboo

stick. If she did not like the work I did, she would make me get on my knees and beat me until I fell over. If she found me sleeping on the stairs, she would stab me with scissors in the shoulder until I bled very badly. Even when I was bleeding, she would make me go back to work.

I worked in the factory until I was fourteen years old. One day, the owner caught me sleeping on the stairs and she stabbed me in the head with scissors. There was so much blood I thought I might die. I was given a bandage and sent back to work, but I was too dizzy. That night, I ran away. I wanted to run away before, but I had seen other people try, and the guards always caught them. The owner would pull their fingernails or burn them with torches for punishment. When I escaped, I wanted to call the police, but I did not know how to dial a telephone. I found an adult to help me and he filed a police report. I went to the hospital and was taken to a shelter. They helped me file a court case against the owners. The judge sent the owners to prison for six months and fined them forty thousand baht [\$1,000]. They served their sentence and they are back at the market. They are very upset at me, and I am afraid they will come after me.

When I first came to this shelter, I was very angry. I did not understand why something like this happened to me. I wanted to go to school so badly, but I could not. The owner had three children, and they went to school. One was in Bangkok, and the other two went to university in America.

I recently met my mother for the first time in many years. She is working in a second factory owned by Jay. I miss my mother, but I cannot see her again because the shelter is worried the owners will find out where I am, and they will do harm to me.

I asked the shelter personnel for the names of the owners, but they could not tell me because of a confidentiality agreement they signed during Aye's legal case. They did, however, tell me the location of the market in which the goods from the factory were sold. I visited the market and saw the fruits, spices, and other trinkets Aye was forced to process for ten of her fifteen years of life. The market was not more than a stone's throw from the U.S. embassy. I wanted to burn it to the ground.

Though Aye suffered nightmares, fits of anger, and an acute eating disorder, after a few months in the shelter she had discovered a genuine

enjoyment for art. At the end of her story, I asked if she would like to share her work. Her eyes lit up and she hurried to retrieve it. When she returned, she proudly presented a painted pencil holder, a beanbag key-chain, and a greeting card with yellow and pink flowers drawn inside. I told her they were beautiful. She bowed her head and giggled bashfully.

Before I left, I asked Aye how she felt about sharing her story for the first time. This is what she said:

I want to tell people my life story, so they know what happens to people like me. I want other people who have suffered like me to know they are not alone.