

WHAT SOCIAL MOVEMENTS CAN LEARN FROM THE ANTI-TRAFFICKING COALITION

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Modern day slavery, or human trafficking, has received increased attention at all levels of public policy over the last few decades. Human trafficking is a crime of exploitation; it takes away people's freedom by forcing them into service, any service, without their consent. Global attention became refocused on the topic beginning in the late 1990s, mainly due to the work of the anti-human trafficking social movement. The number of non-governmental organizations in the U.S. that address human trafficking has grown steadily both in number and influence since then.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

Human trafficking occupies a distinct place on the public policy agenda; it is well recognized, but only at a high level. When asked about human trafficking, people often recognize the sex trafficking of women and girls (mostly at the international level) as part of the problem. However, policymakers and the general public often lack a deeper understanding of the broad scope of trafficking, which includes labor trafficking, trafficking of men and boys, and the domestic human trafficking that takes place inside the United States.

The narrow definition of human trafficking as sex trafficking creates a problem for those attempting to combat human trafficking in all its forms. Most people think they know what human trafficking is, and want to support the movement to stop it; however, the movement must simultaneously build on the general awareness of the problem while deconstructing people's perceptions that it is a problem solely for women and girls, and solely as a problem outside the United States.

Movement leaders must build diffuse coalitions that share tactics and resources to solve this awareness issue. My recent research on the Anti-Human Trafficking movement focused on the work of the Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking (called ATEST for short). The coalition was founded in 2007 and is made up of the best known and most influential anti-human trafficking groups in the United States. Over a six-year period, the study showed that the coalition was able to forward the discussion on labor trafficking by learning from and adopting strategies among its individual members. In addition, they were able to make better policy recommendations in the fight against sex trafficking, mostly focused on the restoration of survivors. The prospect of going to jail keeps many survivors from coming forward to tell their stories, which hampers the ability to track down traffickers and trafficking rings. "Safe Harbor" laws are statutes aimed to help restore the lives of trafficking survivors and erase the crimes they were forced to commit while being trafficked. The coalition partners, each focused on their own piece of the movement, can create a holistic response to the trafficking issue. These laws, coupled with programs to help survivors regain their lives through education, support and healing, are important in stopping cycles of abuse.

SOCIAL MOVEMENT TACTICS

Social movement tactics have been well-documented in research. Often, the target of the action, whether private entities or government agencies, dictates which tactics movements use to forward their agenda. For example, if a social movement wants to stop a corporation from doing something, it will boycott its products, picket its corporate headquarters, and attempt to publicly shame the company into doing the right thing. On

the other hand, when a social movement feels the government is a target for action, it will pressure members of Congress to address the issue via legislation or work to lobby government agencies to present solutions that include their recommendations. These tactics hold in the anti-human trafficking arena.

Sex trafficking dominates human trafficking policy; its connection to prostitution (illegal in most parts of the world) places strategic action firmly in the realm of government. For example, laws must be changed to include sex trafficking in current statutes or change the definition of prostitution entirely to *exclude* survivors of trafficking.

Outside the realm of sex trafficking, labor trafficking is seen as a private, corporate problem; organizations fighting labor trafficking often target private industry with awareness campaigns that urge them to join voluntary programs to address slavery in the supply chain. The ATEST coalition has used both strategies in new ways to achieve better results.

COALITIONS INNOVATE ON SOCIAL MOVEMENT TACTICS

- ECPAT International – an ATEST member, formerly known as Ending Child Prostitution and Trafficking – has a Code of Conduct for companies in the travel industry, which explicitly targets private companies as a means for eradicating sex trafficking. It is not enough to just outlaw the act of child trafficking; there are plenty of access points to the human supply chain where this crime can be stopped. ECPAT has helped open the eyes of the corporate travel industry to the role they play in the movement of victims. Awareness is a vital first step in preventing trafficking. Companies that sign the Code of Conduct agree to partner with ECPAT to create training programs for their employees, helping them spot potential trafficking situations.
- The Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Human Trafficking (CAST), another ATEST member based in southern California, has targeted the government to fight labor trafficking. Their efforts helped pass the California Supply Chains Act – which ensures large retailers and manufacturers provide consumers with information about their efforts to eradicate slavery and human trafficking from their supply chains. This tactic used on the power of the state to compel private businesses to address labor trafficking in their supply chains.
- The coalition also targeted the federal government to increase awareness of labor trafficking. ATEST realized that the large sums of money flowing through the federal procurement process should also adhere to anti-human trafficking ethics. To this end, the coalition helped produce a toolkit for the Department of Labor on child and forced labor.

Thinking outside the box and using tactics in new ways has helped ATEST influence policy and expand the discussion beyond sex trafficking. They used the main narrative, sex trafficking, to get decision makers' attention. Then, they deepened the conversation by centering the topic of labor trafficking in their work. The organizational structure of this social movement coalition could provide a blueprint for other social justice movements that feel they may need a more holistic approach.

Read more in *Framing the Fight Against Human Trafficking: Movement Coalitions and Tactical Diffusion* by Amanda D. Clark (Lexington Books, 2019). See also, Soule, *Contention and Corporate Social Responsibility* (Cambridge Books, 2009).