

Dr. Kevin Bales

University of Alberta Visiting Lectureship in Human Rights

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Dr. Kevin Bales: Thank you very much. I'm honoured to be here. That was a very kind introduction and of course, you know when I have an opportunity to be in a place like this and to speak to such a wonderful group of people, I always feel that somehow a terrible mistake has been made, you know, that somewhere in the office dealing with this, a student intern has used a cut-and-paste in their word processing package and somehow my name has ended up where it shouldn't be. However it came about, I'm very thankful.

I also have to say about this choir. You know, tonight, before I came over, I was looking at that beautiful moon rising above the city, and I also began to see those ugly, dark clouds of war beginning to blot out that moon. And yet, standing back stage and hearing those perfect young voices raised at harmony pierced those clouds for me, and I began to feel again some hope when we have to face what I hope is not a very ugly immediate future.

I'm supposed to say, Your Honour, Lois, I'm very happy to get to see you again and it's a treat. Gentlemen, thank you so much for that.

I want to start off by showing you a very small videotape that lasts about 10 minutes. The film that was mentioned was a very long documentary film, but we have a supporter, who is a Hollywood film producer, which is a wonderful thing to have as a supporter! And she took our 90-minute film and she squeezed it down to a 10-minute version, primarily to operate as a recruitment film for our anti-slavery organization in North America. But I'm not showing it to you to recruit you to our organization. Though if you want to join, that's perfectly okay. We can help you with that! But instead, about 95% of it, if not more, is an introduction to the forms of contemporary slavery around the world.

And, you know what they say about a picture being worth a thousand words? Well, I can assure you that in this case that's true, and in many ways 10 minutes with the film is worth, you know, spending a week with me, I think. So if we might, let's roll that bit of film.

[Video film begins playing]

Narrator: There are 27 million slaves in the world today. Men, women, and children held against their will; forced to work without pay; controlled by violence every day.

Dr. Kevin Bales: Slavery is what slavery's always been: About one person controlling another person using violence and then exploiting them economically, paying them nothing. That's what slavery's about.

Narrator: Slavery is not legal anywhere, but thriving everywhere in Africa, Asia, and here in the United States. The CIA reports 50,000 women and children are smuggled into the U.S. each year as sex and domestic slaves or locked away in sweat shops, tricked into coming here with offers of a good job and an education, terrorized into staying. It happened to Dora, Christine, and Rosalie.

: I would work about 6 o'clock, sometimes 6:30. I'd go back to bed like around 2, 2:30.

: I was helping, taking care of the kids, doing everything in the house. I wasn't getting paid so I live in the house for about 3 and a half to 4 years.

: They used to hit me. I can't go for three days without them beating me up.

Narrator: Dora escaped by jumping from a moving car. Ironically she was enslaved in this house by an official of the World Bank, an organization that supposedly tries to alleviate the plight of the world's poor.

: Dora's been talking about working here, and we'd like to give you the opportunity to tell her side of the story.

Narrator: Joyce Arimka works with freed slaves in Washington, DC.

Joyce Arimka: There is so little awareness. Americans don't want to believe that modern day slavery is occurring.

[Music playing]

"Listen on the wind, you hear their voices. On a strong wind, you can feel the sweat of their despair, fear, and pain. Will you listen, in the quiet of night."

Narrator: In India, thousands of children have been kidnapped by slave traders or tricked into slavery in the carpet belt. 5,000 children are missing in the poor, remote region of Bihar.

Chiche: My son Hiro was just six years old when he disappeared with a cousin. When I couldn't find him, I thought I was going mad. I felt so empty inside because my child was missing. His mother, too, was going mad.

Narrator: Hiro's been gone five years. He doesn't even know some of his younger brothers and sisters. Chiche's best shot at seeing his son again lies with the South Asian Coalition Against Child Servitude or SAACS. The organization rescues 3,000 children a year from slavery. SAACS thinks it's found Hiro.

Chiche: I just pray to God that my child will be found. The moment he sets eyes on me, he'll start to weep, and he won't stop.

Narrator: Chiche comes for the raid on the loom.

[Music playing]

"If you listen, you will hear the voices of a million souls. Helpless, hopeless souls. Into slavery, blood and soul."

Narrator: At last, Chiche has found his son.

[Music playing]

"If you listen, you will hear, the price of desperation. It's the shame of the nations. If you listen, you will hear."

Narrator: These young men are slaves in Africa.

Dr. Kevin Bales: They're working on the lower end of the economic ladder. It tends to be raw materials, agriculture, basic stuff that feeds into the local economy. But all over the world there are also slaves making things that feed into the world economy.

Narrator: Things like cocoa. Half of the world's cocoa comes from the Ivory Coast. Many cocoa farms there use slaves which means that some of the chocolate we eat comes from slave labour.

Dr. Kevin Bales: In the old days, slaves were expensive. Today they're cheap. There's a glut of slaves, and when you've used them, you can throw them away if you don't want them anymore. They're disposable.

Narrator: Slaves like these men cost the equivalent of \$40,000 in the Deep South in the 1850s. Today the average slave costs \$90. A local journalist in the Ivory Coast uses an undercover camera to show just how easy it is to get a good deal on people. It takes 30 minutes and about \$80 to buy these two men. They come from Mali, hoping to work for a better life. Their purchase in the market turns out to be just a warning for the men who so narrowly avoided slavery.

: He said that if anyone escaped, he would be caught and killed.

Narrator: No one warned these 19 young men from Mali. They demonstrate the beatings they survived. Others weren't so lucky. They've never even tasted chocolate.

: When people eat chocolate, they're eating my flesh.

Dr. Kevin Bales: People watching this may think, well, why don't we just stop buying chocolate? I have to tell you that can make things worse. We have to make it clear to the multi-nationals that slavery is too high a price to pay for cheap goods.

Narrator: There are pockets of success around the world in preventing slavery, freeing slaves, and rehabilitating those that have been freed. Not too long ago, 30,000 people were enslaved in Brazil, making charcoal for the steel industry. The public outcry forced change. Within three years, all of the slaves were freed.

Kevin Bales recently testified in Washington, D.C. Penalties against traffickers are now tougher. In West Africa, "Free the Slaves" has worked with the chocolate industry and other organizations to uncover the exact extent of the slavery problem. Together they are building an inspection system that will take slavery out of chocolate for good.

And in India, SAACS not only rescues children from slavery, it also mends their spirits and educates them, making them leaders when they return to villages where almost no one can read or write.

: If you are illiterate, anyone can cheat you. If I am literate, no one can cheat me.

Narrator: Such schools are funded by the Rugmark Foundation that investigates and ensures consumers that children have not laboured over the expensive carpets. The Rugmark stamp adds about \$2 to the cost of a rug.

: We believe that's a small price to pay for that peace of mind that by buying that rug you're not getting involved in the child slavery problem.

Narrator: Also in northern India, women have formed small credit unions and bought their freedom. Achieving economic independence means they no longer fear debt bondage and slavery. Their increased incomes now support local schools for the children they have taken out of the workplace.

"Free the Slaves", an American based non-profit organization is supporting these programs and more, including encouraging governments to enforce their own anti-slavery laws. There are more slaves today than at any other time in human history.

Dr. Kevin Bales: Every one of us is benefitting from slavery around the world. We could eradicate slavery. The laws are in place. The multi-nationals, the world trade organizations, the United Nations, they could end slavery, but they're not going to do it until and unless we demand it.

Narrator: Now is the time.

[Music playing]

"If you listen, you will hear: the voices of a million souls. Helpless, hopeless souls, into slavery."

Dr. Kevin Bales: We can fade that down now. Good, thank you.

I apologize for a couple of things. One of course obviously is that some of the things that you saw were a bit harsh. And I'm sorry about that. The scenes of violence are difficult to look at.

But I have to also say that it's not really for me to apologize about that because that is the reality of contemporary slavery. And when we go out to do our work, that's precisely what we find, and if you didn't see that, you wouldn't really be seeing what it is that we're constantly working on.

I suspect as well that a lot of you may be thinking: How on earth would we get to a situation in 2003 where there are 27 million people in slavery? How is that possible?

I want to be very clear that we're talking about slavery. We're not talking about sweat shops. We're not talking about people who have really bad jobs. We're talking about people who are truly enslaved. And that's why I wanted to pop up this definition to be clear that we're talking about people who are controlled by violence, who have no pay whatsoever, working without any kind of payment, who are being economically exploited, basically people who cannot walk away. They are totally under the control of other people.

Now, I appreciate that again, particularly if you've studied history, you're thinking, well, you know, isn't slavery about legally owning another person? Well, sometimes it has been, and sometimes it hasn't been is the answer to that question.

Slavery actually predates the very beginnings of written law. Slavery actually predates the origins of money. Slavery existed before money and before law, and it has existed at times in human history as a legal entity and for other large parts of human history as the criminal or informal activity that we have today.

Throughout time, history has had the same attributes that violence is used to control someone. Violence means that they cannot walk away from their situation, that they are paid absolutely nothing, that they're being exploited.

I think what we have to remember about slavery, and again this comes as something of a surprise to us, especially if we're growing up in the north, in the prosperous north, is that we tend to think of slavery in a very black-and-white, good-versus-evil kind of mindframe.

And we want to understand it in that way, and it's harder for us to take the next step or two and look at the subtlety that actually exists in slavery. But what I have to point to is the fact that slavery is actually a relationship. It's a relationship between two people. It's a social and an economic relationship which is grossly unequal. It's marked by violence. It's marked by horrific exploitation, but it's a relationship, one that sometimes goes on for very long periods.

And once we begin to understand that it's a relationship and has been a relationship since the beginning of human history, we can begin to understand how it is that we can end up with so many slaves today and also we can begin to understand how slavery has evolved and changed while retaining those very attributes that makes slavery slavery.

I suppose one way to point this out is to say, you know, I know that in an audience that includes a lot of university students, there are a number of you who may actually be married in the year 2003 for the first time.

And I would suggest, and I'm sure you'd agree, that if you were to get married in the year 2003, you would never expect that the nature of your marital relationship, that social and economic relationship called marriage would be

like a marriage that was contracted in 1903 or 1803 or 1403.

I mean, we assume that the nature of the relationship that we call marriage changes over time. I mean every other Sunday you pick up the Lifestyle section of the newspaper there's an article that says, Marriage, where is it going? There's this kind of assumption that it's somehow changing over time.

Well, in our minds, the historical reality of slavery has tended to somehow solidify, and we hold in our minds a picture of slavery which is the slavery of the American South before the civil war for most of us, and we seem to be locked there as if that is slavery.

Well, the reality is that the relationship that is slavery has changed a great deal from 5,000 years ago through several permutations in the way that it's acted out, and it has changed again, especially in the last 50 years.

And in fact, it's changed in ways in the last 50 years which are greater and more dramatic and in many ways more dangerous and deadly than have occurred in all the history of slavery before.

Let me explain why that's happened. And let me also talk about, then, how did we end up with 27 million slaves in the year 2003? There are three factors that get us to that situation.

The first is one that we all understand. It's the population explosion which has occurred since the Second World War. We all know that the world population's gone from 2 billion people to 6 billion people in that time.

And we know that the majority of that growth has been in the developing world and that today, if you go to the developing world, you find extremely large numbers of people and very young populations, but of course that doesn't make them slaves.

Having lots and lots of people doesn't make them slaves. You have to keep adding the other factors.

The second factor which has been so important about increasing the number of people in slavery is -- or I should say are the economic transformations which have swept the world since the Second World War. The process of modernization, of the end of colonialism in the developing world, the alteration of their economies especially in the developing world and then the sort of trump card of globalization which has again changed and battered the economies of the developing world.

In some ways the easiest way to visualize this is that if you've been to the developing world, you've seen what I'm about to describe, and if not, you've probably seen it on television, is to understand that there has been this vast movement of large populations out of the countryside in the developing world and into cities.

So that, for example, Mexico City is now a city of 20 million people. 20 million people. And it's not the largest city in the world. I mean there are cities around the developing world of that size made up primarily or to a large extent by extremely large numbers of people migrating in from the countryside when subsistence agriculture is brought to an end and replaced with cash crop economies; when kleptocrat governments militarize and force people from their lands; when ethnic groups and indigenous people are forced from their lands; and people are pushed into the cities into shanty-towns and find themselves in enormous vulnerability, find themselves in situations of terrible vulnerability.

Now, I'm not trying to suggest that somehow life in the countryside in the developing world was any kind of paradise. I think we all understand that it was tough and especially tough for women in the past. But what we do know is that throughout the developing world, subsistence agriculture existed for centuries and that the people who practiced it, lived in villages or in tribal groupings in which some kind of safety nets had evolved over time so that if there were floods or droughts or blights or lost crops, people had a tribe or an extended family or a temple or a church, some kind of local social organization to turn to that would provide some kind of social support.

Break up those communities, drive those people to the giant urban centres, pack them into shanty-towns, and they lose those forms of social supports, the narrow social supports that they had before, and they become very, very vulnerable, socially vulnerable because they've lost those

community safety nets; politically vulnerable because they're so poor that politicians are not interested in them and they tend not to be able to vote; financially vulnerable because they're destitute. They've reached the city and find that they're competing with jobs with the other million people from the other side of the country.

It's a situation in which their lack of education, finances, resources and so forth put them at an extreme disadvantage.

But millions of people who are then made extremely vulnerable does not make them slaves. To turn the vulnerable into slaves, you have to use violence. And to bring violence to bear on the extremely vulnerable, it requires corruption. And sadly, in a great part of the developing world, that final ingredient is available. Police, underpaid, greatly tempted, are able to sell or to rent their violence to catch slaves, to return slaves to people who would take them, to capture people and put them into slavery or to turn a blind eye if someone wants to use violence to turn another person into a slave.

Because violence is the absolute heart of slavery. It's the kernel, it's the core of slavery and has been since the beginning of time. If you strip away cultural practices, historical practices, social practices of all the different sorts of slavery which the world has experienced from ancient Babylonia to today, at the base of it, at the core you find violence.

So that even traditional, some traditional forms of slavery which seem very elaborate and gentle will dissolve into violent interaction if the slave tries to walk away. At that point, violence is used to put them in their place.

Now, those factors have led to a situation in which we, in large part because of the very large numbers of vulnerable people, we have reached a point where a very large number of people are enslaved. 27 million is our best estimate.

But it's also led to something that is remarkable. I've talked about how slavery has actually in some ways changed little over time. But there's one way that slavery has altered in a very, very

dramatic way, in a way that makes slavery different today than it has been compared to any time in human history, and that has to do with the cost of slaves.

Slaves today are at an all-time historical low in terms of their cost. And it's a very simple, basic economic equation.

The supply of slaves, the supply of enslaveable people, generated by the population explosion and the economic changes which have brought their vulnerability, means that there is a glut of potential slaves on the world market.

It's a glut of such proportions that the price of slaves has plummeted to really a low that I think historians of the past would never have dreamed possible.

I think you saw it. You saw how we went into a market in the Ivory Coast and re-bought two young men for \$40 each. \$40 for a human being. \$40 for the productive capacity of a human being. It's an astounding bargain, you know, if you want to think of it in really crude terms. And compare that to the slavery of just the recent past, to the slavery of the American South.

If we were to go back to 1850 to Alabama and we were to buy a young man of exactly the same qualities as you saw us buy in the Ivory Coast, a 19-year-old agricultural worker who was healthy, to buy a young man like that in Alabama in 1850 cost \$1,850. But \$1,000 in 1850 is the equivalent of \$38,000 American dollars today. \$38,000.

Slaves in the deep South were not cheap. To buy a slave was like buying a major piece of property, possibly the equivalent of a tractor today or a brand new car in terms of the purchasing, what it meant in terms of your income and what you had to save and borrow.

And you would imagine that if you were paying that much money for slaves in the past, you would have all of those attributes that we tend to equate with slavery in our minds: A bill of sale, a deed of ownership, a legal system to back up your ownership. That doesn't exist today in part because slaves are so, so cheap.

They're so cheap that sadly, and almost incredibly, they've become disposable. The slaves of the past would be caught in situations in which they would be enslaved for their life, and their children's lives and grandchildren's lives. Slavery would be a long-term relationship. Slavery in the past in the American South, for example, generated an annual profit of 5%. Now, compare that to slaves today who can generate profits as high as 800% in a single year.

Let me put up a last overhead and just show some of the differences before slavery in the past and slavery today.

The fact that there's no point in having legal ownership for a slave who is so, so cheap, obviously it's illegal so you don't want it, but what would be the point?

It's a bit like the plastic pen that you may have in your pocket. If you buy a plastic pen, you don't usually keep the bill of sale, you don't try to have a deed of ownership for your plastic pen. If someone picks it up from your desk, you don't call the police, send out a search party.

No, it's a disposable pen. We all understand that. It's just that that's the situation that has shifted, that human beings now can also be seen in that particular framework.

The purchase price is very low, the profits are very high, the relationships can be much short term, and we have around the world people being enslaved for much shorter periods because the cost is low. So that people may be enslaved for three months, six months, a year, two years and then disposed of in whatever way.

Let me illustrate that by talking about a young woman that in my book I call Siri, who's a perfect example of this new kind of slavery.

Siri was 14 when a broker in Thailand, northern Thailand gave her parents about \$1,000 in Thai baht, as an advance on the wages that she would supposedly earn from the job that he was promising that she would have as a waitress in Bangkok, so it was all a bit of subterfuge to get control of this young woman.

She was then sold to a middle man for the equivalent of \$2,000 who then sold her to a brothel in a provincial town of Thailand for \$4,000, all within a couple of days these transactions occurred.

And when she arrived in the brothel, this 14-year-old girl was told, you will be working here, you will be prostituted, and you will stay here until you have paid back \$8,000.

Now, the reality was in fact that they had no intention of letting her go at all. The idea that she had to pay \$8,000 was complete fiction. And she was never able or allowed to see any sort of accounting of monies or anything like that. She was enslaved. And very quickly, she was brutalized, she was sexually assaulted. She was put into a round of prostitution in this working class brothel in provincial Thailand. And she, from that time, had to service or be serially raped is the only way I can truly think of it, before 20 and 30 clients, men, per day.

It's a horrific reality, and she was one of about 20 young women in that brothel, and that brothel was one of 10 brothels on the main street in that town.

And mind you, this has nothing to do with sex tourism. This is not about Westerners and Europeans, these were working class Thai men going to a working class Thai brothel.

Now, the remarkable thing is that Siri is in many ways one of the most expensive slaves I've ever met, costing something like two to \$4,000, yet she generated for the people who purchased her about 850% profit per year. She repaid her own purchase price within three weeks. She was able to generate vast sums of money, and that was just one individual in a brothel that had 20 or so young women.

If you are willing to use slaves, the profits are astoundingly high. Of course they won't last in the sense that Siri won't last and the other young women won't last in those positions because after two or three years, four at the most, their bodies are a cocktail of sexually transmitted diseases, they have suffered physical injuries, they have suffered mental injuries, and many of them are in terrible mental situations with their mental health, or they've been brutalized to the point of incapacity. And at the point at which they test positive for HIV, is the point at which they're

normally thrown onto the street and disposed of, simply dumped, gotten rid of at the age of 17, 16, 18, something like that.

That disposability, that cheapness, that large level of profit is indicative of the way this new kind of slavery based on this cheapness of human beings is even in some ways more pernicious and more violent than the slavery of the past.

And I think what in many ways is unsettling for us is when we have to look to the fact that we are, ourselves, being touched by this slavery, that we in fact, not necessarily that we benefit from it, but that around the world there are people who are making things: sugar, cotton, cocoa, coffee, steel, it goes on and on, that come from slave labour, feed into the flow of products into the world economy, and end up in our lives.

And you saw the man making charcoal in Brazil in the film. Charcoal there has been made with slave labour. It still goes on in spite of the fact we were able to effect some changes in one part of Brazil.

That charcoal is strangely not used for anything that we're used to. It's not used for barbecuing. It's actually used in the steel making process. Steel is the third largest export of the Brazilian economy. Most of that steel comes to North America and western Europe. It particularly takes the form of rolled steel. The reason I'm saying all that is to point out rolled steel is exactly the steel that made up the chairs that you're sitting on right now, the bottoms of the seats underneath the springs where you're sitting is made of rolled steel. And there's a good chance that it is in fact Brazilian rolled steel. Likewise the body of the car that you drove here in or if you drove at all, it could well be with rolled steel.

The cotton in the clothing that you're wearing, some of the coffee that you drank earlier, the sugar that you put in that coffee, all of those things could have come ultimately back down the line at the level of the raw material cultivation slave labour.

Now, it would be wonderful, I know, if we could point out that product and that product and say don't buy that, but in fact slavery operates at the bottom end of the economic ladder.

And we have to in fact address slavery at its source, usually rather than attempt to address it at the level of consumption because it mixes as it enters the world economy with coffee and cotton and sugar and steel, which isn't coming from slave sources.

It touches all of us as well, though, because companies and industries which are using slave-produced raw materials often in ignorance are making better profits, and those profits are increasing their returns and their stock values and our pensions, and our endowments may in fact also be, again, possibly unknowingly, benefiting and profiting from that.

In a sense, it's about our little bits of greed for greater well-being, greater prosperity, better returns on our investments and so forth are feeding into these little streams of greed which get rolled into the great rivers of greed that permeate people who would use slaves to make vast profits, and those rivers of greed wash over people in the developing world and tumble them and push them out of any sort of control of their own life.

Now, that sounds a very depressing point at which to stop, so I won't stop because in fact, there are a number of things that we can look forward to and we can look toward in terms of a positive end to this horrific problem.

I want to touch on a couple of those and then even say something that is in a sense larger than specific activities.

In the film we mentioned the Cocoa Protocol, the agreement which has now been signed by every chocolate company in North America and western Europe, in which they agree to take social, moral, and financial responsibility for their product chain all the way down to the farm, wherever that farm happens to be.

Now, I was enormously excited about this particular agreement that we were able to hammer out. In large part, because as a trustee of Anti-slavery International in Britain, I know that we had been attempting to reach this kind of agreement with industry for, I have to say, wait for it, 160 years! 160 years ago, anti-slavery as an organization began to talk to the cotton industry and the sugar

industry of Great Britain and said, could we not reach an agreement through which you would take responsibility for your product chain? And the answer for the next 160 years was, no, we can't be police. This is happening in a foreign country. If we don't do this, other people will use it and make the profits and drive us out of business. Excuses lasted for 160 years.

But with chocolate, with the chocolate industry and with cocoa, we've made the breakthrough and we've achieved the situation which they are bank rolling the work necessary for us to take slavery and child labour out of cocoa for good. If we do our job correctly, it will come out forever.

And we're able to hold up that model now to other industries and say, to the people in the cotton industry, could we not do the same thing with cotton that we've done with cocoa? Can we not do the same with sugar that we've done with cocoa and so forth? It's a step in the right direction, but it's a first step.

But I'd like to jump up a level. You know, one of the things that is very poignant at this moment, probably particularly today, the day that they're removing weapons inspectors from Iraq, is United Nations over ten years ago deployed weapons inspectors to Iraq to enforce international will, to enforce conventions against weapons of mass destruction by putting inspectors on the ground to discover what was actually going on.

Now, call me naive, but long before there was a convention against weapons of mass destruction, there was a convention against slavery. The League of Nations put on record international conventions against slavery which were reconfirmed by new conventions in the United Nations which were reconfirmed in new conventions at several levels in the ILO and so forth. Conventions against slavery have existed for over 60, 70 years.

Where is the United Nations slavery inspection? Where are the United Nations slavery inspectors? When has the United Nations ever threatened a sanction against a country which egregiously and continuously allows the use of slave labour within their economy, within their society?

Well, it's a rhetorical question. Obviously we know that it doesn't exist; it doesn't happen. The issue of slavery has never been raised in the Security Council, the true heart of the power of the United Nations. Why not?

It seems incredible to me at one level, and yet of course I also understand the real politics that says it's the issues which are of most interest to the most powerful countries which are going to be brought to the security council. And of course then I have to understand as well that the issues that are of most interest to the most powerful countries are those issues which their citizens and their interest groups push most vociferously.

And then I begin to see possibilities because indeed we live in powerful countries and we are powerful people.

And certainly in a world which is globalized, if we don't understand that if we don't take action against slavery, if we choose not to do so, what in fact will happen is simply that other people will jerk the strings that tie us to slavery.

And I appreciate very much that there are other kinds of violence in the world that need to be answered, other kinds of injustice, other kinds of exploitation.

But I also believe that slavery represents violence and injustice and exploitation rolled together in what must be their most potent forms.

It seems to me that if there's a fundamental violation of our humanity that we just cannot allow, it has to be slavery.

It seems that if there's a basic truth that every human being, virtually every human being could agree on, it has to be that slavery must come to an end.

And I have to ask what good is the enormous economic and political power that we hold if we can't use it to end slavery?

And I also have to ask, if we can't bring an end to slavery, how can we say that we are free to take action?

Now often I would stop at that point, but I want to add one thing because on a night when hope is dimmed a bit, I want to try and put a little more back, you know, a little more hope back, and I want to tell you a couple of things.

One is that this incredibly large number of slaves in the world, 27 million, is in fact the largest raw number of slaves that has ever existed at one time in human history.

But being trained in statistics I also know how you can juggle these figures. And I should also tell you that while it's a large raw number, it's also the smallest proportion of the world population to be in slavery in human history; that the smallest fraction of enslaved people exists today.

But more importantly, the people who fought slavery of the past, the abolitionists of the past had three great battles that they won for us. We don't have to fight the legal battle.

Slavery is illegal in every country. They won that one for us. And we don't have to fight the economic battle because while slavery is input to different parts of the economy, the economy of no country, of no industry is dependent on slave labour. If we eradicated slavery tomorrow, no country would fall, no economy would fall. The economic argument is won.

And in the past, they had to win the moral argument as well. There are people who have said this is not necessarily wrong. There's even biblical support for it and all that sort of thing. Well, that just doesn't happen anymore.

Flag No. 4, the 4th right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is that there can be no slavery. Virtually every human being agrees that it is a moral wrong. Those key battles are won by people who went before us, who had the really tough job. Our job is simply to make sure that countries enforce their own laws and that slaves, when freed, have an opportunity for rehabilitation, reintegration, education, and so forth.

And we can do that. We can do that because those battles are won. We can do that because the people who practice slavery today are isolated in their communities, very often are fundamentally criminal within the legal context of their own countries. They are in a sense, you know, ready to be knocked down.

And this is potentially because of the low cost of slavery, the low number of slaves, proportionally. You have the phenomenal good fortune to be living in a generation that could actually be the generation that is able to say, for all of human history, slavery has ridden on our back like an ugly spirit, but we're the generation that brought it to an end.

You could do that because the cost would be not so large. The laws are in place. The moral agreement is there. It's only the action that's required to move ahead.

Around the world, I'm amazed to see the growth of a movement against slavery. I'm amazed and thrilled, and I have to say it's beyond my expectations and ahead of any thoughts that I ever had about where we would be in the year 2003.

But I'm thrilled to see growing wherever I go, an understanding, a movement that slavery needs to come to an end, and this is the generation that can do it.

And that thrills me in a wonderful, wonderful way. I suppose to finish, I'll just say, I hope you'll come with us as we make a gift to our children and their children and their children of a world without slavery.

Thank you so much.

[Applause]