CHILD EXPLOITATION IN THE WORKFORCE

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# Table Of Contents

1. Research Proposal ................................................................. 3  
2. Annotated Bibliography.......................................................... 5  
3. Outline...................................................................................... 12  
4. Text ....................................................................................... 13  
5. Bibliography............................................................................ 35
Research Proposal

For my senior project, I would like to involve my passion for human rights with the knowledge I gained from attending Cal Poly. I would like my project to focus on child exploitation in the workforce, specifically in Africa.

With child exploitation I would like to focus on child miners in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and child workers in the cocoa fields in Ghana. I have a heart for the topic because I believe that no child should ever be exploited. All children deserve an equal chance to education, basic necessities, love, and encouragement.

I saw child exploitation first hand and I have never been able to forget. Two years ago I spent a life changing summer in Ghana, working in an orphanage. I started to notice in my village that children would go missing. I asked my host mom and she said that the children were working in the cocoa fields to help support their families. The truth is that children were being sold by their parents to work in the cocoa fields, often times never to be seen again, and always exploited. Hearing this story made me realize that I want to dedicate my life to help others who are being exploited.

I am currently a Director coordinator with in Cal Poly’s Student Community Services and have been involved in many community service programs, but especially “Raise the Respect”. This program is dedicated to improving human rights. This quarter we decided to focus on the conflict in the DRC. While researching the topic I realized that much of the destruction in the country is due to fighting over control of the mines. The mines in the DRC contain many minerals that our in all of our electronics. Realizing that America’s consumerism is driving the conflict is sickening. The fact that we are allowing so many to suffer for our electronics is unacceptable.
I plan to present the information from my paper into a workshop at Cal Poly’s “Change the Status Quo”. This is a day event where teachers, students, and non-profits host workshops on various topics relating to the environment, human rights, and challenging stereotypes. The goal of the conference is to teach and motivate students to make change in their world. I believe this conference would be an opportunity to inspire our campus to join together and help solve the problem of child exploitation.

Growing up in a loving and supporting environment, it is hard to fathom that so many children do not. What is the difference between children who grow up in the developed world and the developing world? Every day I realize that I was one of those children who were lucky enough to have a chance at life. And everyday I realize that because I have that amazing chance, I want to dedicate myself to those children who are not as privileged as I am.

Nelson Mandela once said, “For to be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others”. This project is so important to me, I would like to use this project as a tool to expose and most importantly help the problem of exploitation. I hope to open Cal Poly’s student’s eyes to the world outside our small town. It is not enough to learn about war and poverty we must work at changing it. As long as children around the world are not free, I do not consider myself free either. Not until all humanity is freed will I consider myself free. My dream would be to one day starting my own NGO to fight child exploitation. I think this project would be a great stepping-stone to complete my dream one day.
Annotated Bibliography

1) This article explains a day in the life of a child miner in Katanga, an eastern province of the Democratic Republic of Congo. It goes on to explain how children as young as 6 years old dig for minerals in tattered clothes, with empty belly’s, working with no safety equipment using only their bare hands and feet. By the end of the day the miner does not even have enough money to buy a meal. A whole days work amounts to about one U.S. dollar. The articles information came from the International Labor Organization (ILO), a UN agency that works worldwide to provide improved working conditions. There was very little bias in the article; it simply was presenting the facts. This article is important for my senior project because it explains how working in a mine has physically and emotionally affected the children. The articles argument would have been stronger if the author went into more detail of the child's life, for example what his living conditions are like, his family's well being, and the effects the war has had on the child’s life personally. (185Words)


2) This article explains how children are used to mine coltan, a key ingredient in most electronics. Sadly it showed how over two million children have died over the past ten years in mining accidents alone. The value of coltan in higher than that of a Childs life in the DRC. The U.S. Department of Labor has stated that the DRC has the worst reputation for child labor. The article believes that the fate of these child miners is in the hands of electronics consumers. The author is upset with the United Nations and politicians for failing to realize the importance of this issue. She believes that with more education the
public would be behind using conflict free minerals. The author cites the UN and the U.S. Department of Labor in her article. The perspective of the author is that our spending habit on electronics is fueling child labor of the worst kind. She believes that our government and people can solve the problem, yet many are unaware. This article is important to my senior project because it makes the connection between the problem, the consumer, and the government. To make the article stronger the author could have gone more in depth in the role of the DRC's government and the U.S. government on the situation. (215Words)


3) This article explains how children are vital in the mines in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Children are preferable workers because their size allows them to work in small crevices underneath the riverbeds. This article shows the vast inequality gap caused by the minerals; a few are getting rich while the majority (the workers) are barely surviving. Also explained is how at least 80 percent of all coltan that is ends up in our electronics was mined in the DRC. It also explains how coltan is being stolen from miners to fuel other militia groups in Rwanda and Uganda. This article is a call for action, a call for people to start realizing the connection between their laptop and the life of a child in the DRC. The UN showed how different companies such as DELL have their hands dirty with using minerals mined in the DRC. This article is important for my senior project because it shows how the money from coltan is not helping the people but is fueling conflict. There is no bias in this article. (179 Words)

4) Unicef estimates that due to the declining price of minerals (partly due to the current financial crisis) that child labor in the mines will increase. Due to families economic instability must bring their children with them to the mines. Parents are forced to bring their children with them to work in the mines to scrap together enough to barely survive. Sadly, because of this phenomena children are not going to school. This article talks with a mother and her children, who pound rocks into gravel. At the end of the day they will sell the gravel. In the process of the pounding they also hope to find cobalt, a copper by product that can sell for more money than gravel. This article is important to my senior project because it explains how families are forced into mining out of complete poverty and bring their children with them just to survive. It is also important because it cites the Convention of the Rights of the Child, showing that child labor is illegal. There is no bias in the article. (178 Words)


5) This website contains statistics on the DRC. It has many indicators of the population’s health and well being, such as the Infant Mortality Rate, HIV prevalence, and literacy rate. The research also shows general statistics about the Democratic Republic of Congo, like the population’s number and the Gross Domestic Product. A few statistic rates that I think would be useful for my senior project are: life expectancy rate, child labor rates, and percent of population with clean drinking water supply. All these statistics will help
my project show the number of children affected by mining and the conditions they might live in. It would be hard to tell if there was bias in the statistics and statistics are only an estimate there is no way to completely document every aspect of a country. (133 Words)


6) This article gives a brief overview of the problem of child slavery in the cocoa fields. It goes on to explain corporations role in buying slave chocolate. It cites specific chocolate companies such as Nestle and Mars and their little cooperation with making their products fair trade. This article is important to my senior project because it quotes different chocolate corporations and their lack of willingness to help stop the problem. The article also brings up an excellent point that corporations have the responsibility to ensure their products have not been made with slave labor. It attacks the corporation’s belief that the problem is too big by citing corporations who do ensure that their products are not made with slave labor. The article explains how it is the responsibility of the consumer and the chocolate producer to ensure that the chocolate they consume or produce is ethically made. The article also explains how the United Nations and the US Congress has shown that chocolate from Ghana and the Ivory Coast was made with child slavery. The UN went on to say that the cocoa industry in West Africa as “one of the worst forms of child labor”. There is no bias in this article. (204 Words)

7) This article gives an in depth overview of chocolate, from its history in the Aztec civilization to its current use of slave labor by children in the Ivory Coast. It cites specific children who were sold into slavery and their stories. The article makes a brilliant comparison between slavery in America in the past and slavery now in the chocolate industry. Robbins article cites multiple experts in the field such as the director of the organization "Free the Slaves". He also shows the timeline of the movement for labeling products slave free and how people like former presidential candidate Bob Dole shot down this movement. The article also introduced the "Harkin-Engel Protocol", a plan to help end child slavery. The article cites the earnings of CEO's of major chocolate companies and their unwillingness to spend a bit more money to buy fair trade. This article in extremely important to my senior project because it gives a clear understanding of the problem, and what is and is not being done to help end child slavery in the cocoa fields. There is no bias in this article. (187 Words)


8) This article explains the dangers associated with child slavery in the cocoa fields in the Ivory Coast. Children often do hazardous and laborious jobs. In addition to the physical abuse the children experience they also suffer severe mental abuse. The children are verbally abused and alone, feeling as if no one cares for them or cares what happens to them. It also explains the root causes of child slavery, relating back to high levels of poverty. Children are unable to go to school. The article points out the irony that many of the children have never even tasted chocolate and do not even know what they are harvesting. The article also explains how cocoa is harvested. It also cites the abuse the children face by their owners, constant beatings, little food, long hours, and at the end of
the night the boys are locked in a room. This article is extremely important for my senior project because it shows the negative effects working in the cocoa fields and also so I can personally understand what kinds of jobs the kids are usually doing and how those endanger their health. There is no bias in this article. (196 Words)


9) This article explains the chain of exploitation that happens to create our electronics. It makes the important connection between the mining of minerals and the increased conflict. The miners and community do not benefit from the wealth of the minerals because it is stolen from them by the DRC military or other rebel groups such as Rwandan Hutu groups. Militant groups are not the only ones exploiting the Congolese people, electronic companies play a part as well. Electronics lobbyists are spending 2 million a month to decrease reglations on mineral trade. Doing this would increase the conflict and terror that the DRC is experiencing. While electronics companies state that it would be too difficult to regulate where the minerals come from, it is easy to because minerals from different areas (DRC vs. New Zealand) look distinctly different. This article shows that electronics companies only care about profit. They are the number one buyer of minerals from the DRC. This article is extremely important for my senior project because it shows electronics companies role in the exploitation of the Congolese. There may be bias in this article because it was written by the NGO “Enough” which works to end the conflict in the DRC. (203 Words)

This article was the first to expose the problem of child slavery in the cocoa industry in West Africa. The authors tell the stories of former slaves. Beatings, little food, and extreme work for no pay became a reality for boys sold into slavery. One of the boys Aly, was worried about dying at the cocoa plantation and no one knowing who he was.

Farmers who get caught using slave labor are rarely punished and if they are it is minor compared to the pain they caused. The article also explains how the children are sold into slavery. Often times the boys come from Mali, and our lured to go with a man to the Ivory Coast to find a better life. Many of the boys have no way to live and see working in the cocoa industry as a good opportunity. But, once they get to work, they quickly realize all the was promised to them in Mali is false, and instead they were sold into slavery.

This article is incredibly important for my senior project because it gives a face to the problem. It also explains the process of becoming a slave in the cocoa fields. There is no bias in this article. (205 Words)

Outline

1. Briefly Explain the Topic of the Paper
   - The use of child slavery to support our consumerism
2. Introduce Child Slavery
   - Cocoa fields in Ivory Coast
   - Mineral Mining in the Democratic Republic of Congo
3. Life as a child slave
   - Ivory Coast, tricked into slavery, impossible to escape, treated harshly
   - DRC, history of war, no other options for children
4. Actions
   - What the government is doing
   - What NGO’s are doing
   - What individuals can do
   - What work of the government, NGO’s, and individuals is successful and unsuccessful
5. Slavery Comparison
   - Slavery now as compared to slavery during earlier times
   - Currently more slaves than any point in history
6. Change the Status Quo Presentation
   - Format
   - Making the presentation
   - Reaction from audience
   - What I liked about the presentation
   - What I did not like about the presentation
7. Conclusion
   - Summarize findings of research
   - Purpose of paper
The purpose of this paper is to show how our society is connected and actively supporting child slavery by our consumerism habits. Whether it is by buying a chocolate bar or a new cell phone, these actions directly affect the lives of children in the third world. The goods that we eat, use, and buy are often produced in a manner that exploits others, especially children. In our economically driven society many will do anything to make money, even if that means gaining from another’s pain.

Life in the developing world is often a constant struggle for survival. In the never-ending battle for life people will do anything, even sell their child into slavery. These child slaves are viewed as disposable because there is a flood of poor children that will take their spot if one is to get injured or die. They are considered a cheap way of producing goods or services, not as children. (Bales, 1999) This phenomenon has led to devaluing human life. I think as a society we need to realize that our actions have consequences for others. The materialistic goals of our society combined with the need for the cheapest prices create a dangerous combination for children in the third world.

The inspiration for this paper came from a personal experience. I had the opportunity to visit a few slave castles in Ghana and am still haunted by the experience. To walk through a dungeon that held hundreds of slaves was an unforgettable journey, touching the walls and feeling fingernail imprints by the slaves that lived there, walking through the door of no return, these are all things that I will never forget and still have nightmares over. Outside the dungeon there is a plaque that states: “In everlasting memory of the anguish of our ancestors may those who died rest in peace may those who return find their roots may humanity never again perpetrate such injustice against
humanity we the living vow to uphold this”. Later that day I was talking to my host mom about the experience and she told me about current slavery in Ghana in the form of children working in the cocoa industry. This information disgusted and inspired me at the same time. I was a young naïve traveler, thinking that slavery ended a long time ago. In that moment I knew I had to do something. The idea that slavery still exists, in a different less organized form, is unacceptable.

The beginning of my paper will give a brief overview of what slavery is and why it has been able to spread so quickly as well as the international laws that have been set up to end slavery. While child slavery is present in every corner of the world, in this paper I will focus on the continent of Africa, specifically on two current forms of child slavery. The first is the use of children in the cocoa farms in West Africa to produce our chocolate products. The second is the use of children as miners in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to produce the minerals that are vital components to all of our electronics.

This paper will also document my experience of presenting the information I collected at Cal Poly’s “Change the Status Quo” Conference. The goal of my workshop was to have attendees learn about how child slavery is connected to them personally. I hope attendees learned how to spread awareness about the cause as well as change their consumerism habits.

Slavery

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states in the beginning of the document that all people have the right to be free from slavery and slave like
practices. Article 4 of the UDHR states, “No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.” (Welch, 2009)

Slavery and slave like practices are not monitored by a UN treaty body like other human rights violations. “An obvious problem for the anti-slavery movement remains the lack of any international enforcement mechanism or even a governmental reporting requirement”. (Welch, 2009) Slavery is considered illegal in all places, and enforcement is expected to fall on the countries government. “As in so many other aspects of human rights, the willingness and ability to enforce change (particularly at levels above the nation-state) remain far weaker than the verbiage of international agreements would suggest. Legal abolition does not mean that slavery practices have been eliminated”. (Welch, 2009). While government and the United Nations have stated they condone slavery there is not a group upholding their beliefs in the form of ensuring that slavery does not exist. While these groups do not believe in slavery they are not acting to make sure that slavery does not occur.

Slavery is a problem. There are currently 27 million slaves, that is more than at any other point in history. (Welch, 2009) Slavery is big business, “In 2007 slave traders earned more than Google, Nike, and Starbucks combined”. (Call + Response) Slavery is everywhere, its’s in our neighbor’s house, our morning cup of coffee, our favorite t-shirt, and so much more. The goal of this paper is to show that slavery was not abolished after the U.S. civil war, it still occurs and is very much thriving. We need to make the connection that the products we consume and use could be directly contributing to slavery.
Child slavery in our world is rampant. The International Labour Organization estimates that there is at least 218 million children who work instead of attend school, 8.4 million of those being in some form of child slavery (“Anti-Slavery Child Labour”). Their day begins with a shovel instead of a pencil. This is true in West Africa where the use of children as slaves to produce cocoa is a common labor force.

**Child Slavery in the Cocoa Industry**

West Africa has a long painful history of slavery. Europeans were first drawn there for its gold, but with the increasing need for slaves in the Americas, it strayed away from gold and made slaves its main export. Sadly in slavery’s birthplace child slavery is still thriving. This paper will specifically focus on child slavery in West Africa where children are forced to work as slaves on cocoa farms.

West Africa (Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon) produces 70% of the world’s cocoa every year. (Saalam – Blyther, 2005) It is estimated that in the Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria, and Cameroon there are at least 284,000 child workers in the cocoa industry, of that number 12,500 reported to have no family in the area. This is a red light that those 12,500 children may be slaves. (Global Exchange) Over 60% of the children working on the farms are under the age of 14. (Sallaam – Blyther, 2005).

Working in the cocoa fields is often dangerous to the children’s health in addition to the other abuses they face from their owner. Child slaves in the cocoa industry are often trafficked from surrounding countries that are much poorer such as Mali and Togo (Global Exchange).

These child slaves have hazardous jobs. They must spray the cocoa beans with toxic pesticides and insecticides with little protective wear. Work with machetes to cut
down the cocoa pods from high branches. Split open the cocoa pods and scoop out the cocoa beans (Global Exchange). Carry heavy loads of cocoa, many of which are heavier than them. Venomous snakes and insect bites are also a threat for these children.

Sami Sery, age 7, works on a cocoa farm owned by his uncle in the village of L’Ssiri in the Ivory Coast, he does not attend school (Parenti, 2008)
Life as a Child Slave in the Cocoa Industry

In this particular story, a man named Le Gros was responsible for enslaving 19 boys trafficked from Mali to the Ivory Coast to work on his 494 acre cocoa farm. The trader gave the boys promises of a bike and a way to support their family. The boys were lured to leave their home on false pretenses and naive hopes for a better life (Raghavan, 2001).

A day in the life of a child slave on Le Gros cocoa farm seems unbearable. The boys started working in the fields as soon as the sun came up and did not finish until the sun set. Their stomachs grumbled all day from little food. The boys slept on wooden planks with no blankets or comfort. The windows and doors of the room they slept in were barricaded, only leaving a small hole for air. They were locked in the room, forced
to go to the bathroom in a can in the room the boys shared together (Raghavan, 2001). The living conditions are inhumane as well as the way they are treated. Beatings were a daily occurrence for the boys. They were beaten for falling while carrying the bag of cocoa beans, that are more than twice their size, not working fast enough, or just for amusement of the owner. One of the boys, Aly Diabate, spoke about his fears; “Aly had nightmares about working forever in the fields, about dying and nobody noticing. To drown them out, he replayed his memories of growing up in Mali, over and over again” (Raghavan, 2001)

One boy named Oumar Kone escaped Le Gros farm and was able to talk to members of a local Malian immigrant community who then spoke to the Malian consul general, Macko. Macko with several police officers went to Le Gros farm and found the 19 boys there. The boys had been there anywhere from six months to four and a half years. They all had severe open or healed wounds, many, which were infected, obviously from beatings. All the boys were sent back to their homes in Mali, expected to go back to life with no form of therapy and little monetary compensation for the ordeal they had experienced. (Raghavan, 2001)

Le Gros completely denies any of the boy’s allegations, saying that he never laid a hand on any of his workers and he did not buy them. For his crimes Le Gros was sentenced to 24 days in prison and is currently free. His sentence was originally 5-10 years in prison and a large fine. This punishment was not carried out because all of the boys were sent back to their home country of Mali, so no one could testify against him. There is a huge problem of corruption when it comes to punishing the very few slaveholders on the Ivory Coast that get caught. (Raghavan, 2001)
legislation, corrupt police officers, and a shortage of resources to combat child slavery in the Ivory Coast are a few reasons why slave traders and slave owners are not being brought to justice.

The slavery that occurred due to Le Gros is just one instance of child slavery. While the injustices that happened on the farm were discovered, many are not. The only reason that the children were found was because of one brave child who risked his life for freedom. Former child slaves spoke about boys who had tried to escape were severely beaten even to the point of death. (Raghavan, 2001) Many children are too afraid to run away out of fear of the consequences if they are caught.

**Actions by the International Community on Cocoa Production**

In June 2001, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to create a “slave free” label for chocolate products so that consumers could buy products knowing they were bought with out forced labor. The chocolate corporations were not happy with this new protocol so they began an aggressive lobbying campaign, even hiring two former senate majority leaders, Bob Dole and George Mitchell. (Robbins) Chocolate corporations constant denial of any responsibility for the way in which their cocoa was produced began to break down. They came to a compromise called the “Harkin-Engel” protocol (Robbins).

The “Harkin Engel” protocol was introduced in 2001 by Senator Tom Harkin and Representative Eliot Engel to eradicate child slavery in the cocoa industry by 2005. They did this by implementing a 6 step plan that the cocoa industry agreed to stop harmful and forced child labor on cocoa farms. The protocol tried to follow the guidelines by the International Labor Organization (ILO) NO. 182, on stopping the worst forms of child
labor. It is important to note that the protocol is completely voluntary on the part of the corporations and it is not part of legislation. (Salaam-Blyther, 2005) The six-step plan is:

1. **Issue a public statement of the problem and develop the terms of an action plan.**

2. **Form a multi-sectoral advisory group to investigate labor practices in West Africa, and develop appropriate remedies for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor in the growing and processing of cocoa.**

3. **Sign a Joint Statement on the need to end the worst forms of child Labor in cocoa production, and identify alternatives for children removed from the cocoa sector.**

4. **Develop a memorandum of cooperation that establishes a joint action program of research, information exchange, and steps to enforce the internationally-recognized and mutually-agreed upon standards to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in cocoa production.**

   Establish an independent system to monitor and report compliance with standards.

5. **Establish a joint international foundation to manage and sustain antichild labor efforts, promote field projects, and establish a clearinghouse of best practices to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.**

6. **Develop an industry-wide certification process that ensures that cocoa**
beans and their derivative products have not been grown and/or processed with any of the worst forms of child labor.

(Salaam-Blyther, 2005)

While the protocol is helping the fight for slave free chocolate it is not completely following through on its promises. The original plan was to have all chocolate slave free by 2005. This deadline had to be extended to 2008, and the goal was changed, the new goal was to ensure that half of all chocolate from West Africa is slave free. (Parenti, 2008) Due to the protocol, the International Cocoa Initiative (ICI) was created. ICI is a collection of NGO’s, cocoa processors, and chocolate corporations working together to ensure cocoa is produced without slavery. By 2007 the ICI had made little progress. They had started a pilot education program in 27 Ghanaian communities. Due to their involvement many cocoa farms in these select communities have children carry less heavy loads, are not breaking cocoa pods, and are encouraged to go to school. In 2008, there were larger accomplishments by the ICI. They began to work with 154 cocoa producing communities in Ghana and 88 in the Ivory Coast. While progress is being made, compared to the number of communities not being affected by the ICI is great. For example, while the ICI has been able to reach 154 cocoa producing communities in Ghana there is a total of 12,000 cocoa producing communities in the country, and in the Ivory Coast the ICI has been able to reach 88 cocoa producing communities but there is a total of 18,000 cocoa producing communities. (“Where Does all our Chocolate come From?”). The gap between those communities being helped and those not is too great. Until chocolate corporations can guarantee that one hundred percent of cocoa is not being produced by child slaves the protocol has not succeeded.
A shelter for street children in Abidjan, run by a NGO that is funded through the ICI. The ICI has only one employee on the ground in the Ivory Coast; they do not directly give any money to cocoa producing communities. This shelter has only helped 8 former child slaves in the cocoa industry. (Parenti, 2008)

To further ensure that the “Harkin Engel” protocol would be put into action the U.S. Department of Labor hired Tulane University to monitor the progress (Parenti, 2008). In 2008 Tulane University created a 400-page report on the results of the “Harkin-Engel” protocol. The findings were not concurrent with what the ICI promised they would do. The conclusion of the paper was that, “the vast majority of children in the cocoa growing areas… do not report exposure to any intervention projects in support of children in the rural areas.” (Parenti, 2008). While the “Harkin-Engel” protocol brought attention to the issue of child slavery used in the cocoa industry, the chocolate corporations have not followed through on their end of the deal.

Chocolate Corporations Response

Chocolate corporations continue to deny that ensuring chocolate, as slave free is their responsibility. Many have also decided that it would be impossible to track how and
where chocolate is coming from. Corporations argument is that they buy cocoa from
middlemen who buy beans from multiple locations and then they all get mixed together.
Nestle, ADM, and Cargill are three of the largest chocolate-producing corporations.

Nestle is the largest food producer in the world, earning 76 billion dollars a year. Nestle has been directly linked to using cocoa farmed by child slave labor. (Orr, 2006) CEO of Nestle, Peter Brabeck-Letmathe defends his company by arguing, "Nestlé is not the owner of any plantation" and "there might be a lot of other human rights abuses than just the ones that have been picked up." He goes onto explain that the situation in the Ivory Coast would be even worse without Nestle. (Orr, 2006) Nestle buying cocoa in West Africa will never lift the people out of poverty, it will keep them at a barely surviving level. Corporations have no right to exploit children due to monetary reasons.

Hershey’s and M&M Mars dominate two-thirds of the $13 billion chocolate industry in the U.S. Both of these companies are directly linked to buying much of their cocoa from West Africa. (Robbins). With their large cocoa purchases it would be safe assumption that their chocolate is tainted with child slavery. Hershey’s Food Corp, has stated that, “they are shocked and deeply concerned” when told about the possible use of child slavery to produce their chocolate products. (Robbins). Hershey’s is not alone, other companies such as Ben & Jerry’s, Godiva, Guittard, Kraft, Toblerone, and Sees Candies use chocolate from the Ivory Coast. While many of these companies publicly condemn child slavery they have also stated that they are not going to ensure their chocolate is slave free (Robbins).

These companies that refuse to take responsibility for the cocoa they use say there is no way they can create a slave through product because they do not own the farms and
buy the cocoa from suppliers. This argument ignores the fact that multiple large-scale food company’s use slave free chocolate. Companies such as Clif Bar, Dagoba, Green and Blacks, Newman’s Own Organics, and The Endangered Species Chocolate Company have made a commitment to use chocolate only produced in a way that does not exploit others (Robbins). While the issue of child slavery is difficult, if a company is producing an item it is their responsibility to ensure the ingredients that make up their product is not harming others.

Actions by Individuals on Child slaves in the Cocoa Industry

There are many ways to make a difference in the lives of child slaves. First, individuals can choose to only buy and consume chocolate that is fair trade. Fair trade simply means that the product was made in a manner that can let the worker live with dignity, through paying a living wage, providing safe working conditions, opportunities for advancement, practicing environmentally sustainability, and investing in the community. (“Fair Trade Resource Network”) In the chocolate industry fair trade means they are paid $.80 per pound and $150 is invested in to the community per metric ton. (“Fair Trade Chocolate Campaign”) Fair trade in a nutshell ensures that farmers are not exploiting workers while also being able to provide for their family and put their children in to school.

Write to companies like Nestle and Hershey’s explaining to them you are boycotting their products and encouraging others to until they become certified as using ethically traded cocoa. Holding protests against chocolate corporations on college campuses, in your community, or outside their corporate offices. Make a public statement that consumers will not continue to ignore their use of child slaves.
There are also many options that specifically students can implement. Starting a club that spreads awareness about child slavery in the cocoa industry or other forms of child slavery. Create an informational display on campus about a day in the life of a child slave and information about fair trade. Starting a campaign on campus urging your campus-dining hall to only purchase fair trade chocolate, and boycotting campus dining until they do. When doing fundraisers only sell fair trade chocolate. In your daily life only eat fair trade chocolate and deny when people offer you non fair trade chocolate, and tell them why! The consumer really has the opportunity to change the system and we are voting for or against giving cocoa farmers a decent life with every purchase of chocolate whether it be fair trade or not.

Child slavery in the cocoa industry in West Africa is sadly just one of the multiple forms of child slavery. The use of children in the Democratic Republic of Congo to extract minerals from mines. The work these children do is treacherous and incredibly dangerous to their health. For many of these children it is the only life they have ever known and their only chance at survival.

**Child Slavery in the Mining Industry**

The history of conflict, terror, and abuse over resource extraction in the DRC goes back to King Leopold’s rubber exploitation and continues to thrive today. (Dummett, 2004) The use of child labor is not uncommon in the mining industry currently in the DRC. “The World Bank has documented, the mines are also filled with child laborers between the ages of 10 and 16, now missing precious years of schooling”. (Prendergast, 2009)
Tin, tantalum, and tungsten are three minerals that are abundant in the DRC. These three minerals are in almost all of our electronics, from laptops to digital cameras. The extraction of these minerals has led to conflict and degradation for the DRC, instead of promoting their countries wealth. (Prendergast, 2009) There are multiple armed groups fighting for control over the mines, including the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), who were responsible for the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and the DRC army. These armed groups also come with a reign of terror, including raping the girls and women and stealing miners days wages. The groups do this by taking the minerals out of the miner’s hands as soon as they come up from the mine. “When the FDLR come to a mine, the first thing they do is get the girls and abuse them. Then they force many people to work and kill those who don’t want to work” – Jacques a former militia commander. (Prendergast, 2009)

Mining in the DRC is a dangerous job. Mudslides cave-ins, mercury poisoning, and rock falls are just a few of the dangers these child miners face on a daily basis. (“Miners out of Mining). Many of the children are working in the mines because there are no other opportunities for survival. But, no level of poverty should lead children to work in the mines.

A Day in the Life of a Child Slave in the Mining Industry

Decu, a boy of only eight years old has known nothing except working in the mines. He does not go to school or play with friends. He wakes up every morning at dawn; with no breakfast and then he and his twin brother begin their journey. Every day he makes the two-hour walk from his home to Ruashi mine in the Eastern province of Katanga. Decu is not alone there are 800 other children who work in this mine digging
for copper and cobalt. (Guerin, 2006) Once they arrive at the mine they begin sifting through soil to find mineral deposits. For this task the boys were given enough money to each buy a small pastry. After that the boys began digging in the red dirt with their hands and feet and no safety equipment. By the end of the day they were not even able to buy dinner. Decu expressed wishes of a life like the children in Europe; “They go to school, I saw them on television. But, my father can not afford my school fees that is why my life is so hard” (Guerin, 2006)

**Actions by the Government on Conflict Minerals**

Currently the U.S. is working to pass an act called “The Conflict Minerals Trade Act”. This act would monitor mines in the DRC, hiring third party members to go to mines and assess if they are conflict free. The act would also require that if a company uses conflict minerals that it will be on the package. The U.S. would also help rebuild Congolese communities that were destroyed by armed groups. Every year there would be a follow up to ensure that the mines were still conflict free. (“House Government Relations”) Congressmen Jim McDermott introduced the “The Conflict Minerals Trade Act, he hopes that; “Under my legislation, the American people, and the world, will know when a company or industry is using conflict minerals and I think this knowledge will prove much more powerful than any weapon fired by those prosecuting this horrible war.” (McDermott, 2009)

**Actions by the International labor Organization (ILO)**

The ILO created the program “Minors out of Mining”; the goal is to stop all forms of child mining in two different approaches. The first is at the community level, called Downstream. Building schools that are affordable and close to the families homes. Child
miners often do not go to school because of the cost and far distance from their home. Improvements can also take place in the mines, by giving miners better equipment and training. This will allow miners to do their job in a more productive and safer way. Also at the local level, a monitoring system, to ensure that the mines are working in a safe way. The way to do this is have a community monitor with training and links to people of higher authority who could help if the mine is denying the rights of the workers. The second approach is called upstream which is at the national level. Creating appropriate health, safety, and livelihood standards for all mining industries. Keeping constant communication between the miners and the mining companies. Implementing governmental policy to recognize the importance of small-scale mining and the possible benefits of lifting communities out of poverty. Lastly by coordinating a committee of NGO’s, industry, unions, and government dedicated to insuring that these actions to protect miners occur. (Prendergast, 2009)

Actions by Individuals on Conflict Minerals

There are many ways that an individual can make a difference in the movement towards ethically traded minerals. Awareness about the issue is the first step. Many people do not know the situation in the DRC or how it relates to their electronics. Educating yourself on the matter and telling everyone you know about it. Call, email, or write a letter to your senator urging them to support the Conflict Minerals Act. Call, email, or write electronics companies, telling them you will buy their products only when they become conflict free.
Children working in a mine ("Miners out of Mining")

Children using mercury to extract gold ("Miners Out of Mining")
“Change the Status Quo” Presentation

After presenting my workshop on “Our Consumerism … Causing Child Slavery !?!” a tornado of emotions came over me, relief, joy, inspiration, and most importantly the desire to share the message of child slavery to others. The greatest personal joy from my presentation was that I had told a story that many had not heard. I felt like I accurately told their story, in a way that honors the sacrifices and pain that child slaves have experienced. Not sugarcoating their lives, but relating their lives to every person in the audience. I hope that I conveyed to the audience that child slavery is unacceptable in all forms.

During my presentation I expressed my reasons for presenting on child slavery. I explained how during a summer volunteer trip in Ghana, my host mom had told me about children from poor villages were sold into slavery to work on cocoa farms or in the fishing industry on Lake Volta. This combined with the experience of visiting a former slave castle inspired my passion for the anti-slavery movement.

I structured my presentation in an informational but personal way. I first explained the problem of child slavery and how it existed in all corners of the world. Giving brief statistics on how many child slaves there are in the world. I gave a real life example of how in of our daily lives we are connected to slavery. I explained how simple things you do in the morning such as having a cup of coffee, wearing tennis shoes, and using an ipod all could have been produced by child slaves. Through this example I was attempting to show that child slavery is not far away it is right in front of us.

I first explained my first case study, child slavery in West Africa to produce our chocolate. I told the story of a former child slave in the Ivory Coast, how he was taken
from his home in Mali, and forced to work on a cocoa farm. I showed a video of former child slaves who worked on a cocoa farm together. I think the film was especially impactful because the former child slaves showed how they were beaten, their scars, and how they felt about their time as slaves. The audience seemed to be shocked that none of the boys had even tasted chocolate. One boy who had been enslaved on the farm for four and a half years with no compensation, when asked how he felt that chocolate was enjoyed all around the world, he said, “I would not have nice things to say to those people … It’s like they are eating my flesh”. Connecting the facts and stories to actual boys who suffered for our chocolate made the story so much more personal.

Before speaking about life as a child slave in the mines in the Democratic Republic of Congo, I asked those in the audience about their electronic use. I did this by asking how many electronics each person had (including ipods, cell phones, digital cameras, lap tops, and alarm clocks). Every single person in the audience had at least three electronics that are known to carry the minerals mined in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The person with the highest number of electronics was eleven. I then went on to explain how their must have electronics are made; through child slaves and other low paid workers. I presented a day in the life of one child slave, in the DRC, his job at the mines, and the life circumstances that led him to work at the mines.

The goal of my presentation was not to condemn the audience for their habits. It was to educate and motivate the audience to think differently about what they buy, be more connected to their products. See a history of the product.

I explained to the audience my own ways of spreading awareness about the situation of child slavery. Whether it is as simple as emailing all my friends and family
the Conflict Minerals petition or asking a store clerk why they don't carry fair trade chocolate, asking your work to use fair trade coffee, and being creative to spread the word.

At the end of my presentation I lead a discussion with the audience about how we could live our lives in a way that respects and upholds the dignity of others. I also spoke about different items that were fair trade and how to find them. I gave examples of different clothing stores that used fair trade practices as well as encouraged the audience to buy from thrift stores. I brought a multitude of fair trade chocolate and baked goods for the audience to taste. As well as giving them a list of stores to go to that have fair trade food. I also passed out a letter to the audience addressed to Hershey’s explaining that we are do not approve of their cocoa producing practices, then people in the audience had the opportunity to sign it and then I sent them into Hershey’s.

I believe that those who attended my workshop were impacted by the presentation and moved to act. Multiple people asked questions during and after the presentation. I have received multiple emails from friends and strangers who attended my presentation and wanted to know more, asking to send them my presentation. I have run into people on the streets and on campus telling me how since the presentation they only buy fair trade chocolate, complain to stores when they don’t carry fair trade chocolate, and tell people about child slavery. Small successes like these are huge. The more awareness about the connection between slavery and the goods we buy the more people are not going to stand for it. I look at the environmental movement, which started as a grassroots effort and has now spread like wildfire. Grocery stores encouraging consumers to bring reusable bags and stores carrying more organic products and all natural cleaning
products. I envision that if there are enough people to join the “slave free” movement child slavery can be a thing of the past.

Conclusion

Slavery reaches every corner of our world, from the chocolate we consume to the electronics that have become necessities to our lives. Children are being forced into slavery to produce the goods our lives revolve around. Slavery is not far way from us, it is part of our daily lives. I have a personal connection to slavery. Understanding the fact that our lives revolve around things that were produced in an inhumane way is unbelievable. The U.S. is an advanced nation that many dream to come to. We may be advanced in the living standards of our people, but we must not forget those who make our lifestyles possible. Exploiting another person for any reason is not acceptable. While, non-profits, the government, and the UN are making some advancement, it must reach the people who are buying these goods. I truly believe that if people were more aware of child slavery we would demand an end to it. I think the next steps would be to spread awareness. These child slaves stories should constantly be in the news, books, and documentaries. Stores need to ban items that are created with child slavery. The consumer needs to be more connected with what they purchase. I hope from this project people will make a more conscious decision about what they buy and in the near future child slavery to finally come to an end.
Bibliography


<http://vision.ucsd.edu/~kbranson/stopchocolateslavery/atasteofslavery.html>.


