

Tentative Title of Dissertation:

Issues of Responsibility Surrounding Modern Slavery

Abstract:

Many people today are seemingly unaware that slavery exists around the globe on a massive scale. One current estimate is that between 21 and 36 million people are enslaved in our world today, despite the fact that slavery is illegal everywhere. So, what is our responsibility or obligation to these 21-36 million human beings who make up this grossly exploited population? Are we in any way responsible for their slavery? Are we in a position to impact this injustice? If so, in what ways are we culpable, and what actions are we obligated to take on behalf of the world's slaves? Answering these important questions is the overarching goal of this current project. I appeal to negative duties to explain how many global citizens perpetuate and support slavery through consumerism. I appeal to positive duties to argue that even when we are not complicit in actions that lead to slavery, we may carry some responsibility to act on behalf of slaves. And I develop the idea of "conditional cosmopolitanism" to argue that, because slavery is such an egregious violation of human rights, our duty to fight for slaves transcends nation-state boundaries. The culmination of the project centers on practically applying the theoretical concepts and duties established throughout the work. If we have duties to our global neighbors trapped in slavery, what precisely are those duties? What steps can individuals take to put a dent in this massive pandemic? How stringent are our obligations, and what should our daily lives look like in light of these obligations? These questions will be addressed as I discuss what living morally satisfactory lives demands in light of the reality of slavery in our modern world.