

New Tools to Abolish Slavery

The White House Forum to Combat Human Trafficking April 9-10, 2013

ICCR members have long focused on the role business can play in helping to eradicate the dehumanizing practices of human trafficking and slavery in our world. In advancing this agenda, ICCR has worked closely with the Office to Combat Trafficking in Persons of the U.S. State Department which has been leading this initiative within the U.S. government. As a result of this relationship, ICCR's David Schilling was invited to participate in the White House Global Forum to Combat Human Trafficking on April 9th. Sr. Kathleen Coll and Sr. Ann Oestreich attended a related event the next day sponsored by the President's Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships as members of ICCR and the Leadership Council of Women Religious.

"In the months ahead, we will continue to take action by empowering investigators and law enforcement with the training they need, and by engaging business, advocates, and students in developing cutting-edge tools people can use to stay safe."

—President Barack Obama

David Schilling, Senior Program Director, ICCR

I recently learned that the State Department is not alone in addressing trafficking and slavery, but rather has the full backing of the White House along with 14 U.S. agencies that together, are committed to making this issue an urgent national priority.

The White House sponsored the Forum to Combat Human Trafficking, which brought together advocates, business lead-

ers, faith leaders, technology experts, law enforcement officials and key White House and government representatives to discuss strategies and introduce new tools in this work. I was inspired to be a part of this discussion as ICCR's representative, and to witness our government taking the lead on this critical issue.

Attorney General Eric Holder presented the Federal Strategic Action Plan (2013-2017), Coordination, Collaboration, Capacity from the President's Interagency Task Force to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. This plan has specific goals and objectives ranging from collaborating more effectively with state, tribal and local governments, increasing awareness of trafficking and slavery, building stronger partnerships with NGOs and faith-based institutions, and expanding training of personnel to detect potential trafficking victims.



Bill Corr, Deputy Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services and Ima Matul, Survivor Organizer, Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST).

During the event, the President's award for exceptional leadership in confronting trafficking was presented by Ambassador Luis CdeBaca of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. Recipients were Marilyn Carlson Nelson, Chair of Carlson Company, the first U.S.-based hotel chain to adopt the ECPAT code of conduct and institutionalize ongoing training of front-line staff in its hotels, and



Left to right: Marilyn Carlson Nelson and Deborah Cundy of the Carlson Company and Ambassador Luis CdeBaca

Florrie Burke of Freedom Network USA. Ambassador CdeBaca emphasized, "It comes down to institutionalizing this fight against trafficking in all its forms. It can't be one person or one office. It needs to permeate our entire culture."

Participants shared carefully-honed strategies, new approaches and innovative tools, but by far the most powerful tool unveiled at the Forum was the passion that advocates from all sectors, including ICCR members, are bringing to this issue.



David Schilling, Senior Program Director

Building Partnerships to Eradicate Modern-Day Slavery

“This Council represents many diverse faiths and non-profit networks with connections on the ground in dozens of countries, mutually reinforcing domestic networks, and with investment capital in the billions of dollars. We have immense resources at our disposal and the capacity to create significant and lasting change within the United States and around the world in service of our shared values. And we have only begun to explore the seemingly endless ways to better promote—and protect—freedom.”

– From *Building Partnerships to Eradicate Modern-Day Slavery*

Sr. Kathleen Coll, SSJ, Administrator, Shareholder Advocacy, Catholic Health East

The President’s Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships convenes faith and community leaders with the goal of forming partnerships between governments at all levels and nonprofit groups, both faith-based and secular, to more effectively serve our nation’s most vulnerable. The President tasked the advisory council with exploring strategies for combating trafficking and slavery and on April 10th, we gathered at the White House as the Council’s report, *Building Partnerships to Eradicate Modern-Day Slavery* was released and ratified by the group. Sr. Ann Oestreich and I were participants, both as representatives of the Leadership Council of Women Religious and as members of ICCR.

The Council made 10 recommendations to the President. The second speaks most directly to the work of ICCR members: “(that) The Obama administration lead the effort to eliminate slave labor in the purchase and consumption of goods and services.”

Building on the President’s Executive Order to eliminate human trafficking in federal contracting, the report recommends that government:

- Create a set of standards that all companies can use to benchmark and track

progress in evaluating, monitoring and eliminating forced labor from supply chains;

- Encourage auditors to include anti-slavery standards in their trainings and certifications; and,
- Promote these standards and certifications to the business community and to the general public.

The Council also recommended the development of a national certification program similar to the ENERGY STAR label that could assure consumers that goods are manufactured without the use of slave labor.

Ambassador CdeBaca expressed his hope that young people would take this issue on just as they did the fight against apartheid in South Africa. He also chal-



Left to right: Sr. Kathleen Coll, SSJ, and Sr. Ann Oestreich, IHM.

lenged us to act, lest we be nothing more than “a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal (1Cor. 13:1-3)”.

His challenge served as an important reminder to us all that what compels us to continue to struggle against the injustice of slavery is our love for those who are vulnerable to this crime, and that, as people of faith, we are grateful for the honor to be their advocates.

“Right now there is a young boy in a brick factory covered with dust, hauling his heavy load under a blazing sun thinking, if he could just go to school, he might know a different future, but he does not think anybody is paying attention. Right now there is a girl somewhere trapped in a brothel crying herself to sleep again, and maybe daring to imagine that someday, just maybe, she might be treated not like a piece of property, but as a human being. And so our message today, to them, is - to the millions around the world - we see you. We hear you. We insist on your dignity. And we share your belief that if just given the chance, you will forge a life equal to your talents and worthy of your dreams. Our fight against human trafficking is one of the great human rights causes of our time, and the United States will continue to lead it - in partnership with you.”

–President Barack Obama, Clinton Global Initiative, September 2012