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SOCI 6900

Dr. Pearce

OP-ED #1

**OP-ED**

For my comparison, I chose the topic of “Human Trafficking” using *Human Trafficking: Why is it Such an Important Women’s Issue* by Louise Shelley (2011) and *Human Trafficking: A Photographic Essay*, by Kay Chernush (2011). The essays provide differing ways in which to present the scale of the issue and whom it affects; one is a written article and the other a gallery of photographs and a brief narrative, both by the author. Shelley’s study defines the issue as well as explaining the global scale to which it affects predominantly women through a more technical or scientific style. Chernush’s personal accounts and description of the photos brings the issue to the reader/viewer in a visual format. Indeed, as she states in her essay, her reasoning for presenting visual representations of human trafficking victims was because she feels that we are too removed from human suffering; she infers we have become too sensitized to tragic occurrences.

Social issues such as human trafficking are communicated in various ways and each way only tells part of the story; no medium can provide all of the aspects of any given event, especially concerning human suffering and victimization. Alternately, each way does at least provide some information so that others can become aware, learn, or even become involved in activism. The purpose is to inform others, no matter the form of communication. In addition, each of these essays does that; they inform us that human trafficking is real and that no region is free from this atrocity.

Shelley gives a global view of the trade, focusing on economic and social changes (ending of the Cold War) as significant factors affecting women, also noting that this crime is the only organized, international crime where women are perpetrators at all levels. Her essay relies on statistics and other written works to support her information. While the numbers are staggering, it does not have the emotional element of Chernush’s photographs. Chernush portrays women in the sex trade as prostitutes and dancers, child beggars, and people in generally deplorable conditions in developing societies. Additionally, she provides pictures depicting people involved in helping victims in some way. Although Chernush’s essay provides a more humanistic element in communicating about human trafficking, her narratives give the sense of bias and we are not informed of where she accessed certain information, only that she has worked in many nations with victims of the crime.

Both articles provide important elements about human trafficking and that it is not isolated to a specific region or culture. Each has its aspects that it does not include, thus illustrating the importance of utilizing various kinds of mediums, critically thinking about the presented topics, and question credibility of sources. It can be said that every source is lacking in some manner, and this makes different kinds of communication valid. Not to mention, different kinds of information grabs the attention of different people. Some of us prefer data to support claims and others grab on to the human element within a picture. In any case, this does not minimize the responsibility of any author, reporter, or researcher from backing up the source of their information, even if it is a personal account.

References

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