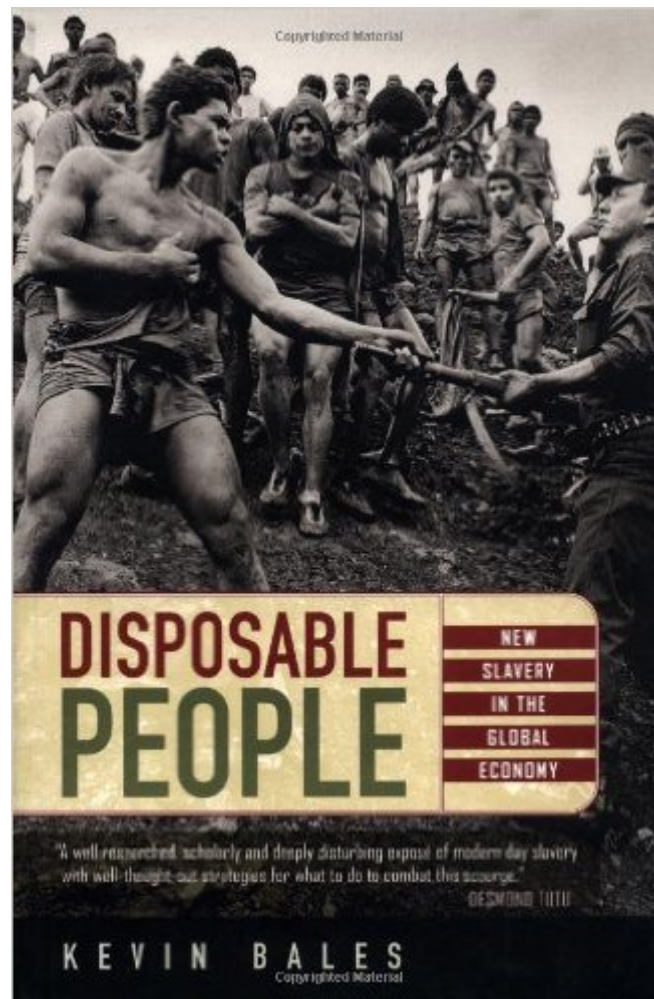


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Disposable People: New Slavery In The Global Economy



Synopsis

Slavery is illegal throughout the world, yet more than twenty-seven million people are still trapped in one of history's oldest social institutions. Kevin Bales's disturbing story of slavery today reaches from brick kilns in Pakistan and brothels in Thailand to the offices of multinational corporations. His investigation of conditions in Mauritania, Brazil, Thailand, Pakistan, and India reveals the tragic emergence of a "new slavery," one intricately linked to the global economy. The new slaves are not a long-term investment as was true with older forms of slavery, explains Bales. Instead, they are cheap, require little care, and are disposable. Three interrelated factors have helped create the new slavery. The enormous population explosion over the past three decades has flooded the world's labor markets with millions of impoverished, desperate people. The revolution of economic globalization and modernized agriculture has dispossessed poor farmers, making them and their families ready targets for enslavement. And rapid economic change in developing countries has bred corruption and violence, destroying social rules that might once have protected the most vulnerable individuals. Bales's vivid case studies present actual slaves, slaveholders, and public officials in well-drawn historical, geographical, and cultural contexts. He observes the complex economic relationships of modern slavery and is aware that liberation is a bitter victory for a child prostitute or a bonded miner if the result is starvation. Bales offers suggestions for combating the new slavery and provides examples of very positive results from organizations such as Anti-Slavery International, the Pastoral Land Commission in Brazil, and the Human Rights Commission in Pakistan. He also calls for researchers to follow the flow of raw materials and products from slave to marketplace in order to effectively target campaigns of "naming and shaming" corporations linked to slavery. Disposable People is the first book to point the way to abolishing slavery in today's global economy. All of the author's royalties from this book go to fund anti-slavery projects around the world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Wow. This *is* a book everyone should read. I'd heard about bits of slavery here and there in modern times. After I heard Bales on NPR and read about his work in Scientific American and the Sun, I was eager to get ahold of this book. But I had no idea that the horror was so widespread. Bales writes with clearness and imagination, yet is thoroughly scientific and researched. He followed sociological procedures and didn't merely report on other's ideas, but did primary research himself with a set variable questionnaire. All of this work makes his arguments irrefutable. Disposable People traces the three main types of slavery- old fashioned chattel slavery, debt slavery (the largest) and contract slavery (the fastest growing), in five different empirical countries. The first case of contract slavery in Thailand I found the most horrendous- families selling their daughters into slave-prostitution and death by AIDS, for the price of a colour TV. The case of chattel slavery in Mauritania was the most interesting- Arab Muslims speaking of their black slaves as their children, who need to be guided by a firm hand, but are inferior; who are fed the bare minimum to work and live, and not allowed to go to school. A place where the children of a female slave become the property of the slave owner, whether or not he is the father, and women can be kept as slaves by the claim that they are actually the wife of the slave owner, who has on his side the Qur'an's stipulation that one may have sex with one's female slaves. It was all too reminiscent of the antebellum period. Bales' weakest arguments were in regards to the form of slavery in India.

"Disposable People" by Kevin Bales is an important book on the topic of slavery in our time. The author intelligently combines original cases studies and third-party research with a solid understanding of global economics. The result is a startling but convincing expose that should be read by everyone. Mr. Bales describes the major factors driving slavery today. First, the post-WW II population explosion has created a huge and desperate reserve army of the unemployed. Second, the process of proletarianization continues in many so-called "developing" nations as millions of peasant farmers are displaced by mechanization. Third, economic globalization serves to break down the social fabric as materialism and greed substitutes for the communal values that prevail in peasant societies. Mr. Bales is careful to contrast the "New Slavery" of today with the "Old Slavery"

of the past. The New Slavery is clearly embedded within the logic of post-industrial production, where capital avoids its social and environmental responsibilities and ruthlessly exploits human and natural resources for maximum profit. In this light, the New Slavery represents the race to the very bottom of a brutal system that is controlled by speculative investors and is accountable to no one. Case studies examining prostitution in Thailand and coal production in the Brazilian rainforest help us further understand the dynamics of the New Slavery. Subcontractors do the dirty work of luring and keeping laborers in servitude while shielding owners from justice. Mr. Bales tells us that in the case of Brazil, the landowners who blithely ignore such practices include some of the largest corporations in the world. The Old Slavery defined by the traditional master/slave relationship has survived into the present as well. Mr.

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