



Ordinary People—Extraordinary Change

'The Inconvenient Truths' Pacific Trafficking in Persons Forum was a first for me. It was the first time I had ever attended a gathering specifically addressing the issue of Trafficking in Persons in the Pacific. It was a first for me to hear speakers from a variety of countries and vantage points surrounding this important subject. It was the first time I have stopped to consider the plight of those who work on the fishing boats that operate within New Zealand waters ... and make that connection with trafficking in persons.

It was a conference that was disturbing on a number of levels. It was disturbing to hear of the abuses that people suffer at the hands of another. It was not easy to listen to those stories because they were real people, and this was their actual story (not a nameless, faceless, generic story being told to generate a donation). It was disturbing because many of the presentations spoke of the brokenness of our humanity and I found myself left with the question of 'how'? How can we 'repair' and 'rebuild' that which, for whatever reason, has been damaged? It was disturbing to realise that greed was such a motivating factor in the execution of trafficking, but also in the hesitation to bring a change of circumstances—in our corner of the global village.

The highlight for me was the presentation by the Auckland School of Business around the plight of the fishermen. Their facts and figures and comparative work made for a compelling argument. The injustice of the situation was evident to all present, and I wondered if it was easier for me to engage with it because it is happening right here, right now in New Zealand—an issue that is right under our noses and has the stench of injustice and abuse all over it.

It is easy to feel like the issue is too complex for me. Where is the version of 'Social Justice for Dummies' that might help me to know what to do from here? There are two things that I am seeking to do as a direct result of the conference: I need to keep myself informed of the issues as much as I can, and then to help others to be informed too. The more people that are engaged in these issues, the louder the voice, the greater the noise, the stronger the pressure for change. And if you do not believe that to be the case, just ask Nestle and the other chocolate companies who felt the weight of the Stop The Traffik's fair trade chocolate campaign. They realised that when ordinary people do ordinary things in an extraordinary way, change must happen. Or in the words of Bruce Almighty (and Muhatma Gandhi) 'be the change you want to see in the world'.