

Modern Slavery Unmasked
White Ignorance, Jewish Racelessness, and Christo-fascism
in the United States Anti-Trafficking Movement
by
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ABSTRACT

Since the late-19th century, academic researchers, nonprofits, and law enforcement have organized in coalition to combat the problem of human trafficking in the United States, while distorting the social consequences of their interventions. This dissertation is an ethnographic and historical examination of the anti-trafficking movement in Arizona. In addition to conducting archival research, data was collected through direct observations of academics, local nonprofit leaders, and law enforcement at anti-trafficking events that were open to the public. By examining vast, invisible anti-trafficking coalitions in Arizona from the 20th century to today, it becomes clear that coalitions garner power and profit by facilitating the criminalization of sex workers and offering support for other groups, most notably Mormon polygamists, whose religious practices can be tantamount to trafficking. Combining Charles Mills' (2007) concept of white ignorance and the nonprofit industrial complex (INCITE!, 2009), this study draws on literature from critical race theory and feminist theory to interrogate how Christofascist discourses of the 19th century white slavery movement continue to guide anti-trafficking coalitions in the contemporary United States. As a social formation in which bourgeois white women have always held influence, this exploration of anti-trafficking activism pivots around political, economic, and cultural conceptions of white Christian women's capacity to reproduce the white race in the United States which has been since its foundation a Christian nation. In turn, there is limited scope and depth of awareness about the complexity of race, gender, class, agency, in relation to the problems associated with trafficking in Short Creek, Arizona, as well as the interventions that were implemented in response to human trafficking following the reign of Fundamentalist

Latter-Day Saints' Prophet, Warren Jeffs. In documenting and analyzing the organizing strategies of professional actors responding to human trafficking between 2016-2021, results generated from this research suggest that the anti-trafficking movement's discourses are steeped in contradiction, to the effect of reproducing racial capitalism and necessitating the eradication of the trafficking framework. It reveals how the differential treatment of agency among trafficking victims in different communities, whether the women and children in polygamous families, or sex workers in Phoenix, has enabled their ongoing exploitation.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to sex workers, whose expertise has deeply informed my politics as a scholar and grounded my understanding in the problems of human trafficking and how society should understand and respond to it. It is also dedicated to victims and survivors of trafficking who were never recognized as such in a manner that was conducive to protecting them from further exploitation and healing their trauma.

Finally, this research would not have been possible without the support of my family, friends, and colleagues, who helped me to maintain my resolve and focus, allowing me to keep moving forward in the face of adversity.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

That any person who shall knowingly transport or cause to be transported, or aid or assist in obtaining transportation for, or in transporting, in interstate or foreign commerce, or in any Territory or in the District of Columbia, any woman or girl for the purpose of prostitution or debauchery, or for any other immoral purpose, or with the intent and purpose to induce, entice, or compel such women or girl to become a prostitute or to give herself up to debauchery or to engage in any other immoral practice; or who shall knowingly procure or obtain, or cause to be procured or obtained, or aid or assist in procuring or obtaining, any ticket or tickets, or any form of transportation or evidence of the right thereto, to be used by any woman or girl in interstate or foreign commerce ... shall be deemed guilty of a felony, and upon conviction thereof shall be punished by a fine not exceeding five thousand dollars, or by imprisonment of not more than five years, or by both such fine and imprisonment, in the discretion of the court.

-The White Slave Traffic Act/Mann Act, 1910, Section 2

"Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery, or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the removal of organs.

-United Nations, The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, 2000, Article 3(2) paragraph (a)

Overview

Trafficking in humans is a complex phenomenon occurring throughout the world (Agustin, 2007; Olayiwola, 2019; Parrenas, 2007; Parrenas 2007a; Potts, 2003; Saunders, 2005; Vandenberg, 2007; Weitzer, 2007). As is laid out by the United Nations definition, the term, "trafficking" covers different behaviors that have been divided more generally into sex trafficking (Bromfield, 2016; Parrenas 2007; Sprang & Cole, 2018; Weitzer,

2012; Zimmerman, 2013), forced labor (Parrenas, 2007a; Urban Institute, 2014; Warren, 2012; Zhang, 2012), and organ trafficking (Jalalzai, 2005; Kelly, 2013; Makei, 2015; Meyer, 2006; Potts, 2003). All three types of trafficking are broadly understood as the forced movement of individuals or individual organs for the purposes of labor, sexual, or bodily exploitation and profit (Musto, 2009; Potts, 2003; Ras & Gregoriou, 2019; Sharapov, Hoff, & Gerasimov, 2019).

Since the early 20th century, the anti-trafficking movement phenomenon in the United States (US) has appealed to racist and xenophobic fantasies of white Protestant Christians, allowing them to wield power and secure profit for campaigns against prostitution and in favor of women's suffrage, prohibition of alcohol, and white supremacy (Boris & Berg, 2014; Blee, 1991; Gilmore, 1996; Gordon, 2017; Ware, 1992). Nonprofit organizations such as the National Women's Suffrage Association (NWSA) and the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), many of whom also held membership in the Women of the Ku Klux Klan (WKKK)¹ used the subject of "white slave trafficking" to advance their causes. Through the language of white slavery, they painted Black people, as well as Asian, Catholic, and Jewish immigrants as sex traffickers of young white Protestant girls to generate interest in their respective campaigns (Attwood, 2016; Delgado, 2012; Doezema, 2005; Grittner, 1990; Peck, 2004).

Whether wittingly or not, during the 1920s, early women's civil rights activism, social philanthropy, and white Protestant narratives about white slavery often overlapped with the ideological beliefs and campaign agendas of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). In the

¹ To increase KKK activism without threatening the male fraternity and masculine image of the Klan, the WKKK became its own distinct, women's-only group.

21st century, because many of these issues continue to be framed by and filtered through the language of trafficking, there is historical precedent for the need to study how nonprofit organizations, including churches and foundations, as well as academic institutions, law enforcement entities, and white supremacist conspiracy theorists in the QAnon² movement work together to fuel historically distorted ideas about trafficking for purposes of wealth accumulation and gaining political authority. In conjunction with legislation and the coalescing of state and private actors at all levels of government, these organizational coalitions have molded the language of trafficking to address different campaign issues at distinct historical moments in the service of racial capitalism³ (Robinson, 1983).

Today, following the anti-trafficking model established in the US, organizations with the mission of protecting women and children from exploitation exist all over the world, but the human consequences of their interventions often depart from their stated intentions. Critical trafficking scholars acknowledge that the current US anti-trafficking movement does not explicitly name racial and ethnic minorities as traffickers, nor do they

² Followers believe that there is an anonymous person or group of people named “Q” who are providing the public with secret codes and messages. Often entangled with Christianity, this conspiracy theory has many offshoots, but at its core, centers around the existence of an international child trafficking ring orchestrated by Satanic pedophiles who torture and drink the blood of their victims to improve their vitality. A raceless form of longstanding antisemitic tropes, these predators are represented as part of the “deep state,” a clandestine arm of a global cabal that controls the US government. QAnon circulates through the social media platform, 4Chan, now known as 8Chan for purposes of revealing an international child trafficking conspiracy ring that will eventually be taken down by the former President Donald Trump and high-level US military generals.

³ The concept of racial capitalism follows Cedric J. Robinson’s usage in *Black Marxism* (1983), which acknowledges how European capitalist accumulation, racism, and racialism are fundamentally linked in the modern world. In other words, contrary to theorists who explain racism as “some conspiracy to divide workers or justify slavery and dispossession ... capitalism and racism... did not break from the old order but rather evolved from it to produce a modern world system of “racial capitalism” dependent on slavery, violence, imperialism, and genocide.” (Kelley, 2017) In the context of this study, this concept is useful for understanding how anti-trafficking coalitions reproduce racial, gender, and class-based hierarchies through their interventions.

explicitly name young white Protestant women as victims, with a few exceptions (Baker, 2018). Without a substantial critique of the racist origins of this historical movement phenomenon, however, there is risk of enabling the movement's white supremacist legacies in an era of formal legal equality and corporate multiculturalism. Filling the historical and theoretical gaps in this literature shatters the image of the US anti-trafficking movement as a post-racial formation (Omi & Winant, 2014) and provides the reagents required to recognize it as a definitively fascist formation hiding in the shadows of colorblind racism.

In his text titled *Racism Without Racists* (2013), American sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva refers to "color-blind racism" as an ideology among bourgeois white Americans that "explains contemporary racial inequality as the outcome of nonracial dynamics" to "rationalize minorities' contemporary status as the product of market dynamics, naturally occurring phenomena, and Blacks' imputed cultural limitations" (p. 2). Color-blind racism provides white Americans justifications for Black Americans' disproportionate racial wealth inequality and overrepresentation in the criminal justice system through stereotypes about their cultural values, such as the idea that Black people are socialized to be lazy, averse to education, and more prone to sexual violence and other forms of criminality than other racial groups.⁴ These narratives played important roles in campaigns for alcohol prohibition, women's suffrage, and white supremacy.

⁴ Color-blind racist ideas have been further entrenched by references to "exceptional" wealthy Black Americans such as television personality Oprah Winfrey, singer Beyonce Knowles, rapper Kanye West, as well as a range of famous Black athletes to explain how race is no as significant as the past to how social relations are organized. (Haworth, 2022)

While Bonilla-Silva's frame focuses on anti-Black racism, white Americans have also extended similar color-blind arguments to Latino peoples, who are consistently stereotyped as illegal immigrants who burden social services, maintain associations with transnational criminal syndicates, and steal job opportunities from citizens who entered the country "the right way." The Asian model minority trope has also played into the color-blind notion of American exceptionalism, rationalizing that all Asian Americans have been economically and academically successful in this country; not because the majority who immigrated in the mid-twentieth century arrived educated and wealthy, but because they subscribe to a unique subculture of extreme discipline, natural intelligence, and strong family values.

In a similar sense to the model minority myth (Thrupkaew, 2002), narratives about the social and economic mobility among Jews in the US counter claims that the US is a racist country. After the US defeated Nazi Germany in 1945, ending the Third Reich's state-sponsored persecution and genocide of six million Jews, Americans came to view their nation as the bastion of democracy, religious freedom, and tolerance of racial minorities. Although most Americans have some basic familiarity with Nazis, Adolph Hitler, the Holocaust, and WWII from books, films, museums, and popular references in public life, most Americans know little of Jewish culture and history. Because most of the Jewish peoples who were killed in the Holocaust were Eastern Europeans, this racialized group and the stereotypes associated with them have become monolithically imagined as white people who were rescued by the Allied forces after being pressured to intervene on their behalf. In turn, the fact that they have been historically denied the same

rights and respect as Christian residents of their nations of origin before, during, and after the Holocaust is absent from their understanding.

The social construction of race depends upon assigning categorical meaning to phenotypical and cultural human groups (Omi & Winant, 2014). Jewish peoples have been defined as a race as long as the concept of race has existed, which positions them as a racial category, but their phenotypical diversity has made their classification particularly complicated. Because of the phenotypic diversity of the Jewish peoples, as an ethnic group defined by their ties to the land of Israel, common languages, and other cultural practices, they exist in a liminal space as a race and raceless⁵ social group. Within white supremacist ideology, this not only causes them to possess all the negative connotations associated with other racial groups, but also allows them to have their own unique characteristics, which position them as both oppressed and as oppressors of people of color around the world.

Given their racelessness, the social construction of Jews is malleable to exploitation among social groups and across the political spectrum. What is special about antisemitism⁶ is that Jews are considered to be uniquely manipulative; puppeteers of

⁵ By Jewish racelessness I mean the blindness towards Jewish people as a race because they are phenotypically ambiguous. Whereas Ashkenazi Jews typically present as white to Americans, the Sephardic Jews of North Africa and Southern Europe appear Black, the Malabar Jews of India are darker-skinned South-East Asians, and the Mizrahi Jews of Israel possess characteristics associated with Arabic peoples, although they have historically been constructed as a racial group and persecuted as such throughout history.

⁶ The term “antisemitism” was coined specifically to describe hatred of Jewish people (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, 2023). “Semite” is a pseudoscientific, now obsolete racial term. Though Jews are not the only group to speak a Semitic language — others include Arabic and Aramaic, for example — the word “antisemitism” was originally used in the late 1800s in reference, specifically, to anti-Jewish hatred. In a period of social Darwinism and scientific racism, the word “antisemitism” sounded more “scientific” than Jew-hatred, and thus, antisemitism was considered socially “acceptable.” The Jewish people have historically spoken Yiddish and Hebrew but since WWII barely anyone speaks Yiddish anymore. Most American Jews only speak English and the Hebrew they learn for their bar or bat mitzvah, at best. This is more ritualistic, however, than a true ability to grasp and communicate the language with

society who control the strings of other minorities⁷ and particularly Black Americans. Jews are, like other racial minorities, tend to be depicted as barbaric and sexually promiscuous. However, a core feature of antisemitism is the belief that they aim to poison white society by injecting “their” beliefs about multiculturalism, feminism, and cultural Marxism into the minds of whites and people of color to make it vulnerable to a supposed third world invasion.

The Jewish peoples have always been persecuted as a religious and ethnic group, and in the 20th century were tied to a global communist conspiracy. After the Holocaust, however, the Western powers sought to distinguish themselves from the atrocities of the Third Reich, prompting the establishment of Israel. In turn, given that many Jews present as white and the Jewish state was formed with support from the US, they have also come to be recognized as oppressors of people of color on a global scale. Antisemitism now extends beyond their religious and ethnic identity, since over 80% reside in the US and Israel, which are globally recognized symbols of imperialism and colonization (Jewish Virtual Library, 2022). Not only are they perceived as the enemies of Christians, Muslims, Mormons, atheists, and other religious groups, but also organizations ranging from international legal institutions, feminists concerned with the male-bias of Judaism (Brodkin, 2000; Ross, 2021).

other people. When Kanye West says he cannot be “antisemitic” because he is “not a Semite,” this is a distortion of history.

⁷ These antisemitic appeals are sometimes two-fold in that they serve to persecute both Jews and African Americans, imagined as acting as “pawns” of the Jews. For example, the former president Donald Trump lashed out at attorney Alvin Bragg, an African American man, characterizing him as a “Soros-backed radical left prosecutor” who had been “placed” in the office by the “Department of Injustice” to “get Trump” (Khaled, 2023).

Jews living in both the US and Israel have been consistently targets of antisemitism since before these states were established, but today are commonly understood as having assimilated into whiteness, even to the point of being compared to the very groups that have sought to eliminate them. Centering the history of antisemitism, as it emerged within the 20th Century anti-trafficking movement, exposes Jewish racelessness as one of the world's oldest hatreds and technologies of white supremacy (2021b). Further, this approach elucidates how Jewish racelessness has enabled white bourgeois Protestants, and particularly women, to project these harmful ideas through the language of trafficking for political and economic gain, while avoiding culpability for their role in this movement.

The importance of foregrounding issues of colorblind racism, including antisemitism, in the history of the anti-trafficking movement phenomenon is to provide a foundation for understanding of how harmful trafficking ideas continue to emerge through professional campaigns, many of which are run by white Protestant Americans. In Arizona today, for example, white Christian extremist groups like evangelical Christians of Dream City Church (DCC) and fundamentalist Mormons of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (FLDS), who hold great influence in state institutions, have also been granted legitimacy through the support of anti-trafficking coalitions such as the Arizona Governor's Human Trafficking Council (AZHTC). Sitting on this council includes esteemed political figures like Cindy McCain, people considered experts in the wider field of anti-trafficking work, like Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz, and law enforcement officials with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) (Shared Hope International, 2015).

While neither DCC nor the FLDS Church identify as explicitly racist organizations, the central religious text that guides these groups breeds belief in the Mark of Cain,⁸ identify Jews as the literal Antichrist,⁹ and claim that global peace can only be restored through their destruction.¹⁰ In a context where American culture is saturated with seemingly raceless conspiracy theories like QAnon, which circulate through mainstream and extremist online platforms, the anti-trafficking movement phenomenon and the people who operate within it continue to pose serious threats to American democracy. Without critically interrogating the racist history of the anti-trafficking movement and FLDS Church, their harms cannot be identified or remedied.

Background

In contemporary debates about trafficking, terms of “prostitution” or “sex work,” are deeply contested by academics, service providers, and other professionals, whose conflicting positions are rooted in disagreements about women and children’s sexual agency. In the early 20th century, these terms were simplistically defined as “white

⁸ In the Old Testament (Genesis 4:9-27), Noah’s son Ham was cursed with a black mark by God for his sins against his father. Protestant Christians have taken this to signify that this curse was carried by his descendants, the Canaanites, who have a unique place in the Book of Mormon. According to the founder of the Mormon religion, Joseph Smith, in a “in a spiritual "preexistence" Blacks were neutral bystanders when other spirits chose sides during a fight between God and Lucifer. For that failure of courage, they were condemned to become the accursed descendants of Cain.” For this reason, Black people were denied access into the LDS Priesthood until 1978, while this form of racism has persisted in the FLDS to this day (*TIME*, 1970).

⁹ In the Bible, a central religious text among evangelical Christians and a companion text among the Latter-Day Saints, is a passage: “Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is the Antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. No one who disowns the Son has the Father” (John 2:22-23).

¹⁰ On the title page of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith describes the central purpose of the text as: “convincing of the Jew and the Gentile that Jesus is Christ, the Eternal God, manifesting himself unto all nations.” Should the Jews fail to accept Christ as their messiah, “the Jews shall be scattered by other nations. And after they have been scattered, and the Lord God hath scourged them by other nations for the space of many generations, yea, even down from generation to generation until they shall be persuaded to believe in Christ, the Son of God” (2 Nephi 25: 15-16).

slavery” or “white slave traffic,” referring to the kidnapping and transportation of white Protestant women and girls for purposes of prostitution or “any other immoral purpose” (The White Slave Traffic Act, 1910). Under the banner of “white slavery,” early American anti-trafficking reformers worked in coalition, propping up one another’s views on race, gender, religion, and sexual politics. Due to its unsavory history, however, its progenitors have reoriented how the public understands the emergence of the anti-trafficking movement by discursively locating its origins in the 19th century abolitionist movement (Bernstein, 2007; Bravo, 2007; Butler, 2015; Smith, 2018), drawing comparisons between their work and of figures like Harriet Tubman,¹¹ Lucretia Mott,¹² and Fredrick Douglass.¹³

By stoking public fears through racist campaigns and media representations of white slave traffickers as Black men, Asians, and Jews (Soderlund, 2013), as well as through influencing immigration and criminal justice policy,¹⁴ the anti-trafficking

¹¹ Operation Underground Railroad (OUR) is a nonprofit organization based out of Utah that conducts international and domestic sex trafficking raids. In 2017, a Utah-based artist painted “The Underground Railroad,” featuring its historically revised leader, OUR CEO Tim Ballard, walking down a set of train tracks carrying a young girl he rescued. On each side of the tracks famous historical figures hold lanterns to light his path, including President Abraham Lincoln, abolitionist Frederick Douglass, and the conductor of the Underground Railroad, Harriet Tubman. Tubman is seen kneeling at Ballard’s feet, gazing up at him with awe.

¹² For example, Amy O’Neill Richard, a senior advisor for the Washington DC Trafficking in Persons Office explained that she draws inspiration for her work in the anti-trafficking movement from her ancestor, Lucretia Mott, who was a slavery abolitionist. According to Richard’s memoir essay, “I often think of her tenacity in fighting slavery and promoting women’s rights” (Smith, 2013, p. 57). These essays were written and published by the nonprofit, Shared Hope International, in a 2019 book titled, *Invading the Darkness: Inside the Historic Fight Against Child Sex Trafficking in the United States*.

¹³ Kenneth Morris Jr. is the great-great-great-grandson of Frederick Douglass and president of the nonprofit, the Frederick Douglass Family Initiative (FDI), which publishes human trafficking education materials for students. According to FDI’s website, Morris Jr. attributes his leadership against modern day slavery to the legacy of anti-slavery activism in his bloodline, having “fully embraced” being “defined by the characteristics that so closely defined his famous ancestors” Like many anti-trafficking nonprofits, the FDI works closely with law enforcement. Frederick Douglass Family Initiative (2020). Kenneth B. Morris Jr. Source: <https://fdi.org/ken/>

¹⁴ The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was initially established to enforce the White Slave Traffic Act of 1910 (Pliley, 2010).

movement has played a significant role in the reproduction of racial capitalism since its emergence. Historically, anti-trafficking coalitions¹⁵ have been enacted by predominantly upper-class white Protestants,¹⁶ whose racist and xenophobic representations of traffickers have produced moral panics¹⁷ (Cohen, 2002) about threats to young, white Christian women in the US (Doezema, 2010; Fukushima, 2014; Zimmerman, 2013). Following the abolition of slavery and wave of immigration from Asia and Eastern Europe beginning in the 1880s, coalitional groups began to stir a moral panic as a conservative backlash against these changes, identifying people of color, immigrants, and religious minorities as traffickers to police interracial and underage relationships, adultery, and the boundaries of domesticity, among other behaviors (Piley, 2010). The anti-trafficking movement no longer explicitly names these groups as perpetrators in their public relations and educational campaigns, but through colorblind tropes¹⁸ about traffickers they can wield the same 20th Century narratives about trafficking towards the same ends.

¹⁵ Other organizations and individuals who participated in anti-trafficking activism included the Anti-Saloon League, social purity reformers, and powerful philanthropists and movement leaders such as John D. Rockefeller, the President of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, Frances Willard, and J. Edgar Hoover, the original director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (Piley, 2010).

¹⁶ While white Protestant Christians led the anti-trafficking charge, scholars such as Estelle Freedman (2013) and Edward Bristow (1982) have also explained how African Americans and Jewish Americans organized against "trafficking" at both formal and informal levels, most often for purposes of rebuking claims that they were part of these alleged organized crime rings.

¹⁷ Criminologist Stanley Cohen describes a 'moral panic' as "a condition, episode, person or groups of persons that emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests" (2002, p. 1).

¹⁸ See Figure 1 below, p. 12.

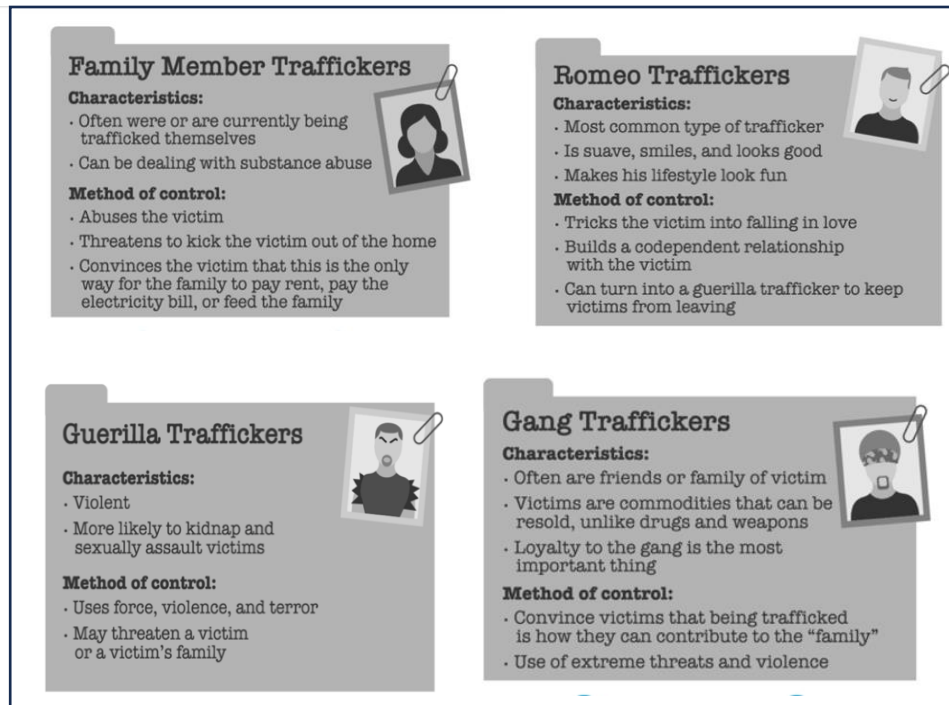


Figure 1. The 4 Most Common Criminal Profiles of Traffickers: The ASU-McCain Online Trafficking Training for Teachers and Administrators

Illustrative of the phenomenon known as “exploitation creep” (Chuang, 2014), anti-trafficking coalitions today have increased their capacity to criminalize these same past populations by expanding the idea of trafficking to target behaviors rather than people; ranging from acts such as pimping, to stripping, online pornography, sexting, domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse (Bumiller, 2008; Ditmore, 2006; Farley, 2011; Showden & Majic, 2014; Smith & Attwood, 2013; St. Onge, 2020). By shifting emphasis from groups of people as traffickers to categories of behavior that constitute trafficking, the people who work within anti-trafficking coalitions have been able to expand common sense assumptions about traffickers through historically racist and xenophobic ideas that obscure the nature and scope of this complex issue. While these discourses depart from those of the white slavery movement, they continue to produce harmful interventions at marginalized populations imagined as victims of

traffickers, such as susceptibility to criminalization, while simultaneously insulating others who fall outside these prescribed categorizations.

Because the scope of the trafficking problem is so definitionally fraught, in that many behaviors are classified as trafficking, measuring the number of perpetrators and victims is impossible. Measuring the trafficking problem is also difficult because the definition has remained a contested topic between anti-trafficking coalitions and their critics, whose disagreements revolve around the subject of female agency in prostitution, otherwise known as sex work (Ditmore, 2006; Global Network of Sex Work Projects, 2016; Leigh, 1980).¹⁹ Whereas sex workers and critical trafficking scholars recognize sex work as a legitimate form of labor (Agustin, 2007; Cabezas, 1998; Chapkis, 1997; Desiree Alliance, 2017; Magnanti, 2012; Musto, 2016; Warren, 2012), feminist scholars such as Gail Dines (2006), Patricia Hill Collins (2000), and Catherine MacKinnon (2005)²⁰ have rejected this assertion, arguing that any and all forms of sex work reflect violence against women in a patriarchal society and thus their presumed inability to

¹⁹Going forward, the term “sex work” will be used in replacement of “prostitution.” Carol Leigh coined the term “sex worker” in 1980, marking the beginning of the sex worker’s rights movement in the United States. According to the Global Network of Sex Work Projects, Leigh called for the use of this term to establish the dignity of sex work and the people who do it because, “It acknowledges the work we do rather than defines us by our status.” Source: Global Network of Sex Work Projects (nd). <https://nswp.org/timeline/carol-leigh-coins-the-term-sex-work>.

²⁰ Echoing feminists with similar positions on sex work, Catherine MacKinnon has supported the argument that “jail is the closest thing many women in prostitution have to a battered women’s shelter” and in “the absence of any other refuge or shelter, jail provides a temporary safe haven” (MacKinnon, 2011).

consent makes sex work tantamount to sexual slavery (Collins, 2000; Dines, 2006; Farley, 2006,²¹ 2011, 2018; MacKinnon, 2005).²²

Anti-trafficking coalitions of nonprofit organizations, law enforcement, and other service providers²³ are also structured by the perspective that sex work is tantamount to trafficking, which has become the dominant understanding of trafficking today in the US. From the position that women and youth do not possess the agency to solicit their own sexual services, anti-trafficking coalitions legally deem those who sell sex as victims and those who buy sex as traffickers (Baker, 2018; Lutnick, 2017; Majic & Showden, 2018; Musto, 2016). Through this logic, anti-trafficking coalitions can promote what they refer to as “victim centered” interventions to combat trafficking through the criminalization of sex workers and their clients.²⁴

While anti-trafficking interventions have targeted sex workers in the past (Delgado, 2012; Flavin, 2009; Frederici, 2004; Soderlund, 2013), today’s anti-trafficking coalitions instead focus on attacking the demand for sex workers by targeting suspected

²¹ The central argument of End-Demand is that a “victim-centered” approach to sex work requires criminalizing “the demand” for sex workers through the criminalization of traffickers and sex buyers (Hunt, 2013).

²² Often, academic studies about violence in the sex industry focus on the abuse of sex workers by the hands of managers, pimps, and customers. Managers in street-based sex work, strip clubs, and pornography can have poor reputations for perpetrating violence and harassment against sex workers as well as withholding income.

²³ In this study, I found that the Arizona “anti-trafficking coalition” is extremely fluid, as professional organizations and corporations frequently engage and disengage from anti-trafficking based on issues (medical, legal, LGBTQ, or otherwise) that they may be able to address in their work within healthcare (Banner Health; Phoenix Children’s Hospital), legal advocacy (Arizona Legal Women and Youth Services), and homelessness among marginalized youth (One-n-Ten).

²⁴ This approach was first introduced in Sweden in the 1990s (Levy & Jakobsson, 2014), followed by the United States, Norway, Denmark, Ireland, Canada, and France who have since implemented similar strategies to combat trafficking in their respective countries (Sex Worker Advocacy and Resistance Movement, 2020).

traffickers and sex buyers.²⁵ Referring to interventions as “victim-centered”²⁶ suggests that anti-trafficking coalitions prioritize the wellbeing of trafficking victims through protection, minimization of harm, and support services, rather than criminalization. However, academic research in the fields of critical trafficking studies, critical legal studies, as well as sex worker’s rights literature has demonstrated that this purported shift from viewing sex workers as criminals to victims has had limited if any impact in terms of minimizing criminalization, stigma, and susceptibility to violence against this historically vulnerable group (Bass, 2015; Desiree Alliance, 2017; Nothing About Us Without Us, 2015; Starr, 2018; Wilde, 2014).

Although anti-trafficking coalitions claim to prioritize the needs of victims, they persistently deny credibility to sex workers who are critical of these interventions, as well as their knowledge of risks of being trafficked within the industry, and other forms of workplace violence (Desiree Alliance, 2017; Nothing About Us Without Us, 2015; Global Network of Sex Work Projects, 2016, 2020). Anti-trafficking coalitions consisting of law enforcement, nonprofits, and other institutional authorities may commonly refer to sex workers as victims, but it is important to recognize that doing so gives them the authority to carry out unwelcome raids on their homes and workplaces like hotels, motels, brothels, and massage parlors (Ditmore, 2009; Ditmore & Thukrai, 2012; Gira-

²⁵ The basic solution is that the “demand” for sex is what fuels the problem of trafficking in the United States and abroad and thus, to solve this problem, we must criminalize the demand by putting men who seek out sex in exchange for money or something of value in prison.

²⁶ The US Department of Justice defines a victim-centered approach as, “the systematic focus on the needs and concerns of a victim to ensure the compassionate and sensitive delivery of services in a nonjudgmental manner” (US Department of Justice, 2017). The Department of Homeland Security’s “Blue Campaign” to raise awareness about human trafficking considers a “victim-centered approach” to combating this problem as placing: “equal value on the identification and stabilization of victims and providing immigration relief, as well as the investigation and prosecution of traffickers” (US Department of Homeland Security, 2016).

Grant, 2020; Koyama, 2011; Vitale, 2013). The criminalization of sex work also increases the risk potential sex buyers take soliciting their services, which has decreased sex workers' financial bargaining power and limited their ability to exercise discretion screening customers as the client base becomes more scarce and competitive (National Sex Workers Outreach Project, 2016; National Sex Workers Outreach Project, 2020). If sex workers are not able to generate enough clients on their own, they may have few alternatives other than to seek a third party, such as a pimp, to manage their work, producing a political dynamic increasingly conducive to their criminalization and other harms.²⁷

Criminalization approaches purported to be victim-centered have not decreased violence against sex workers but often have a reverse effect; increasing their susceptibility to violence and exploitation not just by clients and managers, but also by law enforcement officers, nonprofit leaders, and others who are aware of vulnerabilities associated with criminalization. Understanding the myriad of harms made possible by these contemporary coalitions requires examining the nature of the trafficking problem within specific social contexts as well as the outcomes for people identified as trafficking victims and traffickers by the state. To do so is often particularly challenging, however, because the way human trafficking is defined is deeply contested due to competing ideas about sexual agency, as well as who is afforded the authority to speak to these experiences. Additionally, the broad scope of trafficking discussed among coalitions

²⁷ In June 2019 I presented some of the initial findings of my preliminary research at the Law and Society Conference in Toronto, Canada. During the conference, I attended a panel which was led entirely by sex workers from organizations such as Butterfly -Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network and Migrant Sex Workers Project. Based on direct experience, these panelists explained how anti-trafficking laws hamper youth who sell sex, sex workers, indigenous women, and migrants in Canada.

makes it impossible to gain a comprehensive picture of this problem through research; a matter that is further complicated by the fact that there are political and economic incentives to portray trafficking in ways that attract wealthy donors, philanthropists, and other institutional actors.

Problem Statement

While most people are aware that the anti-trafficking movement exists, the details about the operations, organizations, and individuals involved in these campaigns have not been made consistently transparent to the public. Much of the critical trafficking literature has referred to the collaborative partnerships between feminist academics, churches, and police as “strange bedfellows” (Bernstein, 2007). As this dissertation will demonstrate, however, these alliances are not new formations of historically oppositional political forces, but rather have long been drawn to one another through their common view of human trafficking and how to address it.

In the US, the malleable language of trafficking is being harnessed by anti-trafficking coalitions in ways that increase violence and exploitation of people of color; outcomes that have been common within anti-trafficking organizing since the early 20th century anti-white slavery crusades (Bernstein, 2018; Boris & Berg, 2014; Bromfield, 2016; Durisin, 2017; Knepper, 2012; Smith 2013; Smith 2018; Soderlund, 2013).

Allowing the people who make up anti-trafficking coalitions the capacity and platform to define the terms of trafficking gives them extraordinary power in the US, which often has disastrous human consequences. Not only for those who are identified as victims or

traffickers, but also for those whose victimhood falls outside the scope of trafficking definitions like the children of the FLDS.

Historically, the anti-trafficking movement has exploited racist and xenophobic fantasies of the American public to garner power and profit, which they continue to do today through the language of colorblindness. Through colorblind racism, coalitions between law enforcement, politicians, corporations, and nonprofits continue to facilitate the reproduction of racial capitalism through a three-pronged approach: 1) Defining the problem of criminal “traffickers” as they extend beyond any particular human demographic (Shared Hope International 2020); 2) Portraying the trafficking process as behaviors²⁸ involving internet predation,²⁹ violence and intimidation via gorilla trafficking³⁰ and gang trafficking,³¹ and 3) Distributing the aforementioned racist

²⁸ TRUST, a local nonprofit in Phoenix, connects the presumed behaviors of traffickers to different trafficker profiles: “Pimps use a variety of tactics to recruit victims; they may act as a boyfriend (a ‘Romeo pimp’)” or “use force tactics such as kidnapping (a ‘guerilla pimp’)” TRUST. (nd). Arizona Sex Trafficking 101: An Overview. (Print source).

²⁹ I attended a lecture at a downtown Phoenix library where feminist media scholar, Dr. Gail Dines, suggested that the connection between pornography and trafficking is that sex traffickers have been crawling all over the internet since it made pornography more “affordable, accessible, and anonymous” (G. Dines, field observations, January 22nd, 2019; Walker 2019).

³⁰ I attended one event where Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz was training a group of local teachers how to identify the different types of traffickers. She described the “gorilla pimp” as “a really violent pimp...that’s the picture of a kid being kidnapped, thrown into a car, drugged and sold and we see that about 2% of the time here...they’re in a really high-risk area... out in the middle of the night, lots of risky behavior, and a gorilla pimp can find (a victim)” (D. Roe-Sepowitz, field observations, November 23rd, 2019). Notably, the spelling of “gorilla” pimp varied across trainings, as Roe-Sepowitz also produced the STARFISH Training for teachers and students online, where four different profiles of traffickers are identified, including the “guerilla” trafficker. The guerilla trafficker is described as “violent” and “more likely to kidnap and sexually assault victims” than other types of traffickers, like the “Romeo trafficker” (see Figure 1). Whereas the gorilla and gang traffickers are described as being particularly prone to violence, the Romeo trafficker allegedly lures his victims through charm, by “mak(ing) his lifestyle look like fun” and “trick(ing) the victim into falling in love.” However, if these tactics do not work, he may “turn into a guerilla trafficker to keep victims from leaving” (See Figure 1).

³¹ Based on the STARFISH training, gang traffickers are distinct from other types of traffickers according to their use of “extreme threats and violence” to control victims and because they view them as “commodities that can be resold, unlike drugs or weapons” (See Figure 1). In another example, while conducting observations of local anti-trafficking events, I collected campaign materials that contrast the pimp trafficker against a young Black male holding a gun (ASU STIR Training Tool for Teen Sex Trafficking). While unclear about the discrepancies between gorilla/guerilla traffickers and gang traffickers, I noted that “gang

associations between traffickers and men of color through dog whistles to audiences who are almost exclusively middle and upper-class whites. This tripartite strategy not only produces discourses that target people of color as traffickers, but also positions the behaviors white Christian service providers that are tantamount to trafficking, like those of Dream City Church, outside the scope of how trafficking is understood. Through these colorblind logics and storylines, anti-trafficking coalitions represent the problem of human trafficking in ways that make arrests, raids, probation, incarceration, diversion programs, and other forms of criminalization appear to make sense as the most appropriate response to addressing the problem.

Central to the creation of the dominant narrative concerning the trafficking problem and how to solve it are nonprofit entities that work with law enforcement. Prison abolitionist scholar Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2004) has emphasized that nonprofit influence on the state has become particularly prevalent in the US in the face of devastating cuts to social welfare programs and other rapidly diminishing federal resources, resulting in increased competition over resource allocation (Gilmore, 2004). In turn, social sectors, including the nonprofit sector, have become increasingly dependent on relationships with police to secure grant funding to address community problems including domestic violence, homelessness, and human trafficking.

traffickers" were characterized as particularly dangerous: "We see gang violence in trafficking much more dangerous than the low-level, solo pimp who's 18-what's called a Sneaker Pimp.' He makes just enough to buy himself a really nice pair of sneakers and stay at motel 6. Very different than a person who was an MS-13 or El Surenos or something really dangerous because they are all in this network and they move through that network." (D. Roe-Sepowitz, field observations, November 23rd, 2019). Also see Shared Hope International (2015, 2015a).

Neither law enforcement agencies nor nonprofit organizations dedicated to combating trafficking have been able to penetrate the depths of exploitation nor find long-lasting solutions in relation to any form of human trafficking. However, nonprofit organizations have been able to internalize the mission of policing in their work, while law enforcement have internalized the mission of social welfare.³² Since the mainstream framework of “human trafficking” relies upon government and nonprofit defined conceptualizations of exploitation that are unable to register the concept of “state violence,” the harm of government and nonprofit entities by the NPIC has “enabled and complimented” the rise and expansion of the prison industrial complex (PIC) (Davis 1995) fueled by mass incarceration (Rodriguez, 2009).

The increasingly intertwined relationships between nonprofits and police to address community problems is likely a consequence of the fact that large portions of the government budget has stripped funding from welfare programs, diverted to policing and the prison system. Further compounding the problem between the PIC and the nonprofit industrial complex (NPIC) is their connection to the academic industrial complex (AIC), which as community activists and scholars Soniya Munshi and Craig Willse explain, has:

Brought renewed attention to the role of the academy in directly supporting criminal punishment systems and military industrial complexes...to think in terms of an AIC was to ask parallel questions about why we have the form of

³² In Dr. Roe-Sepowitz’s article in the *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation* (2014), she and her fellow authors described Project ROSE as: “a service opportunity cloaked in a law enforcement action,” stating that one unanticipated benefit of this intervention was that “police officers accepted and embraced their role as service providers” (p. 68).

institutionalized education that we do and what the role of universities might be in both maintaining status quos and furthering harms caused by capitalism, heteropatriarchy, and white supremacy. (cited in INCITE!, 2017, p. x)

Similar to how the problem of trafficking has been articulated by nonprofits and police through historically racist ideas about traffickers, (Bristow, 1982; Davis, 1981; Doezema, 2005; Soderlund, 2013), academics who use predetermined definitions and methods of measuring trafficking uncritically can also exacerbate this problem (Dines, 2006; Farley, 2006; Hunt, 2013; MacKinnon, 2005; Williamson & Baker, 2009). Relying on law enforcement data such as arrest and incarceration records, in addition to uncritical testimonies from law enforcement and others who run and work within these structures, some academics identified as “experts” among anti-trafficking coalitions paint a misleading picture of the problem that supports the criminalization of sex work.

Between 2011 and 2013,³³ for example, anti-trafficking expert Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz of Arizona State University’s Sex Trafficking Intervention Research (ASU STIR) Office, collaborated the Phoenix Police Department’s Human Trafficking Unit to design and execute an intervention called Project ROSE. Over a two-day period in May of 2013, Roe-Sepowitz worked in coalition with police to arrest hundreds of sex workers (Roe-Sepowitz, Gallagher, Hickle, Loubert & Tutleman, 2014).³⁴ They were given the proposition to either simply accept the consequences of their crimes, or alternatively

³³ According to *Vice News* that was published in 2014, there were at least five two-day stings that had taken place since 2011, resulting in over accumulative 350 arrests. (Crabapple, 2014).

³⁴ Some of these services included assisting in sex workers to acquire a state ID, housing, food, medical services, and substance abuse rehabilitation services.

accept resources and have the charges dropped after completing a prostitution diversion program offered by a Catholic charity.

As part of Project ROSE, the data collected and analyzed by Roe-Sepowitz concerned the legal circumstances surrounding sex workers' participation in the diversion program, whether they completed it, and how it affected recidivism rates afterwards for a study that was later published in *The Journal of Offender Rehabilitation* in 2014 (Roe-Sepowitz, Gallagher, Hickle, Loubert, & Tutleman, 2014). While one sample group was court ordered to attend after pleading guilty to prostitution charges, the other consisted of women who were arrested during Project ROSE and opted to participate with the hope of having their charges dropped. The results of this study indicated there was no significant difference in all three measurements between the groups that participated, but members of the anti-trafficking coalition have since referenced Project ROSE and the research produced in conjunction to bolster their public image as authorities on the problem of trafficking and how to solve it.³⁵

Journalists, sex workers, and critical trafficking scholars (Best Practices Policy, 2014; Bubbles & Flaherty, 2014; Cassidy, 2014; Deccan Chronicle, 2017; Ford, 2014; Lemons, 2010; Plews, 2014) have appropriately described the intervention described in Project ROSE as a form of “criminalization under the guise of social work” because it coerced sex workers arrested in police raids to participate in a compulsory nonprofit-led

³⁵ Interventions and methodological approaches such as those offered through Project ROSE are common anti-trafficking procedures throughout the United States (Bernstein, 2018; Best Practices Policy, 2014; Carline, 2012; Khan, 2015; National Sex Workers Outreach Project 2016; National Sex Workers Outreach Project 2020). Interventions such as these perpetuate the racist and antisemitic legacies of the trafficking movement in Arizona and the United States, which has historically targeted sex workers, many of whom are poor, immigrants, and people of color, to serve the narrow interests of wealthy, white, Americans, many of whom identify as Christians.

prostitution diversion program (Hoye, 2013; Plews, 2014; Simon & Jones, 2015). Given Roe-Sepowitz's positionality, and the fact that sex workers were coerced to participate in the study through raids and arrests, within the context of this study, it is also important to analyze Project ROSE within the AIC framework, through which it also appears as a form of criminalization under the guise of academic research.

Understanding the reasons for the ongoing criticisms among sex workers (Fitzgerald, 2017, 2017a; Gira-Grant, 2020; Global Network of Sex Work Projects, 2016; Ludwig, 2020; Mac & Smith, 2018; Sex Worker Advocacy & Resistance Movement, 2020), critical trafficking scholars (Ditmore, 2009; Jackson, 2016; Kempadoo, 2012; McCracken, 2013; Musto, 2016; Saunders, 2007; Weitzer, 2014, 2015), and other allies (Bass, 2015; Cabezas, 1998; Katsulis, 2008) requires not only studying what sort of victim-centered services these coalitions offer to people who have been trafficked, but also who these people are and how they explain the effectiveness of their work in different communities. Without careful oversight of nonprofit service providers, law enforcement, and academic anti-trafficking experts involved in the movement, the discourses and practices of these coalitions remain underchallenged and risk expanding the net of vulnerable populations susceptible to harmful interventions (Chuang, 2014; Mahdavi, 2013). Failure to challenge these discourses and practices also means the continuing detraction of resources from groups that focus on harm reduction,³⁶ rather than criminalization, in providing social services to sex workers and others being identified as trafficking victims in the US.

³⁶ "Harm reduction" describes a range of public health strategies designed to lessen the negative social and/or physical consequences frequently associated with various human behaviors, both legal and illegal, including sex work and drug use (Communications Toolkit, 2011).

A handful of critical trafficking scholars have examined the relationship between white ignorance and the contemporary anti-trafficking movement in the US. Sharapov, Hoff, & Gerasimov (2019) agree that “one of the key messages lacking from anti-trafficking awareness raising” is the denial of relationality that generates human trafficking based on “a power imbalance between employers and workers and the normalization of workers’ exploitation” (p. 10). Critical trafficking scholars examine historical, political, economic, cultural, political, and geographic factors that may influence the characterization of sexual labor as wholly violent. Few, however, have yet to complicate the dichotomies of sex trafficking and Mormon polygamy as it is practiced by the FLDS Church in the US,³⁷ which reflects the limitations of trafficking statistics and research.

Whereas the anti-trafficking coalition behind Project ROSE was able to quickly recognize, define, and respond to what they called a trafficking problem in Phoenix, which disproportionately impacted poor sex workers, many of whom were Black and brown, this has not been the case in rural communities in the state (Arizona Governor’s Human Trafficking Council, 2019). In Short Creek, Arizona, roughly 370 miles northwest of Phoenix along the Arizona-Utah border, it is more difficult for outsiders to obtain the exact nature and details of the trafficking problem that exists there. This is because, since the mid 20th century, the all-white Christian minority group that resides there, the FLDS, have shielded themselves from the influences of the modern world.

³⁷ Authors Heath (2023), Quek (2016), Bennion & Joffe (2016), and Jones (2012) have studied the social, economic, and political impacts of Mormon polygamy within the FLDS Church and particularly in Short Creek, including the effects of human trafficking that these communities give rise to and at times reproduce. However, few of these scholars, aside from Quek, have specifically and exclusively focused on the problem of human trafficking.

Most notably, the FLDS have been protecting themselves from public scrutiny and criminalization for the practice of polygamy³⁸ between adult and elderly men and multiple wives, who are often underage girls.

Since the town was established in 1913 (Bradley, 1993), the FLDS have maintained a stronghold in Short Creek, consisting of the community living in the twin towns of Colorado City, Arizona and Hildale, Utah. The possession and maintenance of this isolated region for more than a century, the rights afforded by the constitution of the US, as well as the United Effort Plan (UEP) trust that governs the land there, has afforded them the privacy and longevity to operate in relative anonymity on the basis of religious right.³⁹ However, there were a few brief moments in FLDS history in which their religious right to practice polygamy,⁴⁰ free from government interference, came into question based on accusations that they were committing crimes of trafficking (Bradley, 1993; Jones, 2012; Hansen Park, 2015; Kelly, 2019; Young, 2008).

³⁸ Polygamy is not unique to the FLDS in Short Creek, nor is the practice inherently a form of human trafficking. In Short Creek and other FLDS enclaves, polygamy entails the basic principle of celestial marriage. Although polygamy and polyamory share surface-level qualities, these practices are sociologically distinct. First and foremost, in the FLDS Church, polygamy is a key feature to their identity because most of its members were born into the group. Members of the FLDS, like other Mormon polygamist groups in the United States, can trace their familial lineages back to 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th generation polygamy. The further back they can trace their polygamous familial line, the higher their social and familial status within this religious caste system. Polyamory, in its dominant Western iteration today, is more likely to be used to refer to a sexual orientation or distinct and perhaps fluid romantic arrangement (Hervieu-Leger & Bennion, 2014).

³⁹ In addition to owning much of the residential land in Short Creek, the trust controls parks, public streets and thoroughfares, cemeteries, schools, meeting houses, light industrial buildings, farms, and open spaces. The FLDS have expanded since their establishment in Short Creek, with outposts in Colorado, Nevada, South Dakota, and Idaho, among other unincorporated municipalities (Bennion, 1998; Bennion & Joffe, 2016; Jeffs, 2017; Jones, 2012; *The Primer: Helping Victims of Domestic Violence and Child Abuse in Polygamous Communities*, 2006). Although the FLDS are a migratory group, they maintained control of the land in Short Creek since 1913 (Bistline, 2004).

⁴⁰ While the practice of Mormon plural marriage has been generally frowned upon in United States history, the specific issue of plural marriage between adult men and underage girls has received the most public scrutiny.

On July 26th, 1953, when the legal equivalent of what is today known as “trafficking” was referred to as “white slavery,” one of the most publicized and well-documented coalitional interventions between government and nonprofit actors as well as other agencies took place in Short Creek, Arizona (Adams, Wright, Diener, & Wright, 2013; Bradley, 1993; Wright & Richardson, 2011). The state of Arizona sent a caravan of law enforcement, including the National Guard, as well as nonprofit workers, members of the Red Cross, media, and other officials into the area to intervene into what then Arizona Governor Howard Pyle called:

a momentous police action against insurrection within its own borders... a community-many of the women, sadly, right along with the men-unalterably dedicated to the production of white slaves (according to) the wicked theory that every maturing girl should be forced into bondage of multiple wifhood with men of all ages for the sole purpose of producing more children to be reared to become more chattels of this totally lawless enterprise. (Bradley, 1993, pp. 207-208)

Although Governor Pyle anticipated a political victory for himself and law enforcement in 1953, at that point, the white slavery panics of the earlier part of the 20th century had died down and were being replaced with middle-class anxieties regarding communism (Glenn, 2014; Goldstein, 2012; Jones, 2010; Ross, 2002), anarchy (Jewish Women’s Archive, 2013), and government overreach into private white religious family life (Imhoff, 2017). Local and national publicity of the raid in the media cast a sympathetic image of Short Creek, a rural community of polite, white Christian families

who, while diverging from the culture of monogamy, appeared to be being persecuted simply for exercising their religious freedom (Bradley, 1993).

When Governor Pyle lost his bid for re-election, he attributed it directly to the '53 raid, which spoke to the political power of the FLDS, whose proud resistance to the raid would become central to the town's identity⁴¹ (Bradley, 1993). The consequences of this raid for Pyle and the coalition of organizations who acted under his instruction ushered in an era of minimal oversight by the state of Arizona, an outcome still celebrated to this day amongst the Short Creek community (Servolution, 2018; Standing Together, 2020). As politicians came to view interference as being an encroachment on religious freedom and a public relations firestorm (Mike Watkiss, 2011; Shurtleff & Goddard, 2006), the Mohave County Sheriff's office no longer patrolled the community, which established its own police force under the control of the FLDS Church to keep residents in, enforce excommunications, and prevent gentiles from entering the town (Bistline, 2004). As a consequence of these changes and the establishment of the United UEP land trust, the FLDS of Short Creek gained total control over the town and largely existed outside the scope of formal US anti-trafficking scrutiny and interventions for nearly five decades (Mike Watkiss, 2011).

When the FLDS Prophet Rulon Jeffs⁴² died in September 2002 (Jeffs, 2009), a culmination of unprecedented actions taken by his son, Warren Jeffs, pushed this town

⁴¹ This is clear by the tradition that emerged following the July 1953 raid on the community, as SCDC co-director and representative, Glyn Jones, described in a 2020 interview: "It's a great story -they set off dynamite in one of the hills as the police cars were coming in very early that morning and woke everybody up in town. They still celebrate that today on the 4th of July. We set off some big explosions really early in the morning to wake up everybody in the town" (Building Bridges, 2020).

⁴² Rulon Jeffs was Prophet of the FLDS Church from November 1986 until his death in September 2002.

into the public spotlight once again. In 2003, after rapidly increasing the rate of child marriages (Musser, 2013), he became a federal fugitive on the run across the US, which was made possible through the tithings collected from his followers as well as his control of the UEP Trust (Elford-Argent, 2022; US Department of Justice, 2017). He ordered the construction of a new Zion in El Dorado, Texas, called the Yearning for Zion Ranch (YFZ),⁴³ which was built with the labor of children and funded by his followers (Goodwyn, Burkes, & Walters, 2005; Hansen Park, 2017b; Hansen Park, 2017f; Zitting-Wyson & Zitting-Wyson, 2022).⁴⁴ He then proceed to transport his children, wives, and most loyal followers to the YFZ ranch,⁴⁵ while those who he deemed unworthy remained in Short Creek (Jeffs, 2017; Roberts & Soncrant, 2020) .

Being in control of the UEP trust helped give Warren Jeffs the legal authority in 2004 to excommunicate the town's most powerful patriarchs, expelling them from their homes, and reassigning their wives and children to Jeffs' most loyal followers, throwing the community of Short Creek into further chaos (Coastline Church, 2020; Hansen Park, 2017a; Hansen Park, 2018; Tory, 2016). In addition to the financial burdens of his reign,

⁴³ The FLDS believe that before the second coming of Jesus Christ a city of Zion will be built by the righteous and Jesus will reign from this city. The FLDS believe that the righteous among them will have the opportunity to build that great city.

⁴⁴ Texas court records document \$1.8 million from individual people and businesses in Utah and Arizona that went toward the purchase and construction of the YFZ in Texas:\$150,000 • Fred Jessop, Cedar City and Hurricane, UT; \$165,634 • Tonto Supply Inc., Hurricane, UT; \$20,130 • General Rock Products Inc., Hurricane, UT; \$60,000 Dave's Builders, St. George, UT; \$655,000 • FLDS Church, Cedar City and Hurricane, UT; \$80,700 • Cooperative Mercantile Corp., Hurricane, UT; \$2,440.36 • Isaac Jeffs, Short Creek, AZ/UT; \$22,050 • William Jessop, Short Creek, AZ/UT; \$15,000 • Details Wireless Inc., Hurricane, UT and Short Creek, AZ/UT; \$250,000 • Western Precision, Short Creek, AZ/UT; \$31,960.70 • Paragon Contractors, Short Creek, AZ/UT; \$12,000 • Allco Truss, Short Creek, AZ/UT (Whitehurst, 2012).

⁴⁵According to Warren Jeffs 65th wife, Briell Decker, of the Short Creek Dream Center, Warren initially took all of his children below the age of 8 from his plural wives and gave them to other, childless sister wives as “caretakers,” to raise in Texas. None of Warren’s wives who had a ready bore children were considered worthy enough to go to the YFZ (Burton, 2019; Fear, 2021; Fuel Your Legacy Show, 2020; Geier, 2019; Heart of the Matter, 2019; Pienecker 2023).

Jeffs and his followers carried out extensive amounts of physical (Jessop & Palmer, 2007; Jessop & Brown, 2009), sexual (Jeffs, 2009; Jeffs, 2017; Musser, 2013), and psychological abuse (Burton, 2019; Wall, 2008), as well isolation (Elford-Argent, 2022; Unfiltered Stories, 2022), neglect (Gorvett, 2017; Nelson, 2018), wage theft (Allsup, 2020; Carlisle, 2018; Simonson, 2021; Torribio, 2021), and withholding of education from children (Creekers Foundation, 2018; Creekers Foundation, 2018a; Duara, 2016; Zitting-Wyson & Zitting-Wyson, 2022). Coupled with widespread genetic disorders⁴⁶ due to inbreeding (Gorvett, 2017; Hollenhorst, 2006), the community was not only left deeply traumatized, but in a state of political, economic, and cultural turmoil (Bleier, 2023; Carlisle, 2019; CBS News, 2023; Coastline Church, 2020; Jim, 2014; Matson, 2015; Measom & Merten, 2010; Wagner, 2015; Wright, 2018).

After a widely publicized raid on the FLDS compound in Texas,⁴⁷ where hundreds of children, many of whom were pregnant, were found by law enforcement and social workers,⁴⁸ Warren Jeffs was sentenced to life in prison (Peralta, 2011). During the

⁴⁶ Most significantly, fumarase syndrome, a rare genetic disorder due to multiple generations of close inbreeding, which reduces life expectancy, causing “seizures, hypotonia, and early onset encephalopathy” (University of Nevada School of Medicine, 2015, p. 2). A man named Joseph S. Jessop carried the fumarase syndrome gene to Short Creek in 1943 after being excommunicated from the LDS Church for practicing polygamy. Since “approximately 80% of the community” is related to Jessop and the other founder John Y. Barlow, this makes the cruel arithmetic of polygamy in Short Creek particularly brutal.

⁴⁷ Warren Jeffs’ imprisonment was widely publicized by journalists, documentarians, and apostates, who are people from Short Creek who have left the FLDS Church (A&E, 2018; Argot, 2021; Dateline, 2020; Dretzen & McNally, 2021; Tory, 2016; Ventry & Sanders, 2020).

⁴⁸ Following disturbing findings of a police raid in 2008, when federal agents discovered hundreds of FLDS children from Short Creek who had been kidnapped and transported across state lines, living in El Dorado, Texas within the walls of a rural compound called Yearning for Zion Ranch (YFZ) (Tory, 2016). A report published by the El Dorado, Texas Child Protective Services revealed that at the time of the raid, there was evidence of at least 274 FLDS children from the Short Creek community on the YFZ compound living in households where they were being exposed to sexual abuse perpetrated against another child in their family or household. For instance, 12 girls from these families between the ages of 12 to 15-years-old had been sexually abused with the knowledge and consent of their parents after agreeing to place them in an arranged marriage with another adult male in or outside of the community. Of those 12 girls, seven had given birth to one or more children since being married into a polygamous relationship (Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, 2008, p. 14).

raid and within the walls of the YFZ Temple, authorities located carefully documented marital records between Jeffs and his underage wives, photographs of their marriage ceremonies, and an audio recording of Warren Jeffs engaging in sexual intercourse with one of his youngest wives, who was barely twelve-years-old at the time (Musser, 2013; Rhaman, 2018).⁴⁹ Although Jeffs' lost control of the UEP and his control of the town has diminished, the sociopolitical dynamics of the town and individual membership within the FLDS has become extremely precarious (Jim, 2014; Joyce Meyers Ministries, 2022; Kociela, 2018; Utah12 News, 2022; 100 Women Who Care in Southern Utah, 2019).

After Warren Jeffs was initially incarcerated, the state of Utah took control of the UEP, appointing Salt Lake City attorney Bruce Wisan as a special fiduciary to oversee and manage the trust in 2005 (Jenkins, 2014). Under Bruce Wisan, he and his legal team changed UEP Trust law so that distribution of deeds in Short Creek could no longer be determined based on religion. Since then, without the ability to discriminate because of religion, the FLDS residents of Short Creek have been forced to open themselves up to outsiders, causing property relations to shift dramatically (Hansen Park, 2017a).

Today, Short Creek mostly consists of the women and children of Mormon polygamous families, many of whom had been separated from family by Jeffs or had their male patriarch and head of household incarcerated in association with his crimes (Zitting-Wyson & Zitting-Wyson, 2022). There remains ongoing evidence of trafficking under these conditions (Bleier, 2023; Levenson, 2019; Utah12 News, 2022), its persistence undoubtedly exacerbated by the fact the demographics of the residents, most

⁴⁹ The marital records of dozens of other men and their plural wives were also located within the YFZ Temple vault as well and helped lead to the prosecution and imprisonment of several other adult male members of the FLDS for engaging in underage sexual relations with their plural wives.

of whom have a 3rd-4th grade education and have been housing insecure since Jeffs was arrested and most are not living with their biological families (Shreveport Community Church, 2022). Further, at least 80% are children (Abundant Grace Church, 2018), with the next largest demographic being single mothers, at least 49% of whom live below the poverty line (Shreveport Community Church, 2022). Although many have left the town, some members of the FLDS remain in Short Creek⁵⁰ and are still loyal to Jeffs. Whether these apostates left the town by choice or by force under Jeffs, many FLDS apostates⁵¹ have since decided to return and rebuild their community from the ashes with the help of outsiders.⁵²

In 2017, the Phoenix-based evangelical DCC was welcomed into the community to provide a range of services to residents who were in desperate need of resources (Argott, 2021; Bennion & Joffe, 2016; Bradley, 1993; Coastline Church, 2020; Eaton, 2023). Among other interventions, the DCC has increasingly gained influence over the local government, including organizing the town's first Chamber of Commerce (Colvin,

⁵⁰ There are those who have denounced Warren Jeffs as their spiritual and political leader but remain committed to the faith that was established by the original patriarchs of the town in the early 20th Century. There is also what Glyn Jones refers to as the "left behind" group- people who have been expelled from the FLDS and are technically apostates but are hoping to be called back as many of their families are still active members.

⁵¹ Apostates are, "by definition...ex-members who have taken an adversarial posture" (Wright, 2011, pp. 141-142), but there are at least three important considerations to the complexity of this category. First, many are still devoted to their religion, including polygamy, but are no longer loyal to Warren Jeffs. Second, many who have been excommunicated are seeking to return to the FLDS Church due to bribery by church leaders and failure to thrive outside the community. Third, because they are deeply embedded in the community, where many of their family, friends, and employers are still active members of the church.

⁵² Although the numbers are changing constantly, the SCDC estimates that approximately 20% of the population is still FLDS (The Assembly Podcast, 2020), while the remaining 80% are apostates. Many of the FLDS apostates voluntarily moved out of Short Creek years before Warren Jeffs was incarcerated to start their lives over in the city of St. George, Utah, but have since returned. There are many apostates who have settled in the surrounding areas of Centennial Park, Fredonia, Cane Beds, and Apple Valley, as well as nearby unincorporated areas.

2018), which initially held meetings in Warren Jeffs massive compound home.⁵³ Acting as the arm of the DCC in this context, the nonprofit entity known as the Short Creek Dream Center (SCDC) is the “sister” organization of the PDC (Phoenix Dream Center, 2018), which is part of the larger anti-trafficking coalition in Arizona that has reinforced the criminalization of sex workers in Phoenix dubbed “trafficking victims” through interventions like Project ROSE.

Even though many of the men in Short Creek continue to illegally marry and have sex with underage girls they deem their “plural wives” as part of their religious practice (CBS News, 2023; Utah12 News, 2022; Winslow, 2022), to avoid Governor Pyle’s mistake of challenging the centrality of white Christian communities in rural Arizona, the SCDC does not equate Mormon polygamy with trafficking outside of the case of Warren Jeffs. Although it has been a decade and a half since the FLDS men living on the YFZ with their children and teen and adolescent brides were convicted,⁵⁴ several of these men⁵⁵ have completed their prison sentences and a few have even since returned to Short Creek, been granted deeds to reclaim their homes (Carlisle, 2019; Rhaman, 2018), and reintegrated into the community by locals, all while Warren Jeffs continues to control the FLDS from prison⁵⁶ in Palestine, Texas (Fox13 News Utah, 2022).

⁵³ Since 2017, to combat human trafficking, the SCDC nonprofit has purchased multiple properties, including a 15-bedroom house for residential advisors, long-term housing, and youth mission trips, an eye clinic, a medical clinic, a food bank, and a 44-bedroom compound building that was previously the home of Warren Jeffs and his 85 wives and children who rotated in and out of the home. From Warren Jeffs’ former home, the SCDC offers services to combat the harms of trafficking including drug and alcohol rehabilitation, short-term emergency crisis housing, long-term housing, GED classes, art therapy, medical services, culinary training, job training, and 24/7 on-site security (Colvin, 2018; Coastline Church, 2020; Radius Church, 2021).

⁵⁴ See Figure 2 below, p. 33.

⁵⁵ For example, FLDS Bishop Wendell Nielsen (Carlisle, 2019) and architect of the YFZ, engineer Michael Emack (Rhaman, 2018).

⁵⁶ While giving a presentation to a church audience about the SCDC, Pastor Angel Barnett told the congregation: “They will pay \$10,000 on calling cards for him to be able to still run (the church)...he says,

Raymond Jessop	sentenced to 10 years in prison in November 2009 for child sexual assault.
Allan Eugene Keate	sentenced to 33 years in prison in December 2009 for child sexual assault.
Michael George Emack	sentenced to 7 years in prison in January 2010 for child sexual assault and illegally fathering a child with a 16-year-old girl.
Merril Leroy Jessop	sentenced to 33 years in prison in March 2010 for child sexual assault and illegally fathering a child with a 15-year-old girl old.
Lehi Barlow Jeffs	sentenced to 8 years in prison in April 2010 for child sexual assault.
Abraham Harker Jeffs	sentenced to 17 years in prison in June 2010 for child sexual assault.
Keith Dutson Jr.	sentenced to 6 years in prison in November 2010 for child sexual assault.
Wendell Nielsen	sentenced to 10 years in prison in March 2012 for three counts of bigamy.
Warren Steed Jeffs	sentenced to life in prison plus 20 years in 2012 for aggravated child sexual assault, which was considered “aggravated” due to the age of the victim.

Figure 2. Convictions from YFZ Raid

Although SCDC’s directive is to combat the harms caused by human trafficking in Short Creek, the organization is overseen by FLDS apostates who live in the area and are invested in maintaining polygamy (Mike Watkiss, 2011). These individuals were either kicked out of the church or left on their own, but they continue to tolerate the practice of polygamy based on what they perceive to be their deep cultural ties to the land, a part of their religious birthright. While not everyone the SCDC serves is actively living in a polygamous familial household in Short Creek, the vast majority of their clients come from polygamous families, which makes most of them accepting of these arrangements and critical of the criminalization of polygamy, which is conducive to trafficking (Jones, 2012; Quek, 2016). Since Warren Jeffs was incarcerated, most active members of the FLDS have been evicted by the UEP⁵⁷ he once governed, which is now

‘if no one else is getting intimate with their wives than you’re not.’ So, the husbands would be taken away and then caretakers are in charge of a lot of the families. ...So, he is still controlling the people that are under his regime” (Radius Church, 2021). One of Warren Jeffs’ eldest daughters, Rachel Jeffs, who left the church at the end of 2015, posted on her Facebook social media page that she was concerned by the fact that her father is still receiving visits from several of his young daughters in prison: “So why does Warren Jeffs get contact visits with his daughters? This is a recent picture of my full sister Melanie with Warren, what if she is one of his victims? Knowing her, she looks afraid of him in this picture. Warren Jeffs only sees his daughters now. He doesn't want any other family members to see him, yet he requires the visitation of his daughters Melanie, Josephine, and Hannah. He sends messages to his family and the people through these girls” (Blackmore, 2019).

⁵⁷ The UEP is the charitable land trust, which holds all the homes and businesses in Short Creek (Bistline, 2004).

controlled by apostates who sit on the trust board.⁵⁸ Because the UEP trust board dictates all of the property arrangements in Short Creek, the DCC's presence in the town is possible only with their permission, which requires the SCDC to abide by their conditions in order to operate there.

While the SCDC's existence is at the discretion of apostates in Short Creek, this is only possible with the resources of DCC's global network of nonprofits and their relationships with the AZHTC.⁵⁹ Today, in 2023, the SCDC is one of many Dream Centers across the country that facilitate human trafficking residential programs.⁶¹ The SCDC receives funding, in coalition⁶² with a select number of other Christian faith-based groups, to provide all these resources as a 501(c)3. Yet, while the SCDC has received millions of dollars in grant monies and private donations to address human trafficking in Short Creek, no research has been conducted by experts in the Arizona anti-trafficking

⁵⁸ In the past few years, SCDC directors have been invited to sit on the town council (Murphy, 2021), they have close personal and professional relationships with members of the UEP land trust, and they have worked with people from the FLDS who have been featured prominently in the media, including with the community's first female mayor, Donia Jessop, UEP Trust attorney Jeff Barlow, the local police department, the Colorado City Marshals, and the 65th wife of Warren Jeffs, Briell Decker (Arizona Governor's Human Trafficking Council, 2019).

⁵⁹ In a podcast interview, Pastor Steele makes plain that while Dream Center anti-trafficking outreaches in Arizona provides important basic resources to vulnerable populations, they also scout opportunities for their organization to set up new nonprofits to address a range of issues in addition to human trafficking, including hunger, homelessness, juvenile delinquency, adoption, and addiction recovery (Issak, 2019).

⁶⁰ Roughly a year after establishing a faith-based non-profit organization that provides housing and other services to Phoenicians in 2006, Steele became interested in tackling the trafficking problem following series of "ride-alongs" with the Phoenix Police Department (Dolphe, 2019; Dream City Church, 2020; Stewart, 2005). According to the DCC's founder, Pastor Tommy Barnett, Steele is the premiere expert on the trafficking problem in Phoenix and the coalitional work to address it: When you look at reaching out to disenfranchised people this man is The Man they all turn to in the city...he's working with the FBI, the Phoenix Police Department, Homeland Security, ICE, all those" (T. Barnett, field observations, February 7th, 2019).

⁶¹ Some Dream Center human trafficking programs are also connected to Dream Centers that are homeless shelters, addiction recovery centers, food banks, foster care programs, thrift stores, and medical clinics.

⁶² While Dream City Church is the central outside evangelical Christian force in Short Creek today, other churches such as Grace Reigns Church based in Lake Havasu, Arizona have also worked with the SCDC to funnel nonprofit revenue into new local thrift stores, through backpack outreach (Standing Together, 2020), and to help with rebuilding the community by repairing people's yards and tending to local cemeteries (NorthStarAcademy1, 2020).

movement to understand the scope, nature, or extent of adult or child trafficking in the town for purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labor.

Although the AZHTC has been able to produce data about trafficking in Phoenix⁶³ with ease and the support of nonprofits, law enforcement, and academic scholars, they have been unable to collect data and produce research about trafficking. As a result, the AZHTC is dependent upon the perceptions, explanations, and programmatic outputs offered by the SCDC to determine the severity, disposition, and appropriate response to trafficking there.

Despite gleaning Pastor Tommy Barnett's⁶⁴ approval of the SCDC's anti-trafficking interventions at the Night of Dreams Gala in 2019,⁶⁵ however, there is reason to be concerned about the problem of trafficking in the town. Because the SCDC is allowed to continue their operation only with the permission of a few apostates who live in or near the community, most of whom were born into the FLDS Church, these familial/political dynamics raise questions about how these influences are shaping the portrayal of trafficking in Short Creek to the public. Given that polygamy is illegal in Arizona as well as most jurisdictions in the US, the failure to produce data about

⁶³ Some of the same experts who serve on the AZHTC and led or were involved with the arrest-alternative prostitution diversion program, Project ROSE, have also been presented with the problem of human trafficking in Short Creek and tasked with providing intervention.

⁶⁴ Pastor Tommy Barnett has established Dream City Churches in Los Angeles and Phoenix, the former of which is run by his son, Matthew Barnett, and his wife, Caroline. Dream City Church in Phoenix is run by Barnett's other son, Luke Barnett. Luke's wife, Angel, is Executive Director of the Short Creek Dream Center in Short Creek.

⁶⁵ Pastor Tommy Barnett was nearly 80 years old in 2019 during the Night of Dreams gala when he marveled about the changes in Short Creek: "We've got it all beautiful-you never seen anything more beautiful up in that place where Warren Jeffs used to traffic girls... 85 wives. And now it's completely finished, and the task is to fill that place up" (T. Barnett, field observations, February 7th, 2019).

trafficking there serves the interests of the people from the FLDS, the SCDC, and the AZHTC.

In addition to Short Creek, the practice of polygamy remains firmly entrenched across the American landscape among polygamous groups like the Apostolic United Brethren (AUB) in Montana and the Kingston Group in Utah.⁶⁶ Whereas SCDC directors and representatives of the nonprofit have ideologically severed the practice of Mormon polygamy from crimes of trafficking, scholars like Kay Quek (2016) and Craig Jones (2012) have argued that the way the FLDS Church specifically practices Mormon polygamy is in a manner tantamount to human trafficking.⁶⁷

First, apostates and active members of the FLDS Church are incentivized to harbor control of the trafficking narrative through the SCDC because it insulates the polygamist community, in which they are deeply embedded, from further criminalization at a time when it has come under fire in the wake of Warren Jeffs' widely publicized scandal. Second, because the SCDC is only able to attract charitable donations, grants, and contracts with the state if they appease the people from the FLDS in control of the UEP trust, who would otherwise refuse to allow them access to Short Creek's population. Third and finally, the failure to produce actionable data about trafficking there also makes the SCDC's capacity to define the problem desirable for members of the AZHTC because it makes the anti-trafficking coalition appear to be actively combating trafficking in Short

⁶⁶ The Kingston Group is also referred to as "The Order" (Survivor's Podcast, 2018h). I listened to multiple interviews with members of the Kingstons (Hansen, 2013; Survivor's Podcast, 2018; Survivor's Podcast, 2018h) and the AUB Group: (Hansen Park, 2015a; Survivor's Podcast, 2019a; Survivor's Podcast, 2019b; Survivor's Podcast, 2019c).

⁶⁷ These scholarly claims should not be accepted as fact without closer interrogation of their arguments, but they are worth considering, as reports of the kidnapping and trafficking of children in Short Creek for purposes of sex and labor continue to emerge (Zitting-Wyson & Zitting-Wyson, 2022; Jones, 2012; Bradley, 1993; Hansen Park, 2020).

Creek without drawing public criticism for their interference in a white, rural, and Christian community.

Historically, the FLDS have accused the Arizona and US government of unconstitutional discrimination by using anti-trafficking interventions in the form of raids, arrests, and the separation of families to target their religious right to practice of polygamy (Draper, 2019; Jeffs, 2009; Jeffs, 2017; Jessop & Palmer, 2007; Jones, 2012; The Long Story of Short Creek, 2021; The Long Story of Short Creek, 2021a). It is quite clear, however, that these interventions have not been entirely directed at the specific issue of trafficking, but also at the common practice among the FLDS of adult men taking multiple underage brides and exploiting the labor of young boys. Ignoring these important considerations, the town regularly honors their resistance to the gentile-dominated state based on an ahistorical persecution myth, even celebrating their ancestors' response to the 1953 raid during various gatherings⁶⁸ like their annual 4th of July parade.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Before Warren Jeffs ordered the FLDS in Short Creek to stop holding community gatherings in 2003 (Jessop & Palmer, 2007), including church meetings, public school, plays, holidays, and dances, to commemorate the brave patriarchs and women of the 1953 raid (Bistline, 2004). Among those celebrated is the FLDS Prophet Leroy Johnson, who is remembered for his bravery and religious devotion during the raid, as he instructed the people not to run from authorities under any circumstances, declaring "These sands will drink our blood before we give up our principles" (Bradley, 1993). While Leroy Johnson is celebrated by FLDS today for his determination to preserve polygamy in the face of state oppression, however, such a frame ignores the fact that the raid was largely motivated by the problem of adult and elderly men taking teenage and adolescent brides in a town where the average age was 16 years old (Bradley, 1993).

⁶⁹ The parade held each year in this community looks like any other Fourth of July parade, but it is important to recognize that the people there are celebrating their freedom from the US government as a religious Christian minority, based on the events of what happened during and after the 1953 raid. Although the annual parade typically receives a large turn out each year as the town proudly remembers their history and heritage, based on its well documented history, this celebratory and proud tone contradicts the fact that following the raid, the FLDS officially changed the town's name to Colorado City to help the state of Arizona forget what had happened there. The locals, however, still refer to the twin towns of Colorado City, Arizona and Hildale, Utah, together, as Short Creek and themselves as "Crickers" (Oswaks, 2015).

Rather than perceiving anti-trafficking raids as government intervention for the welfare of FLDS women and children, the dominant media narrative about raids on the FLDS is that they were targeted for their unusual style of dress, their large family structures, and for exercising polygamy among consenting adults.⁷⁰ Whether active members or apostates of the FLDS, families of the Short Creek community continue to harbor a deep sense of fear and distrust for state authorities due to the history of public scrutiny of anti-trafficking interventions led by law enforcement.⁷¹ While many people are likely familiar with the widely publicized 2008 raid in El Dorado, Texas, the 1953 raid in Short Creek is not a commonly known event in US history, though it has left a residual imprint on the invisibility of this human trafficking problem there.

Unlike urban centers in Arizona like Phoenix, anti-trafficking coalitions continue to approach the issue of trafficking in Short Creek with extreme caution and input from the people of the community itself (The Primer for Helping Victims of Domestic Violence and Child Abuse in Polygamous Communities, 2006). Pastor Brian Steele of the AZHTC and representatives of the SCDC have been tolerant, if not amicable, towards people from polygamous families in Short Creek (Mission Support, 2022; Radius Church, 2021; Shreveport Community Church, 2022; Totally Trailer, 2016a), and yet they continue to push for legislation that criminalizes sex work, sex workers, and their

⁷⁰ When trafficking is discussed in the context of prostitution, experts often suggest that women and girls cannot consent to engage in this activity, particularly if she is under the age of 18. Experts also claim that the women who do exercise agency in prostitution are such a minority group that they are statistically insignificant (D. Roe-Sepowitz, field observations, November 23rd, 2018).

⁷¹ As stated in The Primer for Helping Victims of Domestic Violence and Child Abuse in Polygamous Communities, which was compiled with federal funding and input from the Attorneys General of Arizona and Utah as well as several people from Mormon polygamous groups, including the FLDS, “anti-trafficking interventions such as police raids can cause extreme trauma to individuals, families, and communities, making them less likely to comply with law enforcement or report abuses due to fear of police violence, family separation, and stigmatization by people who do not know them” (2006, p. 6).

families through the language of trafficking in central Arizona (Dolphe, 2019; Issak, 2019; Roe-Sepowitz, Gallagher, Steving, & Lucchesi, 2020a; Zeder, 2020). In this way, the organization detaches the ambiguous concept of human trafficking from polygamy in the white, religious, minority Christian community in Short Creek, while intimately tying trafficking to sex work in urban and often minority communities in cities such as Phoenix.

The disparity in the treatment of people in urban and rural areas is significant in the context of anti-trafficking efforts in the state, especially considering that research indicates there are high rates of trafficking among children in rural areas, where the ability to identify this problem “may be hampered by lack of awareness, training and recordkeeping, and/or isolation from necessary resources” (Sprang & Cole, 2018, p. 192). People who hold significant social status may not be recognizable as traffickers while running a “family business,” or in communities where “trafficking is a culture within the family that is passed down from generation to generation” (Linn, 2016). This is particularly unsettling based on research suggesting that if one person is being trafficked and exploited by a family member, it is likely there are more victims in the family yet to be discovered (Reid, Huard, & Haskell, 2015; Sprang & Cole, 2018).

Vulnerability to trafficking is concerning in a rural and isolated town like Short Creek, where people may be easily cut off from communication with loved ones and local authorities face limited institutional accountability (Bennion, 2004; Jessop & Palmer, 2007; The Fifth Estate, 2015).⁷² Complex concerns pertaining to institutional

⁷² Isolation within institutional settings, including prisons (Ritchie, 2017), police custody (Castaneda, 2000; McKinley, 2018), the child welfare system and foster system (Roberts, 1997), and rehabilitation programs (Nixon, Tutty, Down, Gorkoff, & Ursel, 2002) can increase vulnerability to trafficking.

accountability and intimate familiarity with one's abuser often overlap in this context, where local law enforcement are tasked with policing a community of less than 8,000 people (US Department of Justice, 2017), most of whom are related to one another (Bradley, 1993; Gorvett, 2017; Hollenhorst, 2006; Ventry & Sanders, 2020h). The urgency to address this issue heightened with the knowledge that the local police department, the Colorado City Marshals, is not only historically FLDS (Bistline, 2004; Mike Watkiss, 2008, Mike Watkiss, 2008a) but also has the jurisdictional power to police both Colorado City, Arizona and Hildale, Utah (Cox, 2015; Jessop & Brown, 2009; Jessop & Palmer, 2007; Musser, 2013; Tory, 2016).

Since the intimate relations of polygamy fall outside the scope of the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act (2000), which defines trafficking broadly as requiring elements of *force, fraud, or coercion*, Kaye Quek suggests an alternative framework in an article written for the Women's Studies International Forum (2016). She claims that international legal standards set forth by the United Nations Palermo Protocol provides an instructive framework for recognizing how polygamy in the FLDS is a form of trafficking in women and children. This specific model provides an advantageous blueprint for outlining the conditions of exploitation that must be present for a situation to constitute human trafficking: the *act*, the *means*, and the *purpose*:

First, the *act* of moving a person from one place to another for purposes of exploitation is the most fundamental element of the trafficking process. Within FLDS marriage customs, this act may involve "cross-border movement of women or the domestic trafficking of women between men, which can occur in one city or town" (Quek, 2016, p. 28). FLDS women and children have been trafficked from Short Creek

across states such as Arizona (Eaton, 2023; Matson, 2015), Utah (Bleier, 2023), Texas, Nevada (Wall, 2008), Idaho (Jones, 2012), Wyoming (Hansen Park, 2017), South Dakota (Jeffs, 2017) and Montana (Bennion & Joffe, 2016). Documents filed by the Attorney General of British Columbia in 2011, in reference to the Supreme Court case regarding polygamy in Canada, include evidence of girls as young as 12 being driven from Short Creek across the US-Canadian border by their parents to be married (Braham, 2014). In Rebecca Musser's memoir, *The Witness Wore Red* (2013), the former FLDS member and 19th wife to the Prophet Rulon Jeffs⁷³ recalls teen and pre-teen girls being smuggled out of Short Creek in the Prophet's camp trailer.⁷⁴ Warren Jeffs also recorded the exchange of child brides between Short Creek, Arizona and Bountiful,⁷⁵ Canada in a book *Dictations of the President Warren Jeffs* (Jones, 2012), providing "hard evidence of six trafficked girls—five going to the US from Bountiful, and one coming the other way" (p. 242).

The second element of the trafficking process is the improper *means* for exploitation of a victim. This may include "the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability, the threat or use of force, or brokerage, that is, the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person" (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner, 2000, Article 10c). The

⁷³ When the Prophet Rulon Jeffs died in September 2002, his son, Warren, took his place (Goodwyn, Berkes, & Walters, 2005).

⁷⁴ The trailer was equipped with a bathroom so they would never be seen (Musser, 2013).

⁷⁵ This information was also confirmed from several other sources with testimonies from FLDS apostates including Rebecca Musser's (2013) memoir, Musser's sister, Theresa Wall, who was interviewed about her experience being sent to Canada on a "reform" mission because she was expressing early signs of resistance to getting married as a teen (Hanson, 2015b), and Richard Ream, a man from Short Creek who was also sent to Canada in his teens on a reform mission because he had expressed attraction to a girl his age in Short Creek (Hanson, 2015a).

brokerage or trading of women and girls is key to understanding how polygamy in the FLDS can constitute a form of trafficking.⁷⁶ Because the FLDS are socialized to expect female subservience as the norm, church leaders use their patriarchal authority to coerce girls into marriages with men sometimes old enough to be their fathers or even grandfathers. The element of brokerage is important for understanding how difficult it can be to determine a woman's ability to exercise choice in her polygamous marital arrangement.⁷⁷ Furthermore, it has been customary among the FLDS of Short Creek to marry girls off between the ages of 14 to 16, before they have the knowledge, resources, and legal rights to make a decision as serious and personal⁷⁸ as marriage.

The third and final part that constitutes trafficking demands that the purpose be for *exploitation*, defined as “the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery” like domestic servitude (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner, 2000, Article 3a). According to Quek (2016), FLDS polygamy gives rise to two forms of trafficking, including forced labor and sexual exploitation. Traditional education is not a priority for FLDS children, as many are pulled out of school by 8th grade to pick pecans (Allsup, 2020; Carlisle, 2018; Simonson, 2021), work on construction sites (Zitting-Wyson &

⁷⁶ In the recruitment stage, fathers function as traffickers while church leaders operate as brokers in the deal. The trade in teen and child brides is an extremely lucrative practice because, by exchanging them as commodities, this provides “a way to establish bonds between men” (Quek, 2016, p. 30).

⁷⁷ For example, when FLDS apostate Alicia Rohbock was a teenager, she was wed to the Prophet Rulon Jeffs as one of his many wives. In the Netflix series, *Keep Sweet* (2022), Rohbock recalls being mortified that her first kiss was to an elderly man with an oxygen tank (Dretzen & McNally 2022).

⁷⁸ While marriage outside of the FLDS is typically considered a very personal decision, marital arrangements within the FLDS are about selflessness, particularly for women, and meeting the expectations of the family with the potential to elevate the family's social status or risk devastating it. This custom often includes informing girls that they will be married suddenly, and even in the middle of the night when they are sleeping and awake disoriented (Quek, 2016). Former elite members like Rebecca Musser have explained that FLDS leaders will use marriage as a political tool to suppress dissent among what they perceive to be rebellious youth (Musser, 2013).

Zitting-Wyson, 2022), and in factories, many of which are FLDS-owned (Doty, 2015; Kaye, 2008). Likewise, forced labor within the context of domestic servitude is rampant among plural wives who spend a disproportionate amount of their days cooking, cleaning, and caring for their many children and children of their sister wives (Decker, 2013; Jessop & Palmer, 2007; Quek, 2016).

Due to the patriarchal dynamics within the FLDS, Quek (2016) argues that polygamy in this context results in reproductive exploitation of women and girls. The American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists describes strategies of reproductive coercion as, “controlling the outcomes of a pregnancy, coerc(ing) a partner to have unprotected sex, and interfer(ing) with contraceptive methods” (Committee on Healthcare for Underserved Women, 2013, cited in Quek, 2016, p. 31). Birth control is prohibited in the FLDS and women are expected to have a baby every year to fulfill their wifely duties. The average FLDS woman has approximately 10-20 children (Hanson, 2015; Quek, 2016). The potential for reproductive coercion doubles in raising these large numbers of children, as there is no guarantee that either the mother or child will be treated according to the US basic standards of medical care (Hanson, 2015f;⁷⁹ The Primer: Helping Victims of Domestic Violence and Child Abuse in Polygamous Communities, 2006).⁸⁰

⁷⁹ FLDS apostate Jorjina Broadbent recalled how her husband told her of their future children, “we’re looking for quantity not quality.”

⁸⁰ From the Healthcare section of *The Primer* (2006), “Some families may face strong barriers to obtaining proper health care. These include economic barriers (insurance is prohibitively expensive for some), social barriers (there may be trust issues in interacting with outsiders), and legal barriers. However, others will rely on government assistance to provide medical insurance coverage” (p. 28). In the Home Births section of the *Primer*, it states that in the FLDS, “home births are traditional and very common for economic, social and privacy reasons. Insurance isn’t always an option for plural wives, and many want to protect their privacy” (p. 28). Additionally, there are numerous testimonies from FLDS apostates such as Warren Jeffs’ daughter (Jeffs, 2017), son (Hansen Park, 2017g), and the wife of a former bishop of the YFZ (Jessop & Palmer 2007),

Many women and girls in Short Creek have extremely limited resources, lacking formal work experience and education (Simonson, 2021; Survivor’s Podcast, 2018; Tory, 2016; Wright, 2018). Although it is not considered prostitution, as would certainly be the cause outside of this context, sex is often the primary leverage they have to attain power in their marriage and community. This was made clear in FLDS apostate Carolyn Jessop’s memoir, *Escape*, where she stated that sex was one of the only currencies she had in her marriage:⁸¹

The only way I could protect myself in my marriage was by remaining of value to (my husband) ...we all knew that a woman who is in sexual favor with her husband has a higher value than his other wives. This has enormous significance because a woman’s sexual power determines how she will be treated by other wives and how she will be respected by her stepchildren. (Jessop & Palmer, 2007, p. 117)

The vulnerability of FLDS women and girls is exacerbated by their scarcity, which in a context where they are valued for their sexual labor and reproductive capacity, is the source of their power. In a community where men are seeking to marry multiple

among others who have reported that either Warren Jeffs or the male patriarch of a particular family would withhold medical care from members considered unworthy (Jeffs, 2009; Jessop & Brown, 2009). Even in families that have described a more loving home environment, such as the Wall family, Elissa Wall (2008) has explained in her memoir that during her childhood, the family went without healthcare because her father didn’t want to “live off of the government” and many other FLDS were extremely suspicious of medical professionals being “in cahoots” with the government, putting tracking devices in vaccines to spy on Americans (p. 30).

⁸¹ Carolyn Jessop was married as the fifth plural wife to Merrill Jessop, a prominent member of the FLDS Church who became the bishop of the YFZ in Texas before being sentenced to prison for conducting the plural marriage of his 12-year-old daughter, Merrienne, to the Prophet Warren Jeffs. Carolyn is also one of the first FLDS women to have ever been granted sole, legal custody for all her children after leaving the FLDS Church (Carlisle, 2015).

women, this pits wives with their children against other wives and their children for survival and political gain. This competitive landscape is evidenced by FLDS apostate Paula Barret's claim that her husband's abuse towards her and her children during their marriage made it easier for her sister wives and stepchildren to be abusive towards her as well (Hanson, 2015). In this way, these relationship dynamics are reproduced not only by men in the community, but also by women who view abuse as a means to retain and improve their familial status.

In line with Quek's analysis, the Canadian attorney and legal scholar Craig Jones (2012) found in his legal study of polygamy in Bountiful, Canada that the FLDS are dependent upon a "cruel arithmetic" to grow their polygamous community through exploitation. The "cruel arithmetic" refers to how the intense demand market for plural wives in isolated communities like Short Creek means that not everyone is going to get a wife.⁸² His book describes how the intense demand market for plural wives in isolated communities such as Bountiful or Short Creek necessitates trafficking because the scarcity of women pressures men to seek younger and younger brides (Chan, 2011). Once they are unable to do so, they must pursue women from other locations outside the community.⁸³

Critical trafficking studies scholars have described how the language of trafficking is unable to accurately address the scope of harms faced by sex workers,

⁸² Within these communities, for example, if there are 47 males and 53 females, 17 of those 47 males are going to get wives and 30 of them will not. This "cruel arithmetic" necessitates trafficking not only by driving down the age of marriage for girls, which meets the legal definition of child trafficking, but since it drives the FLDS to find girls from outside their communities to traffic in for marriage (Jones, 2012).

⁸³ Notably, a significant number of FLDS teenage mothers living in Bountiful, Canada in 2012 were born in Short Creek, Arizona (BC Vital Statistics, cited in Jones, 2012).

migrants, homeless and runaway youth, and people of color (Agustin, 2007; Butler, 2015; Jackson, 2016; Lutnick, 2017). These criticisms are centered around the fact that language of trafficking positions these vulnerable groups as targets for criminalization rather than transforming the precarious conditions that render them vulnerable to trafficking. Although these are important considerations, assessing the harms caused by anti-trafficking coalitions demands an interrogation of how anti-trafficking advocates take steps to insulate themselves from criminalization to avoid culpability for their willful failures to fulfill their ascribed and well-funded positions to serve the victims of trafficking and eradicate the problem.

Law enforcement and researchers in Arizona often work closely with faith-based nonprofit organizations, particularly those of the Christian variety, partnering together on research and intervention projects, providing referrals, expertise, and legitimacy, as well as exchanging funding (Brian D. Steele, 2018bb, 2020; Roe-Sepowitz, Gallagher, Steving, & Lucchesi, 2020a; Svoboda, 2021). These combined factors provide further impetus for examining the conditions that make people vulnerable to trafficking in Short Creek, where most of the people in the town today are either evangelical Christians, such as many of those who work with the SCDC (Abundant Grace, 2018; Mission Support, 2022; The Assembly Podcast, 2020), or from the FLDS (Creekers, 2018; Creekers Foundation 2018a; DeLynn, 2022; Dretzen & McNally, 2021; Fear, 2021; Geier, 2019; Hope Heroes, 2022a; KJZZ Phoenix, 2017; Michael Carroll Podcast, 2020), especially, in light of research indicating a correlation between religious fundamentalism and sexual offending (Levine & Meiners, 2020).

The significance of the conditions that make people from Short Creek vulnerable to trafficking continue to be understated, opening the doors to further clandestine sexual abuse, displacement, continued indentured servitude, intergenerational poverty, and ongoing susceptibility to re-trafficking among the most vulnerable people from the FLDS. Quek points out that feminist debates over the harms of Mormon polygamy in places such as Short Creek are frequently bogged down by arguments about the ability of women to express their individual agency in creative forms while living in polygamous family structures (Beaman, 2014; Chan, 2011). For this reason, her approach to understanding human trafficking among the FLDS in Short Creek provides a framework for understanding potential conditions within Mormon polygamy as a whole that give rise to trafficking and related crimes at the level of institutions.

Building on Quek's claims, I suggest that the SCDC's image of trafficking in Short Creek attributes abuse and exploitation to individuals like Warren Jeffs, obscuring the structural conditions that give rise to trafficking in that context, the state of Arizona (Adams, Wright, Diener, & Wright, 2013; Bistline, 2004; Bradley, 1993; Kociela, 2018; Wright, 2018), and the greater North America, including Mexico (DeMuth, 2017; Kelly, 2019; Kimbel, 2020; Gavin, 2019; Levenson, 2019) and Canada (Hanson, 2015; Jones, 2012; The Fifth Estate, 2015). To better understand the issue of human trafficking in the context of this study, I focus on how collaboration between FLDS apostates and SCDC representatives exacerbate local inequities in Short Creek for their mutual benefit through the language of trafficking, which is reflective of a broader trend within the US anti-trafficking movement. Framing this issue through a "victim-centered" lens, law enforcement and nonprofits are using trafficking discourse to generate social status,

amass personal and institutional wealth, and maintain relevance at the expense and direct consequence of people being identified as traffickers and victims through this perspective.

Study Focus

Primary Research Question: How are the historical harms (structural racism, capitalist exploitation, gender-based oppression) caused by the interventions of anti-trafficking coalitions and why do they continue to occur in the contemporary United States?

Guiding Research Questions.

1. Chapter 2: During the 20th century white slavery movement, how did nonprofit organizations, foundations, and law enforcement agencies deploy racist and xenophobic tropes to generate interest in the subject of white slavery and what are the implications for understanding how these tropes are deployed to attract support for the anti-trafficking movement today?
2. Chapter 3: How did bourgeois white women harness their cultural positionality and privileged symbolic position to garner support for the white slavery movement and what are the implications for understanding how this influences how these same people in the anti-trafficking movement operate today?
3. Chapter 4: As persecution myths about Mormon polygamy have been historically projected by those who practice it in the US, how have they enabled their contemporary progenitors to continue this trend in the context of Short Creek, Arizona?

4. Chapter 5: How have people affiliated with the SCDC drawn on existing persecution myths about Mormon polygamy to distort the trafficking problem in Short Creek, Arizona in a way that attracts support for their nonprofit from the American public today?
5. Chapter 6: How has the anti-trafficking coalition in Short Creek, Arizona appropriated politically progressive ideas about racial justice, inequality, and feminism to advance the interests of this otherwise retrograde social movement?

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the harms of anti-trafficking coalitions who front a “victim centered” approach in response to human trafficking across the US and since the early 20th Century. It is prompted by widespread criticism from the populations they serve, ranging from sex workers (Jackson, 2016; Koyama, 2011; Magnanti, 2012), runaway youth (Baker, 2018; Lutnick, 2017; Musto, 2016), children in foster care or juvenile detention (Nixon, Tutty, Downe, Gorkoff, & Ursel, 2002; Reid, Huard, & Haskell, 2015), victims of domestic violence (Bumiller, 2008), migrants (Agustin, 2005, 2007; Parrenas, 2007; Parrenas 2007a), transwomen of color (Ford, 2014; Nothing About Us Without Us, 2015; Simon & Jones, 2015; Slamah, 1998), and others (Khan, 2015).

The stifling of their voices obscures public awareness of the illusory and nefarious political dynamic underlying the anti-trafficking movement today. Comprehending why the interventions of anti-trafficking coalitions continue, despite being harmful, demands critical interrogation of these organizations’ portrayals of trafficking in various communities, as well as the subsequent services offered to people being identified as

victims through the lenses of the nonprofit industrial complex (NPIC) (INCITE!, 2017) and white ignorance (Mills, 2007). Looking at the problem through these distinct, albeit interrelated lenses allow us to better understand why anti-trafficking coalitions not only fail to address localized problems of trafficking across the US, but systematically produce conditions that render diverse populations who are being identified as “trafficked” more vulnerable.

Behind the scenes of these organizational coalitions there is little awareness of what is going on, nor are details about the operations, organizations, and individuals involved made consistently transparent to the public. Critical trafficking scholar Elizabeth Bernstein (2007) has referred to the collaborative partnerships between feminist academics, churches, and police as “strange bedfellows” alliance; a concept that has since been reiterated in other sociological literature (Law, 2014; Sandbeck, 2012). In this dissertation, however, based on direct observations with many of the people who comprise this anti-trafficking alliance in Arizona, I suggest that these groups are actively cultivated bedfellows with a common view of the world of human trafficking, expressed through white ignorance.

Whether the data, research, and general information being generated and reproduced by anti-trafficking coalitions (Bowely, 2012; Dines, 2006; Estes & Weiner, 2001; Hunt, 2013; Roe-Sepowitz, Gallagher, Hickle, Pérez Loubert & Tutelman, 2014; Farley, 2018; Shared Hope International, 2015, 2020, Smith, 2013, 2018; Smith, Vardaman, & Snow, 2009) are credible or not, it is undeniable that they have significant influence on the imagination of the American public, as many of these groups comprise members of a well-funded, anti-trafficking elite who have an ever broadening following

of people who want to understand trafficking (DeLynn, 2020; Heckler, 2019; Magnanti, 2012; Moore, 2015). Additionally, because the people most subject to criminalization through anti-trafficking law are disproportionately poor and/or nonwhite (Bernstein, 2007; Baker, 2018; Fukushima, 2014; Khan, 2015; Marcus & Williamson, 2017), the people behind awareness campaigns, fundraisers, interventions, and their lines of thinking about trafficking must be tracked, traced, and analyzed, to disrupt this exploitative process.

This is a particularly important moment to scrutinize the individuals who comprise these anti-trafficking coalitions (Colvin, 2018; Fieldstadt, 2019; Governor's Office of Youth, Faith, & Family, 2019; Jones, 2019; Richardson, 2019; Roe-Sepowitz, Hickle, Bayless, Agliano, Hall, & Gay, 2020), as these groups have established a response system in the US that incentivizes nonprofit organizations and law enforcement to partner with one another to provide interventions to trafficking that makes people more vulnerable to exploitation for the purpose of profit.⁸⁴ For example, through critical discourse analysis, Hu (2021) has demonstrated how US anti-trafficking websites educate the public to equate support for anti-trafficking work with support for anti-sex work. Similarly, in her analysis of anti-trafficking efforts by nonprofits in coalition with law enforcement in the Midwest, Schwarz (2020) found that criminalization was the primary proposed means to approach the problem in a meaningful way, to the effect of bolstering the carceral state. Further, Ramachandran's (2023) ethnographic interrogation of US-funded non-governmental organizations influence the Indian government to reframe its

⁸⁴ (Brian D. Steele, 2020, 2021y; Shared Hope International, 2015).

anti-prostitution discourses around anti-trafficking in manner that is conducive to policies that harm sex workers.

Many different groups of people have been able to employ trafficking discourses and organize in ways that serve different agendas (Bumiller, 2008; Issak, 2019; Rajan, et al., 2021; Stewart, 2005). Even though many coalitional actors in the US anti-trafficking movement have framed the issue of trafficking as a “human rights” issue, specifically, one of violence against women and children (Coastline Church, 2020), the federal Office of Violence Against Women tasked with addressing this problem is housed in the Department of Justice, which aims to expand the carceral capacities of police and prisons in the US (Mahdavi, 2013). Therefore, unreliable data about human trafficking, present (Kessler, 2015; Zhang, 2012) and past (Boris & Berg, 2014; Knepper, 2012; Soderlund, 2013), is perhaps not an issue of mere epistemic oversight but a matter of institutional resilience for nonprofits, law enforcement, corrections, and their wider coalitions of support. The intervention of white ignorance helps to examine how these different groups rely on ahistorical representations of trafficking in the US to virtue signal their progressive commitments to addressing the problem, while the NPIC offers a framework of analysis for understanding how anti-trafficking coalitions continue to produce research, discourse, and narratives that appears antithetical to these commitments.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Conceptual Framework

The historical harms caused by discourses and interventions in the 20th century continue to be perpetuated today in the US and in states such as Arizona through white ignorance, which fuels the processes of the nonprofit industrial complex (NPIC) (INCITE!, 2017).⁸⁵

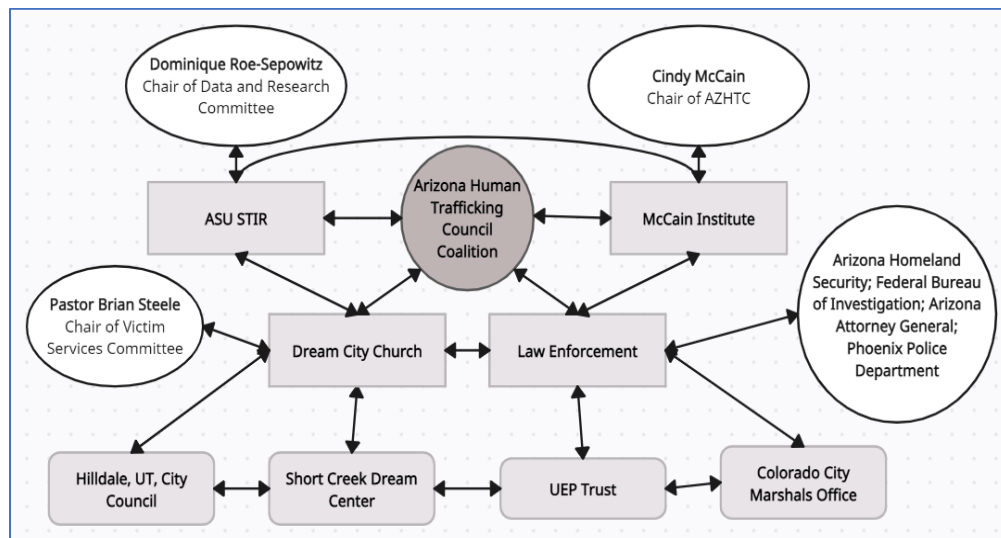


Figure 3. Arizona Human Trafficking Council Coalition

Neither the missions of nonprofits, nor the people representing them and working on their behalf, are value-free entities, nor are they necessarily not profitable (Reich, 2018).⁸⁶ In 1973, the Filer Commission on Private Philanthropy and Public Needs published a report based on a two year investigative study of philanthropy in American

⁸⁵ See Figure 3.

⁸⁶ Not all nonprofits are charitable entities. Hospitals, churches, art institutes, universities, and advocacy groups are nonprofit organizations. Given their function as legal entities, they can fit anything as broad as IKEA, the National Hockey League, Turning Point USA, the Church of Scientology, and Phoenix Children's Hospital are nonprofits, as is the Short Creek Dream Center.

life, in which the authors determined that the nonprofit sphere exists as a distinct “third sector” of the economy (Commission on Private Philanthropy & Public Needs, 1975). Because nonprofits do not exist to generate profit, but they aren’t technically part of the government either, nonprofits can generate revenue from both public grants and private donations.

This is particularly true of nonprofits within anti-trafficking coalitions, as attested to by critical trafficking scholar Ron Weitzer (2007). Weitzer remarks that in the past 20 years, anti-trafficking nonprofit coalitions have transformed “into a project of the US government, becoming almost fully institutionalized in official discourse, legislation, and enforcement practices” (2007, p. 467). Without interrogating the history, discourses, and practices of the anti-trafficking movement, this framework will continue to manifest social conditions that put immigrants, people of color, and sex workers in harm's way.

The most popular contemporary narratives about sex trafficking are deeply rooted in broad racialized dimensions of historical trafficking narratives, which have sexual implications as well, and are extremely durable to the detriment of being understood as commonsense (Bravo, 2007; Butler, 2015; Delgado, 2012; Dempsey, 2009; Denton, 2010; Dines, 2006). In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, moral panics⁸⁷ concerning the threat of white slavery were cultivated through print media⁸⁸ (Soderlund, 2013),

⁸⁷ Scholars have usually characterized the emergence and dissipation of trafficking discourse in US history by correlating it to various moral panics related to socio-cultural change. Speaking to the notion of moral panic (Cohen, 2002), historians and critical trafficking scholars have discussed how rapid technological innovations, increased rates of immigration, the abolition of slavery, and the surge of white women and men of color into the formal labor economy produced anxieties among white, upper-class men and women concerning the possibility that white women would be sexually attracted to and make advances on Black men (Boris & Berg, 2014; Doezema, 1998; Musto, 2014; Soderlund, 2013).

⁸⁸ *Birth of a Nation* (1915) was also the first film shown in the White House to President Woodrow Wilson (Benbow, 2010).

popular scandals (Langum, 1994, 2004), and the first American Blockbuster film, *Birth of a Nation* (1915), which spurred vigilante violence and legislation directed at criminalizing immigrants, Jews, and people of color until the movement died down in the 1930s. The white slavery movement's mission was picked up in the 1990s, when the anti-trafficking movement began to agitate these anxieties to catalyze violence, state sanctioned and otherwise, through more advanced communications technologies like television and the internet.

Through situating it in the 19th century abolitionist movement and using progressive language to rationalize their carceral interventions, the anti-trafficking movement has been able to continue the legacy of the anti-trafficking movement in an era where explicit racism and xenophobia are no longer acceptable in the public realm. By overlooking or ignoring the harmful evolution of the 20th century white slavery movement, as well as the evolution of antisemitic conspiracies following the Holocaust that inspired carceral mobilization, this form of institutional erasure reinforces "hostility towards the testimony and credibility of non-white people" who were harmed by this discourse; including the Jews, who have been monolithically perceived as white due many Jews' light-skinned appearance,⁸⁹ despite being designated as a racial "other" since Hitler's rise to power (Mills, 2007, p. 3). In this way, to maintain relevance and advance

⁸⁹ Jewish racial identity caused a problem for non-Jewish white Americans who, especially as time went on, wanted race to be cleanly divided by skin color (Goldstein, 2006). In his work titled *The Price of Whiteness* (2006, p. 42), Goldstein writes "the black-white dichotomy functioned strategically and was employed by native-born whites to obscure complexity and infuse a sense of order and confidence into the national culture." While Jewish Americans in the early 20th century were under pressure to assimilate into whiteness by participating in anti-Black racism, Goldstein has remarked that Jews used the cover of their unique language of Yiddish to communicate their own oppression: "unintelligible to a non-Jewish audience, Jewish writers could afford to express their deeply held emotional identification with blacks" (2006, p. 153).

interests of racial capitalism in the age of colorblindness, anti-trafficking coalitions suppress public knowledge of how the white slavery campaigns to mount an assault on the sex worker's rights movement and their assertion that the exchange of sexual labor for some form of value is always tantamount to trafficking (Fitzgerald, 2017; Kempadoo & Doezema, 1998; Red Umbrella Project, 2017; Sex Workers Outreach Project, n.d.).

The primary means by which anti-trafficking coalitions suppress this knowledge is through uncritical acceptance and even support for the criminalization of sex work, and by teaching local citizens, social workers, educators, healthcare workers, and others, on the basis that sex workers who do not self-identify as victims are not accurate representations of most people's experiences in the sex industry, nor is the business of selling sex for money "real" work. Controlling representations of sex workers serves the interests of anti-trafficking coalitions, whose public work has faced considerable scrutiny as it renders its clients and sex workers limited in their ability to exercise social and legal recourse due to the criminalization of their work. This is because anti-trafficking legislation identifies any exchange of sex for something of value, whether it is consensual or otherwise, as trafficking, which makes access to federal grants dependent upon a nonprofits willingness to conform to this ideology. In the context of Short Creek, this dynamic is crucial to understand, given that the dominant historical narrative surrounding the FLDS people has positioned their practice of polygamy beyond the scope of trafficking.

As will be discussed in this dissertation, whereas the FLDS in Short Creek have characterized anti-trafficking interventions in their community to be a form of religious and ethnic discrimination, these interventions have been in large part a response to the

practice of sexual abuse of children. However, by identifying themselves as a historically persecuted religious and ethnic group, they have been able to equate their experiences of government intervention to the experiences of marginalized African Americans and Jews, to the effect of downplaying the experiences of these historically marginalized peoples. Because Americans typically lack a meaningful understanding of their own social positionality, they often situate their own experiences in relationship to other social groups, which has served as a powerful tool that has allowed people from the FLDS to broadly displace their own historical pattern of criminal behaviors, some of which are legally tantamount to trafficking; especially, the practice of orchestrating arranged marriages between girls and adult men, which has been common since the Mormon church was established in the 19th century.

To understand how people from the FLDS and their allies have helped insulate this community from criminalization based on their religious practices, it is necessary to interrogate how a false history of their community has been established by exploiting the American public's intentional and unintentional miscomprehension of their social reality, which has allowed the people of Short Creek to equate their experiences to those of people of color and Jews. Particularly useful for this purpose, is the framework of white ignorance (Mills, 2007), which reveals how the ahistoricization enacted by the FLDS "impact[s] individual and collective memory" (p. 3). In addition to effacing the individual and collective perspectives and experiences of sex workers and migrants, many of whom are people of color, white ignorance shields from collective memory "the historical atrocities of white people," who have often been put in powerful, decision-making positions within institutions such as academia (Mills, 2007, p. 3). Considering Medina's

(2013) assessment of white ignorance, as an epistemic perspective that “involves both racial self-ignorance and social ignorance of racialized others” (p. 18), without the ability of filling the gaps in our knowledge of the racist dimensions of human trafficking discourse, past and present, the exploitation of some of the most vulnerable people in the United States may remain “par for the course... their exploiters quite possibly our neighbors, colleagues, and friends” (Chuang, 2010, p. 1698).

Critical trafficking research complicates simple dichotomies of sex and labor (Boris & Berg, 2014; Feingold, 2005; Warren, 2012), the agency of adult and minors (Chapkis, 1998; Doezema, 1998; Lutnick, 2016; Showden & Majic, 2018) the problem of trafficking as domestic and international (Kempadoo, 2012; McDonald, 2004; Musto, 2009; Ruggerio, 1997; Srikantiah, 2007), sex trafficking and sex work (Jalalzai, 2005; Katsulis, 2008; Mac & Smith, 2018), and criminals and their victims (Fukushima, 2014; Khan, 2015; Veller, 2012). The analytical framework for this dissertation presumes that some academics outside the field of critical trafficking studies use dominant frameworks of human trafficking, not because they are accurate, but because they support academics’ possessive investment in whiteness in a political context structured by racial capitalism (Lipsitz, 1998). According to Lipsitz (1998), the possessive investment in whiteness is not about the denigration of another person or group for their race, class, or gender. Instead, this concept speaks to how people use ideas of whiteness to secure profit and wield power through compliance with a global white ideology and the social structure it has enacted;⁹⁰ one dependent on partial and distorted histories about people of color, as

⁹⁰ According to Lipsitz (1998, pp. 371-372), “contemporary racism is not just a residual consequence of slavery and *de jure* segregation but rather something that has been created anew in our own time by many factors including the putatively race-neutral liberal social democratic reforms of the past five decades.”

they have been narrated through the voices of white people.⁹¹ Given the existence of this political, economic, and cultural dynamic, critical trafficking scholars and other critical scholars who oppose the reproduction of white supremacy should continue to maintain significant concern about sex trafficking research generated solely by dominant institutions like academia, government, and carceral regimes as well as major corporations and nonprofits with public-private partnerships.

As this dissertation will demonstrate, scholars both within the academy and as participants in anti-trafficking coalitions, are often compelled to maintain their possessive investment in whiteness to accumulate social capital and wealth. This is why it is important not to understate how much the possessive investment in whiteness may motivate academics, including academics of color, to make recommendations inconsistent with the critical trafficking literature (Agustin, 2007; Ditmore, 2006; Khan, 2015; Musto, 2016; Srikantiah, 2007). Other trafficking scholars (Dempsey, 2009; Katsulis, 2008; Mahdavi, 2013; Nichols & Heil, 2015; Reid et al., 2015) must be vigilant in their interrogations of recommendations that are echoed by powerful institutions in dire need of consistent credibility and productivity output. For those of us scholars seeking justice outside the criminal justice system, this means that we must personally risk more in our own research by criticizing institutions we work within and benefit from by seeking voices outside these institutions for wisdom, guidance, and to meet their demands (LeMoon, 2020; Plews, 2014; Taormino, Shimizu, Penley, & Miller-Young, 2013; West & Horn, 2021).

⁹¹ By global white ideology, I am referring to the political, economic, cultural, religious, philosophical, and biological explanations for the existence of white supremacist relations, which characterize Europeans as being naturally and righteously destined to govern non-whites around the world.

An example of such research was produced in 2019, when critical trafficking scholars published a special issue online in *The Anti-Trafficking Review* the authors of the article titled “Knowledge is Power: Ignorance is Bliss” (Sharapov, Hoff, & Gerasimov, 2019). This article identified four key problems in human trafficking awareness campaigns that are preventing the public from attaining a better understanding of this complex subject due to their white ignorance. For the purpose of this dissertation, awareness of these problems is particularly useful for making sense of disparate responses in rural and urban areas in Arizona, which reflect their dedication to white supremacy. The first problem is that awareness campaigns are *monological*, in the sense that they universalize the relations between the people labeled as traffickers and their victims, which suggests the same strategies and interventions should be expected to be deployed in response to every situation. Service providers within these coalitions reproduce white ignorance through the dominant framework of anti-trafficking, which describes the movement as “modern day abolitionism” (Bernstein, 2007; Bravo, 2007; Levy & Jakobsson, 2014; Ras & Gregoriou, 2019) and the raids and arrests of trafficking victims as the “rescue”⁹² of slaves (Agustin, 2007; Veller, 2012).

The modern-day slavery analogy can be problematic because it is proscriptive, since “slavery” means different things to different people based on their particular

⁹² While raids are harmful to people across race, class, and gender spectrum, including law enforcement, these raids in poor and POC neighborhoods are heavily militarized. Despite the often-stated goal of “rescuing” trafficking victims, the primary purpose of conducting a raid is to collect evidence to build a criminal case. Although the stated objective of conducting raids is to identify victims of trafficking, and despite the millions of dollars funneled into law enforcement departments for training, equipment, and overtime pay, police rarely identify trafficking victims with these approaches. Instead, they are identifying sex buyers, sex workers, and many other criminalized persons.

positionality with a specific social context.⁹³ In the US today, modern-day slavery comprises a fictive cast of narrated, legislated, and carefully observed sexually deviant characters, symbolic of criminal traffickers and their victims. Since the discourses and practices of the anti-trafficking movement are rooted in the white slavery movement, they are instead derived “from the legislative weapons of the early twentieth century that the weapons of the twenty-first have evolved” (Bravo, 2007, p. 222). In other words, unlike the laws that were conducive to liberating people from chattel slavery in the 19th century, the anti-trafficking movement is oriented by racist and xenophobic conceptions of social reality, because they appeal to the racial fantasies of the American public.

Second, awareness campaigns are *unilinear*, with a “one-directional future-facing goal of the ‘the fight against trafficking in human beings:’ more policing and raids; more border control; more prosecutions and convictions; more ‘rescue’ and more awareness” (p. 5). There is a discursive inversion that rationalizes and vindicates practices of criminalization and carcerality through false association between the celebrated abolitionist movement to dismantle slavery and the growing list of behaviors legally codified as trafficking. Imagining the kind of work that they are doing as being a progressive form of anti-slavery activism that hearkens back to the 19th century abolition movement, appeals to the self-delusions of those who facilitate them. However, given that the definition of trafficking has extended far beyond the scope of chattel slavery,

⁹³ For example, Bravo explains that the modern-day slavery analogy functions to appeal more to emotions than intellect, evidenced through four trends: 1) The emotional exhortation to action; 2) the diminution of the horror of trans-Atlantic slavery; 3) the assumption of the mantle of righteousness; and 4) distancing of our (enlightened) time from theirs or “how far we’ve come” (2007, pp. 250-251).

illustrating Janie Chuang's (2014) notion of "exploitation creep,"⁹⁴ to respond to issues like prostitution and sexting the same way is inappropriate and harmful.

Third, awareness campaigns are *teleological* in that they articulate the problem of human trafficking in terms of the purpose of the crime, such as greed, rather than the factors that give rise to it like globalization, neoliberal logics, or capitalism. The anti-trafficking movement is aimed at a "known outcome;" a world with "no victims and criminals" that anti-trafficking actors argue will inevitably become a reality through their ongoing efforts, advances in technology, and capitalist expansion (Sharapov, Hoff, & Gerasimov, 2019). Professionals working on behalf of nonprofits orient representations of trafficking in ways that are both palatable and relevant to attract resources from mostly white, wealthy, Christian donors, who are supportive of law enforcement. While these tactics may appear innocuous to people outside of anti-trafficking, critical trafficking scholars agree that they are the very strategies that prevent sex workers, migrants, the homeless, and runaway youth from being able to keep themselves safe as criminalized laborers and in turn are more susceptible to trafficking. In turn, since they disproportionately affect people of color, it can be said that anti-trafficking coalitions function as "racial regimes" or "constructed social systems in which race is proposed as a justification for relations of power" (Robinson, 2007, p. 380).

⁹⁴ According to Chuang (2014) two important shifts have occurred since exploitation creep began to spread across this movement: 1. All forced labor has been rebranded as "trafficking" and 2. All trafficking has been rebranded as "slavery" (p. 611). By collapsing these terms, coalitions have used statistics about trafficking to elevate the public's imagined fantasies of "trafficking" as a form of sexual slavery and generate support for an aggregate punishing model used to increase the surveillance, policing, and incarceration of people imagined as traffickers.

Fourth and finally, awareness campaigns about human trafficking are *elastic* because nonprofit organizations and law enforcement agencies are always one step away from solving the trafficking problem for good; with just a little more training or just a few more police resources the issue will be solved. The anti-trafficking movement presumes its carceral strategy is not only effective, but that it would only be more effective with access to additional funding and support from the public. The opposite is true, however, given that more behaviors have been defined as trafficking as their movement has grown, exponentially increasing the rate at which people labeled as “victims” and “traffickers” are produced along the lines of race, class, and gender. Not only in the sense that people in both categories are increasingly vulnerable to criminalization, but also because they are more susceptible to extra-judicial exploitation as a result of the political, economic, and cultural conditions it manifests.

Just as racist and antisemitic tropes were deployed by those involved in the white slavery movement of the 19th and 20th centuries to attract support for their cause, contemporary formations appeal to the white supremacist fantasies of middle and upper-class whites through colorblind and raceless language. Specifically, those who imagine themselves as morally innocent, and sometimes even heroes, through the donation of time, money, and resources to charitable nonprofit organizations such as those committed to anti-trafficking. This is exactly what Pastor Brian Steele claimed to do in his pitch to the UEP Trust:

I took them on the Hero’s Journey...so it wasn’t just a, ‘here’s all the things the Dream Center does and look how great we are,’ I took them through this hero’s

journey of, ‘oh my gosh how are we gonna work through this?! Look! We worked through it! I took them on about 4 different hero’s journeys that were kinda catered toward whatever we felt the community needed. We felt like ‘medical’ was a big need, addiction recovery was a big need, (and) remodeling the property was a need even though it was an amazing property they knew it needed to be updated...then would adjust the needs to what the board wanted...(I said) ‘We have no agenda coming into this community, we have no preconceived notion of what this community needs, we’re just here to say that we’re here to help. We have resources, we have people who are trained, but we’re here to just listen to you guys.’ (Brian D. Steele, 2018i)

Although anti-trafficking coalitions use the language of “freedom” and “human rights,” they often do so while simultaneously approaching this issue with criminalization strategies that expand the US carceral system, which is both the largest in the world and one of the most controversial. It is imperative for both critical scholars and general audiences to understand that anti-trafficking coalitions who characterize trafficking as a temporally distinct form of “modern day slavery” minimize the past and ongoing realities of systemic racism under chattel slavery, which was itself central to the construction of modern relations (Robinson, 1983). Campaigns led by anti-trafficking coalitions capitalize upon the metaphor of chattel slavery, imagined as Black chattel slavery to rationalize their criminalization strategies in a context where the criminal justice system has been and continues to surveil, target, and control poor Black communities (Jackson 2016; Alexander, 2010; Bravo, 2007; Butler, 2015).

In a context where it is in the interest of nonprofits to characterize the trafficking problem in a way that can appeal to the racial fantasies of wealthy, white, Christian Americans, Charles Mills' (1997) white ignorance framework is useful for mapping and uncovering historically suppressed knowledge concerning racism, antisemitism, and the onto-epistemology⁹⁵ of white supremacy in US anti-trafficking movement activism. This is because the historically suppressed knowledge of trafficking projected by anti-trafficking coalitions in the US are produced through an "inverted epistemology" with both "psychological and social functions beyond the suppression of knowledge themselves" (Mills, 1997, p. 18). In other words, because producing knowledge that is useful for understanding and responding to localized trafficking problems, the NPIC "cultivate[s] a racialist metaphysical orientation of "structured blindness" (Mills, 1997, p. 18) that renders those affected by their interventions even more vulnerable. Whether the moral foundation of the anti-trafficking movement is undergirded with the secular language of human rights, or characterized as a righteous Christian mission, both rationalizations have been and remain oriented by the white supremacist logic of purity (Zimmerman 2013).

Functioning at an individual level, the shared ignorance produced by anti-trafficking service providers protects them from outside criticism and introspection by shielding their understanding of how they exist in the world in relation to people with less power than themselves. These interventions are based on an understanding of the world that, through the lens of white ignorance, positions service providers within the anti-

⁹⁵ By "onto-epistemology of white supremacy" I simply mean ways of knowing, and being, or carrying out, their white supremacist ideological values.

trafficking movement as saviors of trafficking victims, while at the same time producing the conditions that render them vulnerable to trafficking. Put differently, since the imagined idea of the trafficking victim projected by the anti-trafficking movement of the contemporary US, like the white slave of the past, doesn't "actually exist," as Agustin (2007) points out, "it shouldn't surprise us to find that, for helpers and savers, the center of discourse was themselves," as is the case today (p. 127). Broadly speaking, Hoagland (2007) explains how this political, economic, and cultural dynamic results from white ignorance when she states that: "It is not the other person's need that requires our sense of benevolent charity...it is rather our benevolent sense of charity that requires the other person's need" (Hoagland, 2007, p. 103).

Since the SCDC can only continue to operate at the discretion of those in control of the United Effort Plan (UEP) Trust, who demand to shield their community of polygamous families from criminalization, the UEP Trust, as a private, charitable trust, exhibits how whiteness functions as a form property in the context of anti-trafficking coalitions (Harris, 1993). By distinguishing the religious practices within polygamy from the definition of trafficking while conflating sex work with trafficking, carefully managing who can speak on these matters, anti-trafficking coalitions reproduce an "ecology of ignorance" among powerful whites (Mills, 1997, p. 97). Through "evasion and self-deception become the epistemic norm" (Mills, 1997, p. 97), amidst an implicit "agreement to misinterpret the world" (Allison Bailey, cited in Sullivan & Tuana, 2007, p. 80), social relations are structured to fulfill the mandates of the racial and sexual domination contracts governing racial capitalism (Pateman & Mills, 2007), as Hoagland has articulated:

an everyday strategic practice of maintaining power relations by denying epistemic credibility to objects/subjects of knowledge who are marginalized, written subaltern, erased, criminalized (for example prisoners, homeless women and men, women whom men pay for sex, workers denied documentation, “illegal” immigrants brought in to support big business, women whom men abuse), and thereby denying relationality. (cited in Sullivan & Tuana, 2007, p. 101)

White ignorance is not simply a “gap in knowledge” or an “epistemic oversight” that results in racial oppression and domination, but rather is “actively produced for purposes of domination and exploitation” (Sullivan & Tuana, 2007, p. 1). A historical analysis of trafficking discourses from the 20th century to today, through the framework of white ignorance, collapses the notion that contemporary anti-trafficking coalitions are somehow “strange bedfellows” (Bernstein, 2007) or activists carrying on the legacy of the 19th century abolitionist movement. Revealing how anti-trafficking movement actors have collaborated for over a century, to garner power and profit by exploiting existing racial and gendered power structures through the language of “charity,” “rescue,” and “protection” supports the assertion that the exploitative work of white slavery movement continues today through the NPIC and often at the expense of the very people these coalitions purport to help. In other words, although anti-trafficking discourses are no longer overtly racist as they have been historically, which today would compromise the movement’s capacity to attract support, they continue to reproduce white supremacy.

The study of white ignorance is at the center of this dissertation, but for understanding how unconscious commonsense tropes about violent, hypersexual Black

men and dubious, untrustworthy Jews, are reproduced by anti-trafficking coalitions today, the NPIC offers a useful framework for mapping their structures and processes in certain contexts as well (INCITE!, 2017). As this dissertation will demonstrate, white ignorance within the NPIC has implications for understanding the intricacies of how agency, labor, and social positionality are characterized by the anti-trafficking movement. The NPIC concisely describes the complex, coalitional “systems of relationships between local and federal governments” as well as regional entities engaged in anti-trafficking activism with “the owning classes, foundations, and nonprofit/NGO social service and social justice organizations” (Munshi & Willse, 2007, p. xii). These groups often purport that these coalitional relationships reflect “diversity” among them, suggesting that they are oriented by a range of perspectives attuned to social justice issues affecting various oppressed groups in society. However, the relationships among nonprofits and law enforcement entities within the anti-trafficking NPIC both emanate from and directly feed into the prison industrial complex (PIC), which is well understood to be a mechanism of reproducing white supremacy (Davis, 1995).

There are several functions of the NPIC that can be used to understand how, in the interest of racial capitalism, anti-trafficking nonprofit organizations work with the state on a purportedly social-justice oriented mission to surveil, control, derail, and manage progressive political movements for abolition, such as decarceration and sex worker’s rights. According to INCITE! (2017), the NPIC aims to achieve this by 1) *Monitoring and controlling social justice movements*, 2) *Redirecting activist energies into career-based modes of organizing instead of mass-based organizing capable of actually transforming society*, 3) *Managing and control dissent to make the world safe for*

capitalism, 4) *Encouraging social movements such as anti-trafficking to model themselves after capitalist structures that reinforce structural and institutional inequalities rather than challenge them*, 5) *Divert public monies into private hands through foundations*, and 6) *Allowing corporations to mask their exploitative and colonial work practices through “philanthropic” work*.

First, *to monitor and control social justice movements* for decarceration, anti-trafficking nonprofits equate all exchanges of sexual labor for some form of value, whether consensual or not, in line with trafficking legislation. This not only erases the agency of people who willingly sell sex but diverts attention and resources away from the violence perpetrated against vulnerable populations and others in non-sexual forms of labor. In coalition with law enforcement and other organizations, nonprofits have monitored campaigns for sex workers rights by *suppressing sex worker criticisms of the harms and failures of this movement*, suggesting the latter’s perspectives are not “representative” of most people’s experiences in the sex industry. Sex workers have made criticisms of people like Roe-Sepowitz and Cindy McCain, whose relationships with law enforcement have been positive due to their social positionality, but these relationships are not representative of many sex workers who have interacted with police. Whereas this type of statement about representation denies people the choice to sell sex, it “is rarely applied to women’s ‘choice’ to take jobs propping up the carceral state” (Mac & Smith, 2018, p. 218).

Sex workers rights groups such as Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP) USA, SWOP Behind Bars, The Red Umbrella Project (2017), and the Global Network of Sex Work Projects have been critical of anti-trafficking organizations for their *rare and*

tokenistic inclusion in anti-trafficking coalitional decision-making. Specifically, for their reliance on the perspectives of sex workers who conflate the language of sex work and sex trafficking despite the direct impact of these decisions on their lives and those of others (NWSP Shrinking Spaces & Silencing Voices, nd), which precludes the possibility that someone could make an informed decision to exchange sex (SWOP Language Tips Fact Sheet, nd).

Speaking to and on behalf of the experiences of sex workers enables Dream Centers in Los Angeles, California and Phoenix, Arizona to suppress the sex workers' criticisms of the "victim-centered" approach by legitimizing only the voices of those who conform to their narrative by expressing remorse for selling sex and the desire to be rehabilitated. By intentionally denying the perspectives of people who sell sex and by elevating the voices of those who equate prostitution and sex trafficking, the DCC can represent itself as if its approach was informed by victims of trafficking and conducive to the needs of people living in the urban communities they serve. In the context of Short Creek, the SCDC deploys a similar strategy, as a specific group of people are consulted about the trafficking problem, who view the practice of polygamy and the harms associated with it to be anomalous rather than inherent. By discounting the positions of those who disagree with this outlook, SCDC can project an image of the nature and scope of the trafficking problem among the population they serve, which is acceptable to those who have discretion over the ongoing operation of their entrepreneurial venture.

The second way that anti-trafficking coalitions produce white ignorance is by *redirecting activist energies into career-based modes of organizing instead of mass-based organizing capable of transforming society.* In other words, encouraging people

who want to learn more about human trafficking to contact, work for, or partner with a nonprofit diverges from any sort of path towards meaningful social change for people being identified as “trafficked,” because most anti-trafficking nonprofits have favorable and uncritical biases towards the law enforcement partners that they work with. Additionally, because law enforcement is typically the first point of contact with suspected trafficking victims, they have enormous power in shaping the problem, determining its significance, and defining the parameters of who looks like a “typical” victim or perpetrator of trafficking, which are often based on colorblind and xenophobic typologies.

Without the partnership with law enforcement, who have the power to criminalize people who sell sex, nonprofits are unlikely to have a steady, consistent, and compliant client population to come forward and identify as trafficking victims. Since this coercive mechanism creates an image that the trafficking problem is widespread and criminalization is an effective response, the coalitional and victim centered approach is made more palatable and visually identifiable to the wealthiest of their charitable donors. Even though anti-trafficking interventions often harm the people being identified as victims, people who become ensnared in this murky realm of the criminal justice system may be coerced into collaboration with professional coalitions and institutions to produce exciting stories about escaping victimization to generate donor interest because the alternative is harsher punishment from the state. Given the significance of this epistemological fact to understanding the scope and nature of the trafficking problem in Short Creek, Arizona, and the greater US, it is crucial to acknowledge that most anti-

trafficking organizations, including all of those referenced in this dissertation, work in coalition with law enforcement agencies at various levels of government.

Despite employing a purported victim centered approach to address human trafficking in the US, most clients of lucrative anti-trafficking nonprofits such as the Dream Center, including clients being referred to a “trafficking victims,” come to these programs through arrest referrals from law enforcement, jails, or other carceral institutions (Baker, 2018; Musto, 2013, 2016; Saunders, 2007; Showden & Majic, 2018). Aside from avoiding criminalization, some clients are incentivized to identify as trafficking victims because they can potentially become directors of their own Dream Centers after successfully graduating from the program, which motivates them to exaggerate their degree of victimhood and the benefits of the services they received. Unlike those who are critical of these anti-trafficking interventions or refuse to be identified as trafficking victims, the stories of those who reproduce a favorable narrative are commodified to expand the NPIC.

Third, the NPIC represses abolitionist movements by *managing and controlling dissent to make the world safe for capitalism*, which is only possible through the uncritical representations of anti-trafficking intervention offered by law enforcement agencies and nonprofit organizations. There is extensive documentation of the degree to which sex workers are disproportionately harmed through anti-trafficking interventions such as arrests and police raids, while simultaneously omitted from discussions about anti-trafficking policies that directly impact them (Ditmore, 2006; Fitzgerald, 2017, 2017a; Gira-Grant, 2014, 2020; Global Network of Sex Work Projects, 2017, 2020; Koyama, 2011; Ludwig, 2020; Mac & Smith, 2018; Nothing About Us Without Us,

2015; Ritchie, 2017; West & Horn, 2021). The criminalization of sex workers and people who sell sex suppresses knowledge of how anti-trafficking coalitions frame their arrest and criminalization through the language of “rescue” and “victimization,” receiving ample federal, state, and private money to support these sort of anti-trafficking interventions.

Anti-trafficking coalitions often claim the central reason they do not have a larger reliable data set of trafficking victims in the US is because most of them are too afraid to come forward due to fears of their trafficker. When they do come forward, scholars such as Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz have suggested that victims are unable to provide them with reliable information. While observing a Sex Trafficking 101 Training for teachers and administrators, Dr. Roe-Sepowitz informed the training participants: “The data is terrible. There’s not a lot of evidence. When people are being traumatized, they rarely remember what the room number is where they’re being taken to” (D. Roe-Sepowitz, field observations, November 13th, 2019). However, both children and adults who sell sex in the US consistently identify fear of arrest, incarceration, and police violence⁹⁶ as a source of threat which deters them from reporting abuse to authorities (Nichols & Heil, 2014; Ludwig, 2020; Lutnick, 2016; Mac, 2016; Musto, 2014; Richie, 2012; Ritchie, 2017; Robbins, 2019; Roth, 2017; Shackford, 2018). As previously stated, the Arizona Governor’s Human Trafficking Council (AZHTC) has claimed it is unable to produce actionable data without providing a plausible explanation for why this is the case.

However, through the lens of the NPIC and white ignorance it becomes clear that because

⁹⁶ Sex worker’s rights scholars Juno Mac and Molly Smith (2018) cite a 2010 report which found that sexual assault was the second most reported crime committed by police and that “on-duty police commit sexual assaults at *more than double* the rate of the general US population” (Packman, 2011).

coalitional anti-trafficking data is primarily based on the policing of sex workers, trafficking within Mormon polygamy falls outside the scope of their framework.

In Short Creek, representatives of the SCDC have been silent about the town's central role lobbying for the decriminalization of polygamy in the state of Utah in 2020. Short Creek native and UEP Trust President Shirlee Draper was instrumental in lobbying for this legislation and argued that crimes committed by Mormon polygamists, such as domestic violence, rape, or human trafficking, could be prosecuted separate from the criminalization of polygamy.⁹⁷ While sex workers have been making identical arguments (Koyama, 2011; Mac & Smith, 2018; Magnanti, 2012), stating that trafficking crimes can be prosecuted without the criminalization of sex work, only one of these two campaigns have experienced successful legislative change or institutional support. This demonstrates how the NPIC functions to reproduce racial capitalism by repressing the voices of poor people of color as well as obscuring and decriminalizing the problem of trafficking in white, Christian, communities.

Fourth, by *encouraging social movements to model themselves after capitalist structures that reinforce rather than challenge structural and institutional inequalities*,⁹⁸ the NPIC not only stifles coalitional forces that operate within the US anti-trafficking movement from generating any meaningful change for vulnerable populations, but it also actively works against this change. Hegemonically, people are inclined to believe that

⁹⁷ In the polygamous town right next to Short Creek, community members, composed mostly of women, formed the Centennial Park Action Committee (CPAC) which also fought and lobbied for the decriminalization of polygamy.

⁹⁸ When people identified as “trafficking survivors” do get services: “the services available through the court are not necessarily those the defendants need. Defendants are often assigned activities of uncertain immediate value, like yoga, art therapy, or counseling, with the threat of re-arrest if they fail to attend” (Mac & Smith, 2018, p. 128).

nonprofits perform services that provide something beneficial for communities (Nonprofit Center of Northeast Florida, 2022). However, there is a substantive body of research addressing how criminalization strategies cause more harm than help people identified as trafficking victims (Ditmore, 2006; Lutnick, 2016; Magnanti, 2012; Mahdavi, 2013; Musto, 2014) and limitations of providing resources to these people, by fostering partnerships between anti-trafficking nonprofits and police, which the former describe as favorable to their well-being (Agustin, 2007; Bernstein, 2018; Musto, 2016; Veller, 2012). No studies have explored how and why these collaborative institutions exist through the lens of the NPIC, which explains why the interventions of anti-trafficking coalitions are harmful to the well-being of the populations they claim to serve as being rooted in the constant push to garner funding to keep their organizations afloat and ideally thriving (Samimi, 2010).

Dream Centers are nonprofits that have been established around the globe for the purpose of meeting the needs of specific communities, which allows the umbrella organization to profit from any circumstance.⁹⁹ Yet, who dictates the terms of people's needs and how those needs will be met are not democratically determined by the community, but instead are framed in a manner that will attract funding and support from corporations and public institutions, including law enforcement. Rather than responding to the problem of trafficking in Short Creek, the SCDC is concerned with accumulating private grants, donations, and state contracts through the production of a narrative that

⁹⁹ As explained by Angel Barnett, the wife of Arizona's headquarters in Phoenix, the Dream City Church (DCC), the Dream Center nonprofit's larger flexible model as: "A Dream Center can start out as a feeding program...whether it be clothes, it could be counseling-just gathering and identifying a group of people who need a specific thing" (Radius Church, 2021).

misrepresents the issue and corresponding interventions. Given that the organization's presence in the town is beholden to the UEP trust board, which is constituted by people from the FLDS who occupy privileged positions relative to the majority of people from the town, the nonprofit's approach does not only fail to address the political, economic, and cultural conditions that lead to trafficking, but are favorable towards the people who initially benefited from those conditions in the first place and prior to Warren Jeffs' entrance into Short Creek. If the problem of trafficking were to be contested by the AZHTC in a manner that conflicted with the current regime, it would both hinder the SCDCS's capacity to prevail in Short Creek and draw criticism from outsiders who subscribe to the persecution myth through which most people in the US understand the relationship between the community and the state.

The fifth way the NPIC subverts the abolitionist movement is by *diverting public monies into private hands through foundations*. This is achieved by securing federal grants to provide social services that have specific organizational requirements for recipients, which almost always mandates their collaboration with law enforcement. In 2016, the Phoenix Human Trafficking Vice Unit was awarded a \$675,000 grant from the Office of Victims in the Department of Justice, in coalition with five other agencies (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016), including the FBI, Homeland Securities Investigations (HSI), the US Attorney's office, and one nonprofit service provider, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), which received \$825,000 and all of which were mandatory organizations to apply for the grant. However, because the Phoenix IRC does not provide housing facilities or counseling, they sub-contracted their work out to the Phoenix Dream Center for adult females. The requirement that law enforcement agencies

and social service providers apply together, in coalition, for grant funding speaks to the compulsory dynamic between law enforcement and nonprofits. The PDC and SCDC are not just nonprofit organizations, but branches of a larger parachurch, which is a hybrid of a nonprofit and church operating for purposes of social welfare and evangelism. Their board looks different from typical nonprofit boards because instead of having just one board of directors, they have three: 1.) the *Operating Ministry Board*, 2.) the *Dream Center Foundation Board*, and 3.) the *Title Holding Entity Board*. Working in conjunction, the board members comprising these three entities can insulate themselves from legal accountability and public scrutiny in the event that one of their clients are harmed, while retaining priority over how their labor of clients is applied.

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¹⁰⁰ Pastor Brian Steele coaches directors, who are exclusively privileged, to govern the organization: "You don't necessarily want the who's who of your community on that board...we have people dying and on drugs...and people who've been raped and STDs and I mean it's just crazy! What we do is risky business" (Brian D. Steele 2018).

program data, and review new ministry proposals to acquire a new property for their organization. The Dream Center Foundation Board¹⁰¹ consists of 12 members whose task it is to raise money and lead special projects for the PDC, many of whom are related by blood or marriage, such as Tommy Barnett, Luke Barnett, Angel Barnett, and Kristie Barnett-Sexton. The Title Holding Entity Board consists of up to five members who control the titles to all of the Dream Center properties, allowing the organization to protect its property. In addition to other benefits, these boards determine how clients, either those identified as sex trafficking victims or people convicted of crimes and alternatively sentenced to “volunteer” with the Dream Center, spend their time. Due to the complexity of which money moves through parachurch ministries, the economy being sustained and expanded by the NPIC through anti-trafficking coalitional activism in the context of this study likely spans beyond the public’s basic understanding of charity and policing. There is very little oversight of how these coalitions’ vast system of financial tools and resources (representing the NPIC) help the wealthy donate money to unique “trafficking” causes in ways that benefit them personally¹⁰² and expand their organizations but benefit few clients.

¹⁰¹ The Dream Center Foundation, which consists of “the business leaders and politicians that everybody wants” according to Brian Steele (Brian D. Steele, 2018) began as a limited liability company (LLC) before it transitioned into 501(c)3 status and became an Equal Opportunity Employer (EOE). As such, they can bypass by-laws preventing private corporations from donating a church, allowing them to donate it to the Dream Center Foundation, an EOE, which then grants it over to the PDC. This not only allows corporations that donate to the PDC to get tax write-offs, but also to secure free labor from clients and “volunteers.”

¹⁰² In Brian D. Steele’s (2018c, 2018d) YouTube video, “How do you raise money? Event fundraising,” he explains how he raises money for the PDC through charity golf events: “If I own a construction company I’ll invite my door guy, my window guy, my lumber guy...my vendors...it’s a schmooze and booze thing...many of these companies are very open to having a charity of choice sponsored at their event and so we’ll come alongside a construction company and they’ll say, ‘okay, all the proceeds from this event are going to the PDC because honestly if they’re a for-profit business they’re mostly interested in schmoozing their people...if you make it a *charity* golf event they find that’s a good message to their vendors (that) this contractor supports people that support human trafficking girls. It’s the craziest thing but it.... sticks with them...it’s all about branding, right? We’ve come alongside a number of golf tourneys and we’re the

In addition to having their own salaries as directors determined by the Dream City Foundation board, with whom they work very closely, those who control these entities have access to resources purchased in the organization's name, such as planes, other vehicles, and buildings. Further, they also receive significant tax benefits and can subsidize their personal costs by writing them off as business expenses (Brian D. Steele, 2018d, 2018e, 2018f, 2018g, 2018o, 2018p, 2018q, 2018w, 2018bb). Beyond the resources they have access to directly from the nonprofit, they control the labor of clients,¹⁰³ who are often transported to shelters like the PDC by the police, as well as court-ordered volunteers.¹⁰⁴ This gives them access to free labor for their own businesses under the guise of "job training" and rehabilitation for trafficking victims. Further, the social capital they accumulate as anti-trafficking experts who work with federal law enforcement officers, politicians, and business leaders, opens other paid opportunities, such as professional consultants, publishing, and subsidizing their own private businesses through contracts to provide goods and services to the nonprofit (Barnett, 2019).

Tax-exempt entities such as churches, nonprofits, and private foundations with 501(c)3 status are able to portray their organizations to the world in a way that best suits their personal objectives while simultaneously receiving accolades for their charitable

charity of choice and literally we just give them some stories, we give them our logo, and they call it, like, the Jokkake Golf Tournament Benefiting the Phoenix Dream Center...and then we show up, set up a booth, maybe have a couple of testimonies, but that's about it...they just cut us one check at the end of the event or they route people to our webpage to make a donation and we've had some of these be \$50,000-\$80,000 (donations)...and again, folks, we hardly did anything!"

¹⁰³ As will be discussed in Chapter six, for example, SCDC clients and volunteers have been assigned to do yard work at the home of Donya Jessop, the mayor of Short Creek. Within the context of Phoenix, PDC clients and volunteers work at a print shop, design websites, do construction work (sometimes on new Dream Centers), facilitate fundraising events, and other occupations.

¹⁰⁴ Whereas those who identify as trafficking victims can receive services, such as housing, through their labor, "volunteers" at Dream Centers have the benefit of avoiding being incarcerated.

contributions. According to IRS tax codes, “the term church is found, but not specifically defined” and the IRS “makes no attempt to evaluate the content of whatever doctrine a particular organization claims is religious, provided their particular beliefs, provided the particular beliefs...are truly and sincerely held... and the practices are not illegal” (IRS Tax Guide for Churches & Religious Organizations, 2015). As has been the case historically, funding for anti-trafficking programs by churches such as the DCC comes from both public and private sources with departing and overlapping interests. According to Pastor Steele, 60% of all proceeds donated to Dream Centers throughout Arizona come from individuals, business owners, and their employees. Churches contribute 25% of the organization’s funding and 15% comes from federal grant money (Brian D. Steele, 2020b). In Phoenix, the profitability of the PDC is supplemented by their collaborative relationships with local law enforcement,¹⁰⁵ including specific federal grant monies for trafficking victims that requires their cooperation with local and federal police agencies.

In addition to donations and grants, further capital is accumulated through the language of trafficking by reaping the free labor of clients they refer to synonymously with “volunteers” who participate in DCC’s programs, many of which are court-ordered (Brian D. Steele, 2021a). The DCC facilitates a network of volunteer positions throughout more than 270 centers around the world, who work on various tasks to advance the organization’s larger mission (T. Barnett, field observations, February 2019). Most of these volunteers are participating in one-to-three-year alternative sentencing

¹⁰⁵ In Pastor Tommy Barnett’s personal memoir, *What If? My Story of Believing God for More...Always More* (2020), he explains that the overall mission of all 270+ Dream Centers in the US and abroad is to “find a way to serve the people who nobody else wants” and act as the “go-to center for many of the law enforcement agencies and the court system who give those they pick up a choice: jail or the Dream Center?” (p. 238).

programs mandatory work hours each week conducting outreach, working on construction projects, and facilitating services in Dream Centers. Few volunteers can secure full time, stable employment with benefits through the DCC.¹⁰⁶

The DCC pays no taxes as a religious non-profit organization but has control of millions of dollars that it uses to acquire property, support social causes, and even influence state and federal politics. To continue to receive funding for their anti-trafficking interventions, their stated mission and organizational structure must typically appeal to the values of people who are wealthy, politically connected, and supportive of law enforcement (Brian D. Steele 2018bb, 2021a). This makes the SCDC's task of painting a palatable representation of human trafficking exceptionally challenging; in a context where both the victims and perpetrators are white Christians who have been historically criminalized for their pious resistance to the incursion of modern culture into their traditional community.¹⁰⁷

Finally, the NPIC functions by *allowing corporations to mask their exploitative and colonial work practices through "philanthropic" work*, with the added impact of decentering harm-reduction strategies and strategies for decarceration. So, while anti-trafficking nonprofits commonly adopt the language of abolition to appeal to the racial fantasies of their donors and board members, their efforts are contrary to abolitionists' prerogatives to decarcerate society and divert resources towards social services, since they are fundamentally carceral and colonial. Anti-trafficking coalitional actors repress the movement for abolition in various ways, including spreading their ignorance through

¹⁰⁶ (Brian D. Steele, 2018a, 2018j).

¹⁰⁷ Especially, given the alignment between Mormons and other Christian denominations as part of the new Christian right (Ellenbaas, 1995).

research (Shared Hope International, 2015)¹⁰⁸ at fundraising events (Community Education Channel, 2020) and conducting sex trafficking “101” trainings that instruct participants to profile people of color as traffickers (D. Roe-Sepowitz, field observations, September 10th, 2018; D. Roe-Sepowitz, field observations, November 23rd, 2019). For example, in, an ASU STIR training manual for EMS providers (Training Tool for EMS Providers, nd), which is widely disseminated among the coalitions she works with, is a photograph of a young Asian girl wearing a nightgown who is unconscious on the ground in an alley. The caption above her reads “police found sanitary pad with ‘My nigga 555-7422’ written on it in her purse” (p. 4).

Anti-trafficking coalitions target people of color and immigrants through coded language, which does not explicitly refer to their socially-ascribed racial categorization or citizenship status, to organize expensive raids on hotels, motels, and massage parlors, then use those who agree to self-identify as victims as evidence to build a trafficking case.¹⁰⁹ Additionally, they run specialized government councils and courts that operate outside of the public purview (Svoboda, 2021), allowing only certain actors knowledge of and access to the economy of the “rescue industry; which has enabled self-identified

¹⁰⁸ In this research report about the “demand” problem in Arizona, Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz concludes that there are two types of sex buyers: 1) The “opportunistic buyer,” who has the “desire, ability, time, and money to purchase sex and not necessarily seeking sex w/a minor but is not deterred if the victim is underage”; 2) The “preferential buyer of juveniles,” who “preferentially and intentionally” seeks out sex with a minor (Shared Hope International, 2015, p. 19). Based on these two types, Roe-Sepowitz proposes differing solutions to curb demand. She suggests that the opportunistic buyer “may be successfully deterred through educational programs that can promote healthy attitudes and perceptions of women” (p. 19). Despite failing to explain how she can determine the intentions of sex buyers, she suggests that “preferential buyer of juveniles: “May rely more heavily on punitive measures because of the danger they pose to the community” (p. 19).

¹⁰⁹ For example, Gubbi, Gamez, Thomas & Paidoussis 6)201(nd) have studied how regional and federal law enforcement led sting operations on massage parlors in Mojave County, Arizona, where primarily Asian women worked. In order to gather evidence to prove their cases, these officers engaged in sex acts with these women to prove they were “victims” of trafficking.

“women’s rights” supporters to build professional careers around “saving” women and girls in the global South, emerging market countries, and in economically precarious communities in the United States. Nonprofit influence by the state has become particularly prevalent in the US in the face of devastating cuts to social welfare programs and other rapidly diminishing federal resources. What results from these cuts, as described by Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2004), is the ongoing fight over allocation of resources as the police internalize the mission of social welfare and social welfare organizations internalize the mission of policing. Neither of these institutional missions have yet been able to penetrate the depths of exploitation rife in human trafficking nor find long-lasting solutions to the problem. They have, however, contributed to the expansions and transnationalization of the rescue industry.

The rescue industry facilitates court-ordered diversion programs for sex buyers (Khan, 2015; Roth 2017) and trafficking victims (Roe-Sepowitz et. al, 2014) uncovered through their raids, then portray them as a strategy to reduce the harms of criminalization. Further, anti-trafficking coalitions, through the function of the NPIC, funnel millions of federal dollars into anti-trafficking rehabilitation programs, primarily by using the language of trafficking, to secure affordable housing grants, federal banking system dollars, and new market tax credits to expand their shelters (Brian D. Steele, 2018d). As previously stated in relation to Sharapov, Hoff, & Gerasimov’s (2019) work on white ignorance, the anti-trafficking movement seeks to constantly expand, often in vulnerable communities, who are characterized as being in need of saving, which is characteristic of colonialism. Their mission is discursively framed as though their interventions are motivated by altruism, when they actually contribute to the vulnerability to exploitation

of the people they serve through criminalization in relation to their needs. Such behaviors are rationalized by making everyday people who sell sex appear particularly exploited through language like “modern day slavery,” which discounts the fact that most people’s labor, in all of its other forms, are commonly exploited without being labeled as victims.

The anti-trafficking NPIC captures multiple complex and deeply interconnected relationships among entities the public considers having legitimacy, such as local law enforcement, the ASU Sex Trafficking Intervention Research Office (STIR), the AZHTC, as well as churches, corporations, and foundations that funnel wealth through Dream Center nonprofits and other organizations in the name of “anti-trafficking” in Arizona. With the help of these organizations, the SCDC continues to expand the reach of their services in Short Creek, Arizona today.¹¹⁰ Anti-trafficking coalitional activism is not simply about collaborative governance but also about accumulation of wealth, power, and property. Evangelical Christians in particular, including prominent figures like former Washington D.C. Congresswoman, Linda Smith (Smith, Vardaman, & Snow, 2009), and televangelist Joyce Meyers,¹¹¹ have assumed positions of leadership in this anti-

¹¹⁰ During a 2020 video tour filmed by Coastline Church, SCDC director Jena Jones tells the camera: “We just bought that house right next door there to be able to open up as part of the Dream Center ministry here and when we did that I said (to SCDC leader Angel Barnett), ‘You realize now that we own half of Warren Jeffs’ block? Dream City Church and Dream Center own half of Warren Jeffs’ block. That’s amazing! We’re gonna own the whole thing! We’re gonna take it all for Jesus and reclaim it”; In a church presentation video posted to YouTube, Angel Barnett told her audience that she was trying to secure a deal with an FLDS apostate trying to purchase a second one of Warren Jeffs’ compounds in South Dakota: “It’s 140 acres and I really want it bad...I want to take every compound he has and shove it in his face!” (Shreveport Community Church, 2022).

¹¹¹ During my observations of the 2019 Night of Dreams gala Pastor Tommy Barnett announced that Joyce Meyers Ministries had donated \$500,000.00 to the SCDC to go towards vans to transport women and children to and from work and medical appointments (Joyce Meyer Ministries, 2022; Joyce Meyer’s Talk It Out, 2021).

trafficking rescue industry¹¹² (Agustin, 2007). Elizabeth Bernstein (2010) explains how Evangelical Christian leaders employ a mass-media oriented model of “consumer humanitarianism,” taking mission trips to affected trafficking areas (Grace Reigns Church, 2017), recounting their experiences to churches back home through speaking events and writing memoirs (Bowley, 2012; Smith, 2013, 2018). The language of trafficking, confined to the parameters of an ahistorical understanding of the harms caused by this movement, permits Evangelicals to recount sensational, sexual, and often taboo stories about trafficking based on their personal relationships “helping” people who have had these experiences and thus circumventing risk of damage to their individual reputations.

Evangelical Christians can encourage vulnerable people to identify as victims and then exploit their labor to expand their mission, through the threat of criminalization and their programs promising to heal traumatized people through job training. Like most professionals involved in anti-trafficking coalitions in the US, the Christian vision of justice from trafficking is envisions justice as punishment through policing solutions. However, studies have shown that the treatment of people identified as trafficked victims in shelters, rescue homes, and detention facilities is often abusive and coercive (Haynes, 2014; Gallagher & Pearson, 2010; Vance, 2011). This abuse could not be conducted without the transportation of people to these troubling institutions which, in cases of

¹¹² Migration scholar Laura Agustin (2007) contends that the “rescue industry” consists of self-identified “women’s rights” supporters who build professional careers around “saving” women and girls in the global South, emerging market countries, and in economically precarious communities in the US like Short Creek.

transporting people identified as suspected or confirmed trafficking victims, is most often work designated to police.¹¹³

The issue of transporting trafficking victims is complicated in Short Creek, where the biases of law enforcement are particularly stark. In 2017, the federal government found the local law enforcement agency, the Colorado City Marshals, guilty of harboring Warren Jeffs as a federal fugitive, spying on outside law enforcement with taxpayer funded equipment, turning a blind eye to the movement of girls across the Arizona-Utah border as well as outside of the community for purposes of plural marriage, as well as taking underage wives themselves (Department of Justice, 2017). This fact has been glaringly absent in the SCDC's portrayal of the changing political and demographic dynamics in the town. By distinguishing the local police and board members of the UEP Trust from "human traffickers" such as the Prophet Warren Jeffs, as well as by disassociating polygamous families from the crime of trafficking, the SCDC is creating an ecosystem of white ignorance through the framework of trafficking that is geographically insulated from public scrutiny and government oversight. At stake is the fact that the geographic isolation of this community has prevented the US public from understanding the scope and political magnitude of what is currently happening in this town outside the national imagination of sex trafficking as portrayed by anti-trafficking coalitions who operate within the larger US anti-trafficking movement.

¹¹³ The Phoenix Dream Center's Pastor Brian Steele explains in this video to new Dream Center directors that the PDC was able to significantly curb the number of children who would run away from the Dream Center by having law enforcement conduct all the transportation from the streets to a medical center and from a medical center to the Dream Center: (Brian D. Steele, 2021).

Despite the findings of the Department of Justice (DOJ) in 2017, the federal government rejected the proposition to disband the Colorado City Marshals Office, declaring that it would be too expensive, and the crimes committed did not warrant such a drastic and draconian measure (DOJ, 2017, p. 24). The DOJ ordered court-appointed police monitor to oversee the day-to-day operations of the Colorado City Marshals, update their policies and equipment, begin documenting and recording local crimes in a policing database, and hire two new marshals to police the town of approximately 8,000 residents in Short Creek on both sides of the Arizona-Utah border, where they have jurisdictional powers (DOJ, 2017, pp. 25-31).

In addition to these findings and mandates, the DOJ order instructed the twin towns to subdivide the property held by the UEP Trust, including the titles to the homes that had formerly been held by the FLDS Church authorities (DOJ 2017: p. 32). Because the Colorado City Marshals have jurisdictional powers to police both sides of the Arizona-Utah border, they have been directly responsible for enforcing federal laws following the seizure of multiple massive properties in the town as part of an organized criminal enterprise including two of Warren Jeffs' compound properties, the bishop's storehouse where the community members shopped for goods, clothing, and other basic necessities, as well as the town's only birthing clinic. Since this time, the Dream Center has been busily purchasing, building, and expanding their ownership of property in Short Creek in the name of expanding their anti-trafficking services. Since beginning their outreach in the town in 2015, DCC has purchased multiple properties in the twin towns, including the high profile 44-bedroom compound that was once home to Warren Jeffs and many of his wives and children who rotated in and out of the home.

The replicable nonprofit ecosystem that is by now firmly established in the twin towns of Colorado City, Arizona and Hildale, Utah, which together, comprise the community of Short Creek, is constituted through infrastructure strategies including the purchase of an emergency crisis shelter property, food bank property, as well as establishing rehabilitative work programs for purposes of job training (Radius Church, 2021), in partnerships with government authorities including the FLDS mayor and city council, FLDS charities, and the Colorado City Marshal's Office. Although these services might sound as though they exist to benefit clients, typically, these services, such as job training programs are unpaid,¹¹⁴ a fact which is not publicized by Dream Center representatives. To understand the degree to which working conditions within these training programs themselves facilitate exploitation, such as de-shelling brass bullet casings in a small storage unit on the side of the concrete basketball court, someone would have to travel to Dream Centers such as the SCDC and observe the conditions of these shelters for themselves.

With a small percentage of the non-Mormon public attuned to the complexity of the demographic, political, and economic changes presently occurring within and in response to political changes in Short Creek that have occurred since Warren Jeffs moved his most faithful and elite followers to a new “Zion”¹¹⁵ In El Dorado, Texas, the

¹¹⁴ In one of Brian D. Steele’s YouTube videos to Dream Center directors he explains that in their human trafficking programs in Phoenix and Glendale (Streetlight USA), sub-contract labor is key to their nonprofit’s growth: “We do a lot of contract work...you can really take advantage of people with this...we pay a contractor to do our website and that contractor is free from us to go and do other work and get other bids...we couldn’t ever go out and hire a full time web developer to work inside the ministry. We wouldn’t have the hours to justify it! So, what we’ve done is sub-contract some of that work out.” (Brian D. Steele, 2018j).

¹¹⁵ For the FLDS, like many fundamentalist groups, “Zion” is the equivalent of what Jews consider Israel is for the Jews. Although Warren Jeffs took a small group of followers to El Dorado, Texas, he left many of his followers, including all his wives who had already given birth to children, in Short Creek. Jeffs told the “left

dynamics among individuals, institutions, and coalitions who have moved in and out of this historical polygamous town should be of particular concern to those familiar with large, well known, and well established anti-trafficking nonprofits such as Shared Hope International (SHI).¹¹⁶ This is because it appears that the SHI model has been replicated and endorsed by the DCC who employs a very similar multi-level marketing model disguised as anti-trafficking intervention by reproducing conditions that facilitate the exploitation of the most vulnerable people living there, through land grabs, false promises of future employment opportunities, misrepresentation of existing educational and counseling opportunities, and an overall underwhelming response to human trafficking.¹¹⁷ Although the Dream Center claims to be “the #1 Nonprofit Organization in the World that addresses the human trafficking crisis” (Dream City Church, 2019), the SCDC has helped the FLDS and apostates of Short Creek largely disconnect the idea of trafficking from polygamy aside from its association with the Prophet Warren Jeffs for purposes of rehabilitating the town’s image since Warren Jeffs went to prison.

behind” group that while they were currently unworthy to live in Zion with their worthy children, they could pray and work their way there. Warren Jeffs’ instructed the younger group of his many wives who had yet to bear children to become the “caretakers” of the children of their older sister wives who had already borne children with Warren Jeffs.

¹¹⁶ The Shared Hope International (SHI) website (2023) has a list of third-party service providers in each state “known to Shared Hope International that provide shelter and/or community-based services to survivors of sex trafficking.” For the state of Arizona, it lists only two organizations, the Dream Center, and Streetlight USA, both of which are funded by Dream City Church (Shared Hope International, 2023).

¹¹⁷ Quoted from the SHI website (2023): “Since our founding in 1998, Shared Hope has been committed to providing holistic, long-term, survivor-informed care for victims of sex trafficking by supporting residential facilities where residents have access to medical and mental health care, education, job training and economic development programs. Shared Hope has built and continues to support Villages or Homes of Hope in Nepal, India, and Jamaica, which offer safe communities of refuge and restoration to rescued victims of sexual slavery and their children...Providing survivors with the skills and means of creating their own economic sustainability helps reduce the risk of re-victimization. Today, our successful WIN program is active in Nepal, India, Jamaica and the United States. International training programs include cosmetology, jewelry-making, bakeries, print services, tailoring and leather-making” (Shared Hope International, 2023).

Through the lens of white ignorance and NPIC, this project examines how the FLDS are modernizing on the Northern Arizona-Southern Utah border, to better understand the harms it has caused to the people who live there. Recently, local government leaders brought in the first major corporate franchise to operate in Short Creek, Subway, as well as a Balance of Nature micro-site and other factories. The town has also set up tourist attractions such as Zion's Glamping Adventures, America's Most Wanted Hotel, and Water Canyon Winery, and has opened Water Canyon High School as well as established the Washington County Public Library on the Utah side of the border.¹¹⁸ On the Arizona side, a 6 acre parcel of land has been walled off for a city-funded encampment to house members of the FLDS who were evicted from their homes by the UEP (Jim, 2014) and the Dream Center has established a food bank directly across the street from the town's first bar, the Edge of the World Brewery.¹¹⁹ Many of these changes led one local news outlet to suggest that the town was becoming a welcoming and prosperous tourist destination, referring to the community as "Arizona's second Sedona" (ABC15 Arizona, 2021).

Other sources portray a significantly different image of the community. While anti-trafficking nonprofits like the SCDC continue to expand the scope of their fundraising efforts, outreach work, and media publicity in Arizona, human trafficking only appears to be getting worse in the state as the definition broadens and the movement

¹¹⁸ Hildale, Utah is in Washington County and Colorado City, Arizona is in Mohave County.

¹¹⁹ During my observations of the 2019 Night of Dreams gala, before I realized that the Dream Center owned multiple properties and had a shelter property separate from their food bank property, Glyn Jones told prospective charitable donors, "This building is right smack dab in the middle of the center of town. It's on the main street which we'd call Central Street. It's right across from the brand-new bar that just opened up...so it is an absolute pristine location. You talk about location, location. This is the best location in all of Short Creek" (G. Jones, field observations, February 7th, 2019).

gains momentum. Worsening of the issue is evidenced by a growing number of individuals in the state who face extended prison and probation sentences for a range of petty to egregious activities loosely interpreted as “trafficking” by anti-trafficking coalitions (Arizona Governor’s Human Trafficking Council Meeting, field observations, December 12th, 2018).

Methodology

This research offers a qualitative, ethnographic study of how organizations in the Arizona anti-trafficking movement represent the problem, who they describe as vulnerable to trafficking, the characteristics of traffickers and their methods, and how anti-trafficking coalitions are mobilizing to address the problem, statewide. To ground this study, it is important to express that I am a white presenting woman in academia, who identifies as a queer, Jewish citizen of the US. Before carrying out this project, I considered myself to be an academic research collaborator in the anti-trafficking movement, because as a student in American and Danish universities, I was made to be naïve about my own participation in an institutionalized movement that I did not fully understand. Reflecting my journey out of this form of ignorance, my methodological approach to this dissertation, as well as the nature of the topic, is rooted in my own social positionality and experiences.

The entire research process, including data collection and analysis, took place from October of 2017 to June of 2023. Between October 2017 and June of 2023, I conducted direct observations based on attending a number of anti-trafficking awareness events and conducting observations of one anti-trafficking shelter. During my

observations, I collected quotes from human subjects from direct observations of anti-trafficking events that were open to the public while I sought to broadly examine the meaning of the trafficking in Arizona and how the anti-trafficking movement responds to this representation. Because the problem of trafficking encompasses so many problems and types of relationships, this dissertation was a multi-sited ethnographic study (Marcus, 1995) that examined how researchers, nonprofits, law enforcement, and others define the problem of trafficking and respond to it in different locations and among different populations.

I attended public awareness campaign events put on by anti-trafficking organizations, the Arizona Governor's Human Trafficking Council public meetings, anti-trafficking trainings (both online and in-person) that were organized by ASU's Sex Trafficking Intervention Research Office and the National Criminal Justice Training Center of Fox Valley Technical College, as well as an anti-trafficking fundraising gala in a church that was put on by an anti-trafficking nonprofit to which the public was invited to attend. I identified and selected anti-trafficking events on the basis that they were describing the problem of trafficking in different ways in relation to, for example, sex work, domestic violence, online porn, the vulnerability of disabled children, methods of trafficking and techniques to identify them, historical perspectives, and trainings for various professions. At these events, I observed the presentations made to the audience by representatives of these organizations, with whom I had no personal interactions. I took field notes based on observations of the language they were using to publicly define human trafficking, who they articulated to be the primary victims and perpetrators of trafficking, and how their organizations were responding to the problem. I took field

notes based on observations of the language they were using to publicly define human trafficking, who they articulated to be the primary victims and perpetrators of trafficking, and how their organizations were responding to the problem.

After attending the 2019 Night of Dreams Gala in Phoenix, an anti-trafficking fundraiser that was put on by the Dream City Church and open to the public, my study became more focused. The event was attended by FLDS apostate and Short Creek resident, Verleen Jessop, who had testified in favor of Warren Jeffs in 2007, before she and her 10 children became clients of the SCDC. The director of the SCDC at the time, Jenna Jones, took the stage and explained to the audience that Jessop had been “forced” by Jeffs and the FLDS Church to support him in court or otherwise be sent to a “concentration camp for other mothers to be separated from their families” (Night of Dreams Gala, field observations, February 19th, 2019). As someone whose own family members were murdered in Poland during the Holocaust, this comparison raised questions in my mind about the validity of statements made by people representing the anti-trafficking movement from this point forward, because it became clear they were drawing on the power of atrocities that are commonly known by the American public, which typically lacks any substantive knowledge on such topics but understands the value of their cultural significance, to appeal to their audience. At this point, I had already noticed that the anti-trafficking movement had dramatically compared the experiences of people they identified as trafficking victims to those of African Americans during the trans-Atlantic slave trade and chattel slavery in the US, while equating themselves and their coalitional allies with the abolitionists who struggled to overthrow these institutions. Further, based on my understanding of how bourgeois white women have historically

characterized themselves as vulnerable, while at the same time, playing powerful roles in political organizing, I began to realize that this language was less useful for understanding the problem of trafficking, than a strategy to intrigue and entice the audience to support their cause.

Because ethnographic research and particularly participant observation “is by definition an intensely subjective process requiring systematic self-reflection” (Hallett, 2012, p. 11), while I once considered myself to be aligned with the mission of the anti-trafficking movement, through this research, I have come to understand that it both feeds upon and enacts the political, economic, and cultural facets of the global white supremacist power structure, to the degree that it causes far more exploitation than it prevents and demands its abolition. For reasons thus far discussed, making sense of the harmful impacts caused by anti-trafficking interventions and why they continue to occur, requires a critical examination of the relationship between nonprofits, law enforcement, academic researchers, as well as other participants in anti-trafficking coalitions (Heckler, 2019; Kindy, 2008; Lecheler, 2020; Samimi, 2010; The Nonprofit Times, 2018).

In examining the harms caused by the anti-trafficking response in Short Creek, through the lenses of white ignorance and the NPIC, I aim to contribute to the fields of critical trafficking studies, critical race theory, sex workers’ rights literature, critical legal studies, and ignorance studies. By centering the voices of marginalized groups whose experiences are often denied validity within the anti-trafficking movement, such as sex workers, Jews, and victims of Mormon polygamy, this research demonstrates how understanding the harms of anti-trafficking campaign discourse and interventions first requires unlearning problematic historical misconceptions on this matter regarding the

intersections of race, class, gender, and religion in the US. Rather than taking for granted the categories and structures of the anti-trafficking movement as it defines itself, it explores the underexamined relationships between those who are more-or-less identifiable as traffickers and victims, and accountable to its carceral capacities.

Since the history of the town of Short Creek is entangled with a larger story about anti-trafficking, within and beyond the Mormon Church, this project required reviewing historical (Bradley, 1993; Park, 2020; Smith, 2011), sociological (Bennion, 2004; Bennion & Joffe, 2016; Strassberg, 2003), and critical legal studies literature (Hervieu-Leger & Bennion, 2014; Quek, 2016; Jones, 2012) to make sense of the problem. Beginning in the 19th century white slavery movement, I traced the history of the anti-trafficking movement alongside the history of the FLDS, to contextualize the current state of the trafficking problem in Short Creek and the SCDC's interventions. Guided by the white ignorance and NPIC frameworks, this historical interrogation centers how middle and upper-class white women in the anti-trafficking movement, who often were leaders of nonprofit organizations, have deployed racist and xenophobic discourses to garner power and profit through their work with law enforcement. Further, given the deep influence of the QAnon movement on the anti-trafficking movement today, as well as the fact that the FLDS have equated their experiences to those of Jews under the Third Reich, I focused on the historical development of antisemitic discourses associating Jews with trafficking.

As previously discussed, several of critical trafficking scholars have acknowledged how the US anti-trafficking movement's awareness campaigns are organized around a denial that there is a direct relationship between the exploitation of

workers and the freedom of their empowered employers (Sharapov, Hoff, & Gerasimov, 2019, p. 10). The failure to understand these dynamics is form of white ignorance that not only normalizes the exploitation of all workers, but also contributes to the characterization of sex work as particularly exploitative, which affords the anti-trafficking movement's cause to appear particularly urgent. Key to understanding how the anti-trafficking movement reproduces white ignorance, unabated, is recognizing the fact that the knowledge produced by researchers concerning the problem of trafficking and how to solve it is not produced in a political, economic, and cultural vacuum.

The continuation of the anti-trafficking movement is contingent upon the epistemic ignorance of the American public from which they draw support. Since many anti-trafficking collaborators are incentivized to represent the problem of trafficking in a manner that is consistent with white supremacy, the normative onto-epistemological orientation in the context of the US, there is reason to be skeptical of the methodological validity of the research the anti-trafficking movement uses to rationalize their existence. This research is carefully constructed and selected, so as to project and image of the problem that targets marginalized groups in ways that are sometimes explicit and at other times, deeply nuanced, while also insulating more powerful social groups from criminalization. In other words, as Greenberg and Mandache (2017, p. 202) put it, "what is measured counts" and "what is not measured is by default nonexistent."

Critical trafficking scholars have pointed out that the topic of human trafficking can be particularly difficult to measure and even more difficult to convey to people outside of this field because its victims often represent a "hidden" population. Their invisibility is typically attributed to the stigma that comes with the criminalization of sex

work and immigration that prevents people from being able to come forward and speak to their experiences without fear of arrest. They also represent a “hidden” population because of how anti-trafficking coalitions have successfully expanded and conflated the language of trafficking to identify sex workers, sex buyers, pimps, migrants, and runaway youth as both “victims” and “traffickers,” all subject to criminalization.¹²⁰ By expanding the categories of people who fit within this framework of trafficking without accounting for this variation in research studies, academic scholars who legitimize these studies: “violate a fundamental scientific canon—namely, that generalizations cannot be based on unrepresentative samples” (Weitzer, 2015, p. 452).

In Arizona and throughout the US, anti-trafficking coalitions promote research about trafficking based on sources derived from police, government officials, and social scientists, all of whom are positioned to benefit personally by misrepresenting the realities of this problem through awareness. The most popular sources circulating through these coalitions are often outdated and depend on methodologically problematic measurements of trafficking (Estes & Weiner, 2001)¹²¹ that often reflect the interests of the organizations framing the issue (Koyama, 2011; Magnanti, 2012). Because the definition of trafficking is so deeply contested, quantitative trafficking research should be especially subject to scrutiny, as border scholars Greenberg and Mandache have pointed out:

¹²⁰ For example, in 2018, I attended a webinar called *Inside the Mind of a Trafficker*, where a self-described human trafficking subject matter expert and criminal investigator taught 14,000 online participants about how pimps are often recruited into pimping by sex workers themselves, equating sex workers and pimps, while also explaining that he came from a law enforcement background and did not profess to be an academic (D. Steele, field observations, September 26th, 2018).

¹²¹ STIR created a Teen Sex Trafficking Awareness brochure that touts the claim, “Between 244,000 and 325,000 American teens are considered ‘at risk’ for sexual exploitation, and an estimated 199,000 incidents of sexual exploitation of minors occur each year in the U.S.,” crediting Estes & Weiner (2001) study.

We need to look critically at how numbers and statistics are used politically. What needs to be understood is that...numbers are not simply a reflection of 'reality' but are important in defining it and, consequently, in assessing 'needs' and proposing 'solutions.' In this political process, numbers are in a constant and dialectical relationship with what happens on the ground. Hence statistics on poverty, violence, and wealth actually help to mold these phenomena. (2017, p. 201)

To grapple with the many quantitative, qualitative, and ideological problems and complexities of this topic, I also gathered flyers, brochures, lecture material, meeting minutes, and self-published memoirs written by nonprofit leaders, from which I found two statistics in consistent circulation: Specifically, that the average age of entry into prostitution in Arizona is 14-14.9 years old and there are an estimated 100,000 to 300,000 children trafficked or at risk of being trafficked in the US today (Estes & Weiner, 2001; McLaughlin, 2011; US Department of Justice, 2011).

There are a few basic problems with these numbers. These statistics are based on a study that has been long debunked by the authors themselves (Kessler, 2015), who claim that data was only gathered from people ages 18 and younger who had traded sex, skewing the average age of entry. Given the scope of this study, it is far less alarming to learn that the average of the reported age at which respondents entered the trade is below 18. Additionally, these statistics are inappropriately applied to specific areas like Arizona because they are based on a study of multiple nations. Regardless of the facts, because anti-trafficking coalitions continue to uncritically recycle these same statistics about

trafficking across the country, meaning that participants in trainings and awareness events continue to be disoriented about the scope and nature of the problem.

While these statistics have been commonly represented in Arizona and the greater US, the perspectives of those who have been impacted by the policies incited by them have been suppressed by people who conduct research on the problem of trafficking and society's responses to it. In her online essay, "The Price of Knowledge: Discrimination Against Sex Workers in Academia," (2015, p. 5), sex worker and scholar Juniper Fitzgerald explains how the pervasiveness of "whorephobia"¹²² among researchers within the academy, many of whom have played a part in US anti-trafficking activities, masquerades as a "politically correct form of classism" that "prohibits sex workers from fully participating in the public realm as scholars and agents"¹²³ of their own lives (Jello, 2015; Mac & Smith, 2018) . Because many of those in the academy who research the subject of sex trafficking also share the political ideology of sex worker exclusionary

¹²² According to the Meaningful Work Report (2015), "the intersection of transphobia, whorephobia, HIV stigma, racism and other discrimination leads to almost unimaginable harm" (p. 2). For example, sex workers may be differentially exposed to vulnerability in that the murder of a sex worker may not be investigated as thoroughly or at all as the murder of a woman who is deemed a victim of sex trafficking (known colloquially by law enforcement as "NHI-No Human Involved." The murder of sex workers may be rationalized by the media as something that should be expected in that line of dangerous work.

¹²³ For example, Swanee Hunt, a wealthy philanthropist, anti-trafficking activist, and founder of Cities Empowered Against Sexual Exploitation (CEASE) in Arizona has said of criticisms of the End-Demand approach from sex workers: "There is no 'other side' of the argument" and "they (sex workers) have no credible supporters" (Magnanti, 2018, p. 71). Playing on the historically stigmatizing trope that sex workers are disease carriers and thus not to be trusted because they threaten to contaminate the social body, Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz said in a 2013 interview, "Once you've prostituted you can never not have prostituted. Having that many body parts in your body parts, having that many body fluids near you and doing things that are freaky and weird really messes up your ideas of what a relationship looks like, and intimacy" (Crabapple, 2014). This quote was also used to criticize Project ROSE in Juno Mac and Molly Smith's (2018) book, *Revolting Prostitutes: The Fight for Sex Worker's Rights* (see p. 26, pp. 134-135); During my observations of Dr. Gail Dines' lecture about the relationship between trafficking and online pornography, in Phoenix she said: "You can't be a feminist and a pornographer. You have to pick-you can either be a feminist OR a pornographer and if you're a pornographer who's a woman then you're a pornographer with a vagina but that's different than being a feminist pornographer" (G. Dines, field observations, January 22nd, 2019).

radical feminists (SWERF),¹²⁴ such as Roe-Sepowitz, their disdain for and rejection of sex workers can correlate to the minimal amount of attention paid to violent, state interventions committed against them. As a consequence of the predominance of research produced by such figures, sex workers are “more susceptible to the abuses specific to patriarchy,” such as police violence or domestic violence. (Fitzgerald, 2015, p. 6; Fox10 Staff).

Feminist scholar Kristin Bumiller (2008) has described how anti-violence activists during the 1970s and 1980s began to professionalize their work, in part, by partnering with law enforcement and other state agencies to address this gender-based problem. These types of decisions in women’s campaigns to combat gender-based violence by working in complicity with the state has long fractured women’s rights groups along racial lines because, “in many cases, women’s demands for freedom from sexual oppression have been dissociated from the movement for racial justice” (Bumiller, 2008, p. 21). By using socially progressive concepts like abolition and intersectionality for retrograde purposes,¹²⁵ anti-trafficking coalitions subscribe to white ignorance (Hoagland, cited in Sullivan and Tuana 2007, p. 101), whether at the conscious or unconscious level. In other words, white anti-trafficking researchers and nonprofits that

¹²⁴ In Sophie Lewis’s (2017) article “SERF ‘n’ TERF,” she unpacks how “SWERFs” reproduce “a bourgeois myth about the relationship between capitalism and individual selves/bodies. It’s a myth that says that we can and must protect ourselves and bodies from commodification and technological contamination, the better to do healthful productive work” (n. pag).

¹²⁵ Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge (2016) draw from Jessie Daniels’ (1997) research of white supremacist literature to illustrate how white supremacists have used this theory as a lens to examine how the intersecting interests between “women Blacks, Jews, ‘mud people,’ lesbians, and various forms of mixing” have contributed to the “root cause of the declining fortune of white men” on the basis that, for example, “lesbians, who are assumed to be Jewish, push their feminist values on white women” (p. 40).

work with the police are failing to recognize the historical and ongoing hostile relationship between people of color and law enforcement.

The further assimilation of gender-based issues, particularly regarding sexual violence, persisted into the 1990s through the framing of sexual violence as an issue of public health and basic human rights. Scholar Alice Miller (2004) explains that to secure government funding, “the search for credibility for women’s human rights tended... to emphasize social respectability, such that women’s groups, trying to raise attention to real abuses and denials of women’s sexual rights, predominantly focused on condemning sexual harm” among men “rather than demanding sexual agency” for women (2004, p. 40). Because many of these activists have been middle and upper-class, the interventions they catalyze are often disconnected from the needs of women in other racial and/or marginalized social groups who have differentially impacted by state violence.

The anti-trafficking movement’s focus on criminalizing men who cause sexual harm, rather than elevating women’s sexual agency is because it “is primarily a Christian fundamentalist movement with police, prison, immigration enforcement, counterterrorism, and other ‘law and order’ interests piggybacking on it” (Koyama, 2011, P. 1-2). The movement is not perceived to be successful not because the people it serves claim it has improved their lives, but rather because it “measures the success of its own activities by the number of criminal convictions rather than the long-term health and well-being of women and children (Koyama, 2011, pp. 1-2). Therefore, by prioritizing Christian morality, as it is codified in law, over women’s decision to sell sex, anti-trafficking actors have produced an ecology of ignorance that has resulted in widespread harm and the reproduction of racial capitalism.

Without random sampling of trafficking victim populations, it is impossible to assess the scale and scope of people that are being impacted and exploited by the interventions of these coalitions. By taking a qualitative, ethnographic approach to this research study I sought to conduct a “random sample” of the different social groups being identified as trafficking victims in Arizona by coalitional service providers. Using participant observation methods and ethnographic data analysis, framed by critical theory,¹²⁶ I examined individual testimonies of law enforcement, academics, and service providers involved in these anti-trafficking coalitions as a population of study for the purpose of being able to get a better sense for what it means to have a “human trafficking problem” in Short Creek.

One of the initial methodological challenges for this study of human trafficking was to decide whether to study one site in Arizona or conduct a multi-sited project across multiple locations within the state. To avoid the potential of becoming too overwhelmed with a multi-site project, while minimizing the potential of one site being too limiting to reflect the experiences of trafficked persons, critical trafficking scholar Denise Brennan (2005) recommends conducting this sort of research at the city or statewide level without “risking missed opportunities for serendipity and nuanced examinations of people’s lives” (2005, p. 40). Following Brennan’s recommendation, this research was limited to

¹²⁶ Due to its interdisciplinary nature, this project is informed by multiple critical fields including critical race theory (Bonilla-Silva, 2013; Crenshaw, 1989; Fellows & Razack, 1998; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 2015; Olsen, 2004; Omi & Winant, 2014; Ross & Solinger, 2017), critical trafficking studies (Ho, 2012; Hoang & Parrenas, 2014; Jahic & Finckenauer, 2005; McCracken, 2013; McDonald, 2004; Meri Jones & Brown, 2014), feminist theory (Grant, 1993; Levine & Meiners, 2020; Medley, 2019; Miller-Young, 2013; Smith & Attwood, 2013; Spade, 2013; Spade & Willse, 2014; Tuana & Sullivan, 2007), critical perspectives of history (Bravo, 2007; Gordon, 2017; Hall, 2006; Harcourt, 2017; Jones-Rogers, 2019; Ollus, 2015; Pateman & Mills, 2007; Smith, 2006, 2015), and sex worker’s rights literature (Jacobsen & Skilbrei, 2010; Jackson, 2016; Jagori, 2012; Karvelis, 2013; Kim & Chang, 2007; Marcus, Horning, & Curtis, 2014; National Sex Workers Outreach Project, 2020; Showden & Majic 2018).

the city of Phoenix during the first three years of study, where I observed the work of members of law enforcement, philanthropists, and academic researchers who concerned themselves with the problem of trafficking.

When I was still focused on Phoenix, to address critical trafficking scholar Jill Nagle's (2002, p. 1182) concern that the "personal fascinations" of anti-trafficking coalitional actors often "go unmentioned or grossly undertheorized" in research about trafficking, I observed local leaders such of the movement such as Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz, Detective Amber Campbell of the Phoenix Human Trafficking Vice Unit, AZHTC chair member Cindy McCain, and Pastor Brian Steele, victim services committee chair of the AZHTC and anti-trafficking nonprofit leader, who were all involved in the facilitation of local anti-trafficking events. From these observations, I was able to glean insights regarding these professionals' unique perspectives about the anti-trafficking movement there that would have been much more difficult to obtain through discourse analysis alone. Specifically, from these observations, I was able to uncover the central role and expansive reach of one anti-trafficking nonprofit organization, the Dream Center, within the Arizona anti-trafficking movement and the directives of the greater NPIC.

I attended the Night of Dreams anti-trafficking annual gala in Phoenix at DCC in 2019 where I observed Pastor Steele, who represented the AZHTC, the PDC, and the SCDC, emceeding the event to raise money to combat human trafficking in the community of Short Creek. From this event, the site of this project began to shift to a wider comparison between Phoenix and Short Creek, Arizona, in response to learning that there was an anti-trafficking shelter being established in a historic polygamous town in

Arizona. This was the first time I had heard the language of trafficking used outside the context of organ trafficking, sex work, and immigration. Following these observations, during the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic

I conducted these field observations from the Night of Dreams fundraiser in Phoenix, Arizona in February 2019, the Night of a Million Dreams fundraiser in Short Creek, Arizona in October 2021, and firsthand observations of the Short Creek community, when I traveled there in the fall of 2021 and attended a public tour of the SCDC. I viewed this as an opportunity to examine some of the contexts that give rise to different meanings of trafficking in geographically bound locations, such as Short Creek.

Ethnographic research about trafficking in the community of Short Creek is advantageous, in part, because there are very few-if any-localized studies of resettled trafficked persons in the United States (Brennan, 2005). In this study, to remember the history of Short Creek is to remember how the meaning of trafficking has been “defined by and intimately linked to” the land and people there based on a recurring persecution myth about government discrimination against the FLDS from that community for the practice of polygamy (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 68). Since the 1930s, people from this town have told stories about being subject to numerous police raids and the mass arrests of residents based on religious discrimination for the practice of polygamy. What they have been less forthcoming about is that these raids and arrests were in response to allegations of a range of crimes including child abuse, bigamy, underage marriage, and human trafficking, which was known, historically, as white slavery.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Based on a review of congressional and child custody reports following the raids on the FLDS in 1953 and 2008, it appears that evidence collected in these reports has either been dismissed or overlooked in most of the literature such as the significant rates of teen and adolescent pregnancies and marriages

Because there is a well-documented history of trafficking interventions among the Short Creek polygamists tracing back to a raid by the state of Arizona in 1953, Short Creek, Arizona was ideal for examining the historical particulars of human trafficking and how those particulars inform trafficking today. In other words, since the people who are currently running the town are predominantly people who are polygamists or polygamist sympathizers, there is a need for better, historically grounded data about trafficking in this town beyond the scope of awareness being raised by the SCDC. By examining how experts and local leaders informed meanings of trafficking in Short Creek in the past through direct observations and reviewing of anti-trafficking awareness campaign events online led by leaders of the SCDC, I will consider the possible implications of this term's variability for identifying victims and providing necessary resources to support them in the present.

A major task for representatives of the SCDC, who, as a charitable nonprofit organization, have been serving victims of trafficking in Arizona since 2008 (B. Steele, field observations, February 7th, 2019), has been to bridge the gap between the Mormon fundamentalist world and mainstream America to create a palatable story about redemption, the protestant work ethic, and progress in the aftermath of Warren Jeffs' reign and imprisonment. To make this narrative possible, they paint a picture of the Jeffs' era (1998-present) in stark contrast to the town's history in line with traditional American ideals from the founding of the town up until the 1990s through online awareness campaigns sponsoring the SCDC:

between girls as young as twelve to men old enough to be their fathers or grandfathers (Committee on the Judiciary United States Senate, 2008; United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary, 1955), risking erasing this important data from the historical record.

[Short Creek] is a beautiful town with a lot of history that is rapidly growing and changing. But when we first came to (the town) we weren't exactly sure what to expect. We had heard some pretty crazy stories from the outside news media. Stories about the God Squad and big trucks that would intimidate and follow you everywhere, kids that would yell profanities and throw rocks at you, and a general disdain for outsiders. We found that this couldn't be further from the truth. The news media had distorted the image of this city and what the people here are really like. The people of Short Creek are very friendly and trusting and we felt completely comfortable and at ease right away. This is a town just like any other small town in America. The only real difference is that about half the population is FLDS. (Totally Trailer, 2016a)

Between 2015 and 2016, the Phoenix Dream Center began working with law enforcement who were from the town of Short Creek to take girls out of the community, escaping human trafficking through being arranged in plural marriage within the FLDS Church. Based on the Dream Center's influential role in the Arizona anti-trafficking movement, combined with the success and profitability of their nonprofit, the Dream Center has had to find new and creative ways to describe to wealthy donors and state agencies how trafficking has differently stricken communities in places where they want to set up a new Dream Center.

I gathered perspectives of the PDC Director, Pastor Brian Steele, and the original directors of the SCDC, evangelical Christian missionaries, Glyn and Jena Jones, SCDC

executive director Angel Barnett, and other SCDC leaders and affiliates from a combination of observations from the 2019 Night of Dreams gala and social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.¹²⁸ For example, Brian D. Steele's YouTube channel meant to teach new Dream Center directors how to purchase a building (Brian D. Steele, 2018p), acquire clients (Brian D. Steele, 2018o, 2018p, 2018q, 2018w), and secure donor funding (Brian D. Steele, 2018y, 2018ee, 2020b) also helped me begin to develop an understanding of the NPIC and the different players involved. Additionally, I examined videos from the Jones's YouTube channel documentary (Totally Trailer, 2016; 2016a), where they shared with people the changes that were occurring in Short Creek.

From these data sources, I found that a common storyline across most of these anti-trafficking awareness campaign events often compared to the historical struggles of Black people in the under chattel slavery and during the civil rights movement¹²⁹ to the contemporary fight to end modern day slavery. These storylines appeared to be uncritically accepted by the people I observed around me during field events. However, I

¹²⁸ See References page from Glyn and Jena Jones' open-access Facebook page, where they have photos posted of themselves and members of the AZHTC standing on the steps of the SCDC (Jones 2019d), photos with Jena Jones and Mayor Donia Jessop from the AZHTC bi-monthly meeting in downtown Phoenix (Jones 2019e), photos of Glyn Jones practice-tasing Willie Jessop's son, Danny, in the Hildale City Council Courtroom (Jones 2017a), and photos of the Joneses working and joking around with the Colorado City Marshals (Jones 2019g).

¹²⁹ During the initial four years of my observations, nearly all the events I attended made some sort of reference to Black chattel slavery, the transatlantic slave trade, or the civil rights movement. For example: I attended one event hosted by a nonprofit called Just Men Arizona, where one of the speakers told new volunteer recruits: "Unlike slavery in the 16th and 17th century this is like taking Google or Apple down in comparison to taking down African slavery!" (N. Lembo, field observations, January 13th, 2018). Another event, co-sponsored by ASU STIR and the McCain Institute, was called "Strength to Love" and was intended to be a "burn-out" training for social workers working with trafficking victims. Images of and quotes from Martin Luther King Jr. were featured prominently in this training as a way of motivating social workers to find the strength to continue to love and care about their clients "when no one else will" (D. Roe-Sepowitz, field observations, September 10th, 2018).

learned during the 2019 Night of Dreams fundraiser at DCC that human trafficking in Short Creek, Arizona was being compared differently based on the experiences of European Jews during the Holocaust (1939-1945), with a man named Warren Jeffs being compared to Adolph Hitler. After that event, to better understand why the trafficking situation in Short Creek was being compared to the Holocaust rather than chattel slavery, like it was in Phoenix, I examined secondary source interviews¹³⁰ from podcasts and social media platforms like YouTube with philanthropists and service providers affiliated with the SCDC, including the nonprofit's original co-directors, Pastors Glyn and Jena Jones, Pastor Angel Barnett, and Pastor Brian Steele, who served as chair of the victims' services committee for the AZHTC and director of the PDC (Brian D. Steele, 2018, 2019, 2020; Coastline Church, 2020; Colvin, 2018; Michael Carroll Podcast, 2020; Mission Support, 2022; NorthStarAcademy1, 2020; Perry, 2020; Radius Church, 2021; Servolution, 2018; Standing Together, 2020; Zeder, 2020).

Testimonies are not simply random, sporadic stories people tell, devoid of ideological content. Because the storyteller is either a participant in the story or close to its characters, testimonies provide the appearance of “authenticity and emotional intensity” unique to firsthand accounts (Smith & Attwood, 2013, p. 97). Testimonies help narrators generate sympathy from their audiences or help persuade people about certain points they want to convey. Many individual testimonies told by whites serve rhetorical functions with regard to racial issues such as saving face, signifying nonracialism, or propping up controversial, racially motivated arguments (Bonilla-Silva, 2013).

¹³⁰ I began my investigation into this question in June 2020 through the means of secondary interview sources because by this point, conducting in person interviews and attending in person events was not possible because of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Testimonies are also often closely linked to storylines as personal experiences are typically understood and interpreted through the lens of more broad, racial narratives and understandings of the world.

While service providers and affiliates with the SCDC suggest that the community has been “re-vitalized” since Warren Jeffs has been in prison, based on specific testimonies, Denise Brennan’s (2005) study about methodological challenges in trafficking research suggests that there are reasons to be cautious of this predetermined victory. In consideration of the validity of these stories, as told through second-hand accounts, Brennan (2005) explains that while service providers most often perceive themselves as trustworthy, “there is no self-evident reason” that trafficking victims “would automatically regard them as such” (p. 42). Because victim testimony can serve as a form of currency in anti-trafficking fundraising efforts, carefully cultivated testimonies often mask the more complicated relationships between charities and their trafficking clients and how these relationships came to be. For this reason, in addition to SCDC service provider testimonies, including the testimonies of people from the community who work for the SCDC, this research is also informed by testimonies from 65 individual interviews with people from the FLDS on YouTube, Spotify, and other media sources to access a diverse sample of people’s experiences in Short Creek, reflecting back.¹³¹

¹³¹ In addition to watching and listening to these interviews with people from the Mormon polygamist group, the FLDS, I listened to several interviews with people from the AUB Group (Hansen Park, 2015a; Survivors Podcast, 2019), the Kingstons (Hanson, 2013; Survivors Podcast, 2018h), the Centennial Park Group (Survivors Podcast, 2018), and the LeBaron group (DeMuth, 2017). I also read one personal memoir written by Kristyn Decker, a former member of the AUB Group, daughter of the Prophet Dr. Rulon Allred, and founder of the nonprofit organization, Sound Choices Coalition (Decker 2013). Decker is also the adopted mother of SCDC service provider Briell Decker, Warren Jeffs’ former 65th wife.

To inquire into the validity of these testimonies, I began by studying the testimonies of Briell Decker,¹³² who was initially a central figure informing my understanding of human trafficking in Short Creek before her stories of being in the FLDS Church led me to others. When she was a member of the FLDS, Briell was known as Lynette Warner, and between the ages of 18 to 26, she was the 65th wife to the Prophet, Warren Jeffs. Today, Briell Decker is an important figure in Short Creek, as she is now the face of the SCDC.¹³³ Based on a review of 12 interviews (Burton, 2019; Fear, 2021; Kelly, 2018; Pienecker, 2023; Roberts & Soncrant, 2020; Talbot, 2019; Fuel Your Legacy Show Podcast, 2020; Hansen Park, 2017; Heart of the Matter, 2019; Geier, 2019; McVey & Ray, 2020) with Briell Decker since she left the FLDS Church, her story about being trafficked appears emblematic of the ideal sex trafficking victim narrative.¹³⁴ I used Briell's interviews to identify other FLDS apostates to build out the collaborative anti-

¹³² One of Rulon Jeffs' wives, Alicia Rohbock, was married to another one of Warren's brothers, Leroy Jeffs. Rulon's 19th wife, Rebecca Musser, refused to remarry and fled the community with the help of another male member.

¹³³ Short Creek Dream Center (2023). In a podcast interview, SCDC director Konstance Meredith explained: "Not everyone in the town is happy about the fact that the Short Creek Dream Center has Warren Jeffs' mansion, but it doesn't matter because that's what *Briell's* dream was" (Murphy, 2021). In a video produced by DCC showcasing the SCDC, a narrator says: "Surrendered by her parents to be Warren Jeffs' 65th wife, teen bride Briell Decker staged a dramatic escape, changed her name, and went into hiding. After his sentencing Briell requested to obtain Jeffs' compound and was granted approval to purchase the property. Within just a few months Briell began working with the Phoenix Dream Center to try to turn a place of horror into a place of healing. As the #1 Nonprofit Organization in the World that addresses the Human Trafficking Crisis while also serving struggling families, addicts, homeless, disadvantaged, we at the Dream Center could not say no. Our compassionate nonprofit organization transforms buildings to transform lives and communities. Noting our effort and effectiveness, Colorado City Mayor Donia Jessop, along with leaders such as Arizona Governor Doug Ducey and Cindy McCain all strongly endorse the SCDC initiatives and today we're asking YOU to join these leaders as we seek your influence, your insight, and your investment. Dream with us as we reimagine the city and rebuild lives" (Dream City Church, 2019).

¹³⁴ After refusing to consummate the marriage, Warren Jeffs had her drugged by FLDS members and eventually put under house arrest in her brother's home. Her brother locked Decker in a bedroom and secured the window with two screws to prevent her from opening it while he was away at work. However, she was able to slowly pick at the screws, crawl out the window, and follow back roads for 2 miles until she found the home of a woman in town who had recently left the church with her family.

trafficking network from members of the AZHTC to powerful religious apostates of the FLDS Church and the people they govern in Short Creek. By looking at these data, I piece together a more complex narrative about human trafficking in Short Creek than is presently offered.

After drawing a baseline through Decker's testimonies, I began to analyze stories told by people from the church as well as stories from people affiliated with the SCDC (Arizona Governor's Human Trafficking Council, 2019; Burton, 2019; Brian D. Steele, 2018h, 2018i; Hope Heroes, 2022, Mission Support, 2022), recounting secondhand interviews with and observations of Arizona anti-trafficking advocates, people who have left the FLDS, and active FLDS members in Short Creek, Arizona obtained from podcasts (DeLynn, 2022; Hansen Park, 2015; Ventry & Sanders, 2020; Zeder, 2020), YouTube (Coastline Church, 2020; Creekers Foundation, 2018; Creekers Foundation 2018a; Dolphe, 2019; Unfiltered Stories, 2022; Zitting-Wyson & Zitting-Wyson, 2022), television (Abrahamson, 2018; AZ Family Arizona News, 2022; Elford-Argent, 2022; Fox13 News Utah, 2022; Mike Watkiss, 2008; Mike Watkiss, 2011, Mike Watkiss, 2011b, Mike Watkiss, 2011c; Oprah Winfrey Network, 2015), newspapers (Carlisle, 2019; Hollenhorst, 2006; Nelson, 2018; Richardson, 2019; Tory 2016; Vine, 2018; Winslow, 2006, 2008, 2022; Young, 2008), and documentary interviews (Berg, 2015; Dretzen & McNally, 2021; Measom & Merten, 2010; Neumann & Mucciolo, 2019; Sacred Groves, 2016), spanning from the early 1950s to today. Despite the fact that the actual language of "trafficking" was sparse throughout stories, these unique testimonials contribute to piecing together a larger puzzle of the history of trafficking in Short Creek.

In a review of the Short Creek community's complex past, Mormon historian Martha Sontag Bradley (1993) reveals that anti-trafficking raids carried out by coalitional interventions have a lengthy history in the town which has generated broad suspicion and mistrust for government and law enforcement in FLDS culture. To understand the impact of FLDS trafficking victims' mistrust for state officials and the barriers this mistrust creates for identifying additional victims, data collected speaks to the history of the 1953 Arizona police raid on Short Creek gathered from Bradley's (1993) text, as well as additional historical retellings of the raid and information from the Primer: Helping Victims of Domestic Violence and Child Abuse in Polygamous Communities (Shurtleff & Goddard, 2006), a collaborative government project between the Attorneys General in Arizona and Utah. Data was also gathered from more than 75 online individual interviews (DeLynn, 2022; Fear, 2021; Geier, 2019; Hansen Park, 2015; Hansen Park, 2017; HDNetWorldReport, 2011; Survivors Podcast, 2018), media spotlights (AZ Family, 2017; Bleier, 2023; Duara, 2016; Eaton, 2023; Goodwyn, Berkes, & Walters, 2005; Kociela, 2018), and personal memoirs (Jeffs, 2009; Jeffs, 2017; Jessop & Palmer, 2007; Jessop & Brown, 2009; Kimbel, 2020; Musser, 2013; Wall 2008; Wall 2015) with former and current members of the FLDS. These data sources were chosen for this study because of their availability and the fact these interviews were directed towards a Mormon audience, which undoubtedly informed their commentary.

Scholars have written about the traumatizing effects of anti-trafficking raids on the Mormon polygamists as well as their skepticism regarding the legitimacy of state intervention. This research supports the historical persecution myth that raids on FLDS communities like the one in Short Creek, Arizona and El Dorado, Texas have always

occurred based on the government's "dislike" for the Mormon religion and intolerance for their polygamous family structure (Adams, Wright, Diener, & White, 2013; Bradley, 1993; Creekers Foundation, 2018; Creekers Foundation 2018a; Johnson, 1998; DeLynn, 2022). However, a review of congressional and child custody reports following the anti-trafficking raids on the FLDS in 1953 and 2008 revealed teen and adolescent pregnancies and marriages between girls as young as twelve to men old enough to be their fathers or grandfathers (Committee on the Judiciary United States Senate, 2008; Congressional Subcommittee Raid Report, 1955).

Since the people who are currently running the town are predominantly people who are polygamists or polygamist sympathizers, we need better, historically grounded data about trafficking in this town beyond the scope of awareness being raised by the SCDC. By examining how experts and local leaders informed meanings of trafficking in Short Creek in the past, I will consider the possible implications of this term's variability for identifying victims and providing necessary resources to support them in the present. According to secondhand testimonials of people from the FLDS (B. Decker, field observations, October 1st, 2021; Bleier, 2023; Burton, 2019; Johnson, 2018) and "gentile" outsiders (Coastline Church, 2020; Hanson, 2013; Joyce Meyers Ministries, 2022; Murphy, 2021; The Assembly Podcast, 2020) working with this group through nonprofits such as the Dream Center, this study reveals the capacity of anti-trafficking coalitions in Arizona to obscure the harms of their interventions across different localities through historical distortions, inconsistencies, and denials of how they have entered different communities under the banner of "anti-trafficking."

To decode these differences and generate a sense of understanding for how human trafficking was occurring in Short Creek, I examined how this issue was being conveyed based on stories being told by service providers and affiliates of the SCDC, other nonprofit, foundation, and trust leaders in Short Creek. By examining individual testimonials of service providers involved in these anti-trafficking coalitions online, I had the opportunity to understand how facts about trafficking are being produced and interpreted in ways that do not necessarily reflect the experiences of the people they describe. Using the method of triangulation (McCracken, 2013), I began tracing consistencies and gaps in these peoples' stories about their experiences in Short Creek according to the audience that they were addressing.

I gathered testimonial data and direct observations from the perspectives of PDC Director, Pastor Brian Steele and the original directors of the SCDC, evangelical Christian missionaries, Glyn and Jena Jones, from a combination of 1) field observations from the 2019 Night of Dreams gala, where they emceed; 2) Brian D. Steele's YouTube channel meant to teach new Dream Center directors how to purchase a building, acquire clients, and secure donor funding, and Glyn and Jena Jones' YouTube channel documentary their year long journey around the country as the deal for the SCDC was being made, and; 3) online podcast interviews¹³⁵ and church presentations with Steele, Glyn and Jena Jones, and Pastor Angel Barnett where they shared with people the changes that were occurring in Short Creek. This research revealed that these SCDC

¹³⁵ See References page where I provide approximately fifty references from Brian D. Steele's YouTube Channel intended to provide new Dream Center directors with insider tips about how to go about find, securing, building, and expanding a Dream Center in different places around the country (Brian D. Steele, 2018; Brian D. Steele 2018a; Brian D. Steele 2018b; Brian D. Steele 2018c).

representatives were strategically choosing what information to present based upon their audience, which in many cases was contradictory, to attract support for their nonprofit. These interviews allowed me to document thematic consistencies and inconsistencies in their stories about trafficking in Short Creek, which were often juxtaposed against stories of Jews during Holocaust and images of “Third World” war refugees.

From testimonial data collected from online interviews, promotional videos, and church guest presentations, it became clear that the SCDC’s primary strategy for legitimizing the work they were doing in Short Creek in the name of “anti-trafficking” was by attributing the problem to Warren Jeffs’ regime and comparing their experiences of oppression to African Americans and the Jews, derived from secondhand accounts told by FLDS apostates. However, while there is a high demand for trafficking survivors to share the juicy details of their trauma on television or at public charity events, many people choose not to share their stories with the public, despite the coercive power of criminalization and the prospect of personal gain, which “creates an environment in which the same stories get retold while many go untold” (Brennan, 2005, p. 44). Under these conditions, the service providers who inform anti-trafficking interventions, some of whom do not have direct experiences being trafficked, only have access to secondhand stories, which in the case of the SCDC, has produced limited perceptions of this complex issue.

Based on sex worker’s rights literature and research, which identifies measurements of anti-trafficking success shared among SWERFs, law enforcement, and nonprofit service providers, as posing a serious threat to their health, safety, and livelihood; I sought to understand how these groups were telling stories about human

trafficking “in repressive voices” in Phoenix and Short Creek in ways that could be clearly delineated, defined, and measured by observing the people in power defining the problem in each location (Doezema, 2002, p. 5). According to the coalition in this study, whose members executed Project ROSE and orchestrate the SCDC, people, mostly women, who purport to exercise choice in the sale of sex do not represent most people’s experiences being exploited through trafficking in the sex industry and thus, are not accounted for in the data and research (D. Roe-Sepowitz, field observations, November 23rd, 2019). While at the same time, in Short Creek, the SCDC’s presence continues at the discretion of FLDS apostates who distinguish trafficking from polygamy on the basis that it can produce a range of “diverse perspectives” (Creekers Foundation, 2018; Creekers Foundation 2018b), suggesting that those who have had negative experiences as plural wives, even those who have been underage at the time of their marriage, should not take precedence over those who have not. Given that polygamous marriage is illegal in Arizona and involves an exchange of sexual and reproductive labor for something of value, the discrepancy in anti-trafficking coalitional responses to polygamy and sex work speaks to how the NPIC is oriented towards the interests of white Christians and those they partner with.

As a contribution to the larger field of critical trafficking studies (Agustin, 2007; Baker, 2018; Bernstein, 2007, 2018; Doezema, 1998, 2002, 2005, 2010; Fukushima, 2014; Khan, 2015; Lutnick, 2017; Musto, 2009, 2013, 2016; Olayiwola, 2019; Parrenas, 2007; Ras & Gregoriou, 2019; Saunders, 2005; Weitzer, 2007, 2012; Zimmerman, 2013), by examining how the Dream Center describes and responds to human trafficking from the city of Phoenix to Short Creek, Arizona, through racialized stories about trafficking,

this research sheds light on blind spots in popular assumptions about the legitimacy of anti-trafficking coalitional activism in the US, based on sex worker’s rights scholarship (Chateauvert, 2013; Fitzgerald, 2017; Gira-Grant, 2014; Koyama, 2011; Mac & Smith, 2018; Magnanti, 2012; Showden & Majic, 2014; West & Horn, 2021; Starr, 2018), critical legal studies (Jones, 2012; Chuang, 2010, 2014, 2015; Citron, 2019), and critical race theory (Crenshaw, 1989; Bonilla-Silva, 2013; Glenn, 2002; Hoagland, 2007; Olsen, 2004; Omi & Winant, 2014; Pateman & Mills, 2007; Mills, 2007; Robinson, 1983; Sullivan, 2014).

The data informing this study was analyzed through the lens of the NPIC and white ignorance to better understand the harms caused by the interventions of anti-trafficking coalitions in the US. Like many studies about human trafficking in the US, the conclusions drawn from this research are not derived from the analysis of data collected through random sampling of people who identify as victims due to the complexity and localized nature of the trafficking problem. This site-specific study focuses on why a population that regularly facilitates trafficking as part of their religious practice is largely immune to criminalization despite being the center of “victim centered” anti-trafficking interventions, which has greater implications for why they are harmful to less privileged communities.

This study reveals important findings for understanding the trafficking problem and the movement tasked with addressing, but there are some limitations that should be acknowledged. First, while the NPIC framework presumes the actors discussed are motivated by power and profit, their full motivations are certainly more complex and can ultimately only be speculated about. These criticisms in this study are not intended to

degrade the character of the people who are discussed, but rather to examine the social consequences of collective decisions. Second, because people's membership within the Mormon polygamous groups (Sola, 2023), including FLDS Church, exists on a continuum, it was often difficult to convey to readers whether a particular person was an apostate or FLDS member.¹³⁶¹³⁷ I attribute this largely to the fact that polygamy persists in a liminal state of criminality and that the people living in this community are incentivized to disassociate themselves with the crimes of Warren Jeffs' regime.

Chapter Summary

In order to critique the “victim centered” approach guiding interventions of anti-trafficking coalitions, I sought to understand how nonprofits, foundations, and law enforcement agencies have derived power and profit from their capacity to define the meaning of trafficking in local, regional, national, and transnational contexts, what it means to be a “victim” of trafficking, and how to best respond to trafficking in a manner that appeals to their sources of political and economic support. The proceeding chapters seek to unveil: 1) the historical and symbolic role that Jews have played as violent perpetrators in the US anti-trafficking movement imaginary; 2) the historical and symbolic role that white women have played as victims in the US anti-trafficking movement imaginary; 3) how legal conceptions of trafficking, in different historical contexts, have had the ability to both criminalize people of color and decriminalize white

¹³⁶ Shirlee Draper said in a podcast interview representing the UEP Trust that the FLDS: “are not necessarily above misleading people. They’re manipulating the truth and misusing information to make it look like they’re persecuted when it’s just not the truth” (Hansen Park, 2020). However, she also says, later in the interview: “Even the ones who still follow Warren...they’re still my people” (Hansen Park, 2017a).

Christian traffickers; and 4) how white ignorance regarding the histories of chattel slavery and antisemitism in the US has afforded white Christians, whether they be FLDS or evangelical Protestants, to distort the histories of trafficking in Short Creek; enabling anti-trafficking coalitions thrive politically, economically, and culturally off of these significant gaps in collective historical knowledge.

Critical trafficking scholars have written extensively about anti-Black and xenophobic discourses in the anti-trafficking movement, but little about antisemitism following the end of the US white slavery movement in the 1920s, which is why the general understanding of the anti-trafficking movement's history presumes it was dormant until the 1990s. To address this theoretical, historical, and transnational gap, the first part of chapter three of this dissertation examines how anti-trafficking coalitions formed in the late 19th century in response to racialized¹³⁸ anxieties of middle and upper-class whites regarding the abolition of slavery and the influx of women and people of color into the labor market, as well as major migration shifts and specifically the influx of Eastern European immigrants, many of whom were Jewish, into the US. During this period, white slavery became a major subject of concern in both the US and in Europe, as reformers in both places sought to connect assumptions about "male lasciviousness," particularly among Blacks and Jews, "to declining national power and the demise of an empire" (Soderlund, 2013, p. 47). While the impact of white slavery discourse in the 1930s-1940s US may have lost steam in terms of targeting Jews, the

¹³⁸ Throughout this project I consider the language of "racism" as interchangeable with antisemitism based on the Nuremberg Laws established under the Third Reich in 1935 which sought to fuse race with law and assert that the Aryan race was entirely distinct and hierarchical to Jews in Europe (The Holocaust Encyclopedia, 2021).

evolution of this discourse in Europe, and specifically Nazi Germany, undoubtedly contributed to the first industrial genocide of 6 million Eastern Europeans, driven by the myth of the inferior Jewish race.

Then, *Part II* traces how the myth about Jewish “white slavers” and “pimp-traffickers” have been reinvigorated since the white slavery movement appeared to have lost momentum in the US. This is achieved through an archival exploration of how coalitions conducted research, raised awareness about trafficking, and carried out interventions that caused harm; a legacy that has since taken on a colorblind character, even among Jews, and continues, through coded racist and antisemitic discourses, to prompt racist political mobilization, whether through direct violent action by groups affiliated with QAnon’s Save the Children movement, which poses a threat to the future of Jews around the world.

After illustrating how anti-trafficking coalitions have consistently weaponized their own white grievances in the previous chapter, by co-opting the experiences of social groups to rationalize their criminalization to secure power and profit, the fourth chapter shifts the conversation towards another gap in the theoretical and historical understanding of critical trafficking studies. Specifically, it seeks to make visible the history of middle and upper-class white Protestant women’s leadership and involvement in the anti-trafficking movement in the past and present, who draw on the material and symbolic power of their capacity for reproduction to uphold white supremacy. Centered in the late-19th and early-20th centuries, *Part I* draws on critical trafficking historians (Bernstein, 2018; Bristow, 1982; Boris & Berg, 2014; Plilely, 2010; Soderlund, 2013), feminist theorists and sexuality studies (Grant, 1993; Kipnis, 1998; Levine & Meiners, 2020;

Taormino, Shimizu, Penley, & Miller-Young, 2013; West & Horn, 2021), and scholarship about the roles of women in far-right extremist and racist organizing (Belew, 2018; Belew & Gutierrez, 2021; Blee, 2002, 2018; Gordon, 2017; Gilmore, 1996; Jones-Rogers, 2019; Lower, 2013; Newman, 1999; Ware, 2015). After this history is laid out, *Part II* examines the historical legacies of these bourgeois white Protestant women in the context of the anti-trafficking movement in the US and Arizona today, who reproduce the harms caused by their progenitors through colorblind and raceless discourses like the QAnon conspiracy theory, because explicit racism and xenophobia would hinder their capacity to garner resources from public and private institutions.

Drawing on the historical and contemporary data uncovered thus far in the study, chapter five seeks to address a theoretical and historical oversight in critical trafficking studies. As a field that rejects the validity of research suggesting the widespread problem of white slavery, for both its methodological weakness and in recognition of how the language of trafficking was deployed by coalitional movements to reproduce racial capitalism, critical trafficking scholars have overlooked how white Christian groups like the FLDS have trafficked women and girls for nearly two centuries. After briefly delineating the early history, politics, and beliefs of the Mormon church, *Part I* describes how, more than 30 years after the movement is generally considered to have come to a halt, law enforcement and other state officials used the language of white slavery to raid the town of Short Creek in 1953, where men were frequently marrying to multiple underaged girls. Through an examination of the public backlash from the raid,¹³⁹ which

¹³⁹ The 1953 raid resulted in the arrests of dozens of FLDS men and several FLDS women as well as the separation of FLDS children from their families for two years. The raid cost thousands of dollars (Bradley, 1993) in taxpayer funding, required resources from multiple government agencies as well as transportation,

was portrayed in the media to be an unwarranted intervention tantamount to religious discrimination, *Part II* explains how this event generated a persecution myth that insulated this community from criminalization in the decades leading up to the rise of Warren Jeffs' regime. By examining this archival history, the chapter illuminates how anti-trafficking coalitions' capacity to define the victims and perpetrators of trafficking renders populations increasingly vulnerable to harm¹⁴⁰ because it is more oriented by service providers' interests than effectively addressing the problem.

The historical narrative of Short Creek that informs how the AZHTC responds to the problem of trafficking there was generated in 2019 by a woman from the FLDS named Donia Jessop, who portrays the trafficking problem as isolated to the Warren Jeffs' regime, conflicting with longstanding and documented histories of women and children's systematic exploitation in the community. Understanding this contradiction and how it renders the population of Short Creek vulnerable to trafficking, among a range of other harms,¹⁴¹ requires interrogating the changes that have occurred in the town

housing, and medical costs to care for the FLDS children in state custody. In total, the Arizona legislature gave Pyle \$50,000.00 to finance the raid. From this fund, 4 men were each paid \$2,500.00 for serving as a key source of information for the prosecution, including Frank Porter, Mohave County Sheriff, and Alfonso Nyborg, the deputy sheriff in Short Creek. \$6,000.00 in travel expenses was allotted to approximately 100 law enforcement, public welfare workers, doctors, medical assistants, highway patrolmen, and National guardsmen involved in transporting selves to and from the raid site. Food for the prisoners and government personnel during the raid cost another \$8,000.00 and another \$6,000.00 was set aside for food and provisions for the women and children held in Short Creek while being investigated. By 1955, however, nearly every member of Short Creek community who had been removed during the raid had returned home and the attention the FLDS received from the raid resulted in a growing number of people wanting to move to the town from other Mormon groups or fundamentalist enclaves.

¹⁴⁰ Shared Hope International published a report outlining several federal sex trafficking cases (while maintaining the anonymity of the people involved in the case) to describe the difficulties present in trying to identify someone as a sex trafficking *victim* or *survivor*, considering the multiple intersections of their identity (race/class/gender) that differentially impact their experience being trafficking for sex. In the report, they refer to this method as Sex Trafficking Victim-Offender Intersectionality (ST-VOI). Kimberle Crenshaw (1989), who coined the term "intersectionality" is not cited (Shared Hope International, 2020).

¹⁴¹ Living within Mormon polygamous families, as polygamy is specifically practiced among the FLDS in Short Creek, renders people increasingly susceptible to a range of harms. According to Mormon sociologist and ethnographer Janet Bennion, there are five major conditions among Mormon fundamentalist

following Warren Jeffs' arrest in 2006. To understand how this situation came to be, *Part I* begins by telling the history of the YFZ ranch raid in 2008, based on sociological literature (Nelson, 2015; Wright & Richardson, 2011), newspaper articles (Carlisle, 2019; Nelson, 2018; Rhaman, 2018; Young, 2008), government reports (Committee on the Judiciary United States Senate, 2008; Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, 2008), individual testimonials from memoirs (Musser, 2013; Wall, 2008), podcasts (DeLynn, 2022) and YouTube channels (Zitting-Wyson & Zitting-Wyson, 2022) of people involved in the raid and its aftermath, as well as documentaries (Berg 2015; Dretzen & McNally, 2021; Elford-Argent, 2022), and television shows (Larry King Live, 2008; Oprah Winfrey Network, 2015) before moving on to explain the circumstances under which this new regime ascended and facilitated the introduction of SCDC into the town. Next, drawing on the timeline of events outlined in the previous section, *Part II* describes how a small group of bourgeois white women from the FLDS have been able to grow their authority by representing themselves simultaneously as both *insiders* and *outsiders* (Creekers Foundation, 2018; Creekers Foundation 2018a; Geier, 2019; KDXU 94.9 News Radio 890, 2020; people who both possess the unique knowledge required to speak for the entire community and are at the same time inculpable for the injustices their community systematically perpetuates against women and children with less power and wealth. By describing their lives in Short Creek as

communities that, when combined with polygamy, foster increasing susceptibility to abuse and human rights violations: 1) Low parental investment of the father; 2) Male supremacy 3) Absence of a strong female network; 4) Overcrowding and economic deprivation, and; 5) Isolation and/or rural environments. The central argument in her book, *Desert Patriarchy* (2004), is that, in geographic locations such as Short Creek (pp. 11-12), that “the desert is the mechanism by which patriarchal fundamentalism best flourishes. In places such as Short Creek, Arizona, “harsh physical realities reinforce other characteristics of patriarchal societies” where, in contrast, “urban areas,” are unable to “achieve the same longevity and maintenance of cultural traditions” in patriarchal communities, such as within the culture of pimping.

idyllic before Warren Jeffs became prophet (Draper, 2019; Hansen Park, 2017, 2020; The Long Story of Short Creek, 2021), and equating their experiences under his governance with those of African Americans during the civil rights movement (Cox 2015; Jessop & Brown, 2009)¹⁴² and Holocaust victims (Evans, 2011; Musser, 2013), these women produce an ecology of ignorance that discursively positions the ongoing practice of polygamy outside the scope of trafficking discourse to orient the coalitional response in a manner that insulates their community from criminalization.

The conclusion of this dissertation considers the implications of the findings from previous chapters to understand why contradictory conceptions of female sexual agency, in relation to sex work and Mormon polygamy, produce different coalitional responses that are both harmful to the populations they are discursively intended to serve. The discussion centers around how, by suppressing the voices of sex workers in Phoenix who refuse to equate sex work with trafficking and elevating the voices of those from the FLDS in Short Creek who aim to normalize the practice of polygamy there by, in part,

¹⁴² In October 2015, approximately 100 people rallied across the street from the local law enforcement department to participate in Colorado City's first ever police protest. Protestors held poster board signs with messages including, "Do you trust the POLICE?" "We need the real cops," and, "Arrest the Real Trespassers, Colorado Marshals." In addition to slogans directly targeting the Colorado City Marshals, protestors held signs referencing the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. For example, a Colorado City local named Terrill Musser held a sign that said, "We must learn to live together as brothers & sisters or perish together as FOOLS -Martin Luther King Jr." Another protestor's sign quoted MLK Jr., "I have decided to stick with LOVE. Hate is too great of burden to bare." A third sign held by a little boy simply read, "Martin Luther King Jr." However, these signs were somewhat misleading because unlike protests led by Civil Rights era leaders or current groups involved in the Black Lives Matter Movement in the name of racial justice against institutional inequities in policing, this group consisted of protestors protesting their own family members in the Colorado City Marshals police department. Likewise, Flora Jessop, a woman who fled the FLDS Church in Short Creek in the 1970s, has been compared to both Martin Luther King Jr. (Jessop & Brown, 2009) and Harriet Tubman, the conductor of the Underground Railroad, based on the role she has played helping girls escape the community through a secret network for the past several decades (Mike Watkiss, 2008). Another FLDS woman named Ruth Stubbs, who, as a teen, escaped her polygamous marriage to a Colorado City Marshal named Rodney Holm, has been compared to civil rights activist, Rosa Parks, by polygamy beat reporter, Mike Watkiss: "Like Rosa parks before her Ruth Stubbs refused to give up her seat at humanity's table" (Mike Watkiss, 2008).

separating the structure of polygamy from trafficking, the anti-trafficking coalition at the center of this study produces an ecology of ignorance that reproduces racial capitalism and in service of the NPIC. Considering these findings, in addition to arguing that sex work should be decriminalized on the basis that polygamy was decriminalized in Utah in 2020, I contend that the entire trafficking framework and corresponding interventions be abandoned so that resources can be diverted to better serve marginalized populations within and beyond the US.

CHAPTER 3

WHITE SLAVERY AND "WHISPERING CAMPAIGNS" IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

Introduction

Since few studies¹⁴³ about trafficking examine the academic researchers, law enforcement officers, and nonprofit leaders, many of whom are white, in relation to traffickers, most of whom are portrayed as non-white, the discourses they proliferate are often considered politically neutral and objectively derived. In turn, critical scholars may not be able to speak to trafficking as a testament to “the invisibility of whiteness but rather about the denial of relationality through the erasure of people of color as subjects” (Hoagland, 2007, pp. 102-103). This dynamic becomes exceedingly difficult to recognize when broaching the subject of anti-trafficking and Jews, who have assimilated into whiteness in the US, while also remaining a distinct religious and ethnic group that is particularly scapegoated during times of social, political, and economic strife.

While many scholars who write in the field of critical trafficking studies have highlighted the ways in which white slavery discourse has produced racist and xenophobic research to guide the anti-trafficking movement (Baker, 2018; Bernstein, 2007; Bravo, 2007; Lutnick, 2016; Musto, 2016; Woods, 2013) limited attention has been given to this movement’s historical and contemporary relationship to antisemitism, save a select few scholars¹⁴⁴ (Attwood, 2016; Doezema, 2005; Soderlund, 2013). Prior to the

¹⁴³ Khan’s (2015) work illustrates the relationships between white, middle to upper class people leading prostitution diversion programs and the sex buyers who are frequently court-ordered to attend, most of whom are Black and brown.

¹⁴⁴ As will be discussed in this chapter, critical trafficking scholar Jo Doezema (2005) is one of the few in the field who recognizes how “Anti-Semitism was a common theme in anti-white slavery tracts, reflecting

1890s, Jews went mostly unnoticed in US public life as racialized others and made up a small percentage of the US population. During this time, critical trafficking scholar Gretchen Soderlund (2013) explains that Jews were largely detached from mainstream conceptions of race and racial discourse. By the 20th C., however, the trope of the “Jewish white slaver” had been implanted into the public imagination, representing “cunning and mercenary masterminds operating and the very center of vice economies” (Soderlund, 2013, p. 107). This suggests that the anti-trafficking movement contributed substantially to the construction of Jews as a racial group in the US.

The fact that antisemitic mythologies of Jewish traffickers and their victims persist today, and that these discourses historically resulted in political mobilization since the 20th century, problematizes critical trafficking literature which documents the anti-trafficking movement as being divided by a 70-year gap between the 1920s and 1990s. Considering ignorance studies scholar Jose Medina’s (2013) assessment of white ignorance as an epistemic perspective that “involves both racial self-ignorance and social ignorance of racialized others” (p. 18), in a context where Americans sought to obscure their role in the Holocaust and take responsibility for defeating the Third Reich, it makes sense why antisemitic tropes began to take on a raceless character. By neglecting the role of antisemitism in trafficking discourses, without substantive criticism, the contemporary

the Anti-Semitism that was prevalent in the Progressive years” (p. 19). In addition to the sort of antisemitism typical in white slavery discourse, Doezema explains how the longstanding myth of a national Jewish conspiracy could be found in formal governmental records, such as the US Immigration Report of 1909, “which served as a basis for the 1910 Immigration Act severely restricting immigration to the US” (2005, p. 19). Critical trafficking scholar and historian Gretchen Soderlund (2013) has also documented how antisemitism was steeped in 20th C. white slavery discourse through muckraking magazines such as McClure Magazine as well as several magazines run by the Women’s Christian Temperance Union.

anti-trafficking movement is able to exploit tropes linking Jewish people to trafficking through raceless language.

As this chapter will demonstrate, fascism, Christianity, and the anti-trafficking movement have historically operated hand-in-hand in the US, so it is necessary to fill these gaps in the interest of social justice. By confining the history of the anti-trafficking movement to white slavery movement (1880-1920) and its resurgence in 1990 to today, scholars risk remaining ignorant of the antisemitism that has been as central to US anti-trafficking movement discourse as other forms of racism. Without the ability of filling the gaps in our knowledge of the racist dimensions of human trafficking discourse, past and present, then the exploitation of some of the most vulnerable people in the United States may remain “par for the course.... their exploiters quite possibly our neighbors, colleagues, and friends” (Chuang, 2010, p. 1698). Especially, with a rising bipartisan fascist threat to democracy, white supremacist paramilitary mobilization, as well as the QAnon movement, and other symptoms of online radicalization, it is important for historians to consider how colorblindness and Jewish racelessness are shaping politics in the US today, because in the past white Protestant Christian ignorance of Jewish identity and history in the US has contributed to their harm.

For scholars in the field of critical trafficking studies, to be able to identify how the anti-trafficking movement is conducive to the reproduction of antisemitic and racist tropes about trafficking, it is important to study the positionality of the people who govern the field within anti-trafficking coalitions in relation to their perceptions of people they portray as traffickers and trafficking victims. This is because understanding how the overall absence of analyses of Jewish persecution among critical trafficking scholars

lends credence to the US anti-trafficking movement today, requires examining how antisemitic trafficking tropes were carried from the late 19th century into the US anti-trafficking movement of the 21st century by middle and upper-class white Christians. In response to this problem and foreground issues in forthcoming chapters, this one delineates the ways in which the malleability of the anti-trafficking movement's racial discourses have allowed its powerful progenitors to exploit the antisemitic political imaginary through nonprofit work, and in coalition with other groups, to the effect of supporting and advancing fascist ideals through political mobilization.

To examine this subject through the lens of white ignorance and the NPIC, this chapter draws on historical scholarship based on the experiences of Jewish people living in the US in the early 20th century US (Bristow, 1982; Brodtkin, 2000; Doezema, 2005), the experiences of Jews with antisemitism abroad during this period (Carr, 2001; Trachtenberg, 2002; Wisse, 2015), as well as the experiences of Jews around the time of the Holocaust (Glenn, 2014; Goldstein, 2001; Horn, 2021; Shul, 1967). This literature helps delineate the underexamined history of antisemitism towards Jewish immigrants and other marginalized groups during the white slavery crusade era, as it evolved over time amidst significant political and economic transformations.

In the first section of this chapter, exploring the degree to which religious persecution against Jews was tolerated during this period provides a foundation for examining commonalities and contradictions between their subjection to white slavery interventions and the experiences of Mormons that are outlined in Chapters Five and Six. The second section, which focuses on the development of the anti-trafficking movement following the end of World War II, describes how antisemitic tropes and stories used to

demonize Jews prior to the 1930s were transmuted into racelessness in depictions of Jews as traffickers after the Holocaust, when the American public came to understand themselves as the saviors of the Jews and explicit hatred became less acceptable. Together, these sections not only unveil why and how antisemitism has been and remains central to anti-trafficking organizing today, especially among members of the conspiracy theory QAnon, but it also contributes to critical trafficking scholars' dominant conception of the historical timeline of the anti-trafficking movement, which allows us to understand how the SCDC causes harm to the community it claims to serve.

Part I: 20th Century White Slavery Crusades to WWII

Antisemitism towards Jewish peoples predates the 20th C. anti-trafficking movement in the US and Europe. Since the emergence of Christianity, Western Christendom has accused Jews of bringing persecution onto themselves by crucifying Jesus and effectively killing God or denying Jesus as the Messiah and son of God (Trachtenberg, 1943). Coupled with the notion of Jewish deicide, nearly every organized massacre or *pogrom* of Jews in history has been spurred on by accusations of blood libel, a false claim that Jews participate in ritualistic murder of Christian children and consume their blood on matzo crackers. This mythology was used to account for unexplained disappearances of Christian children, many of whom became Christian martyrs and/or were canonized by various churches. Blood libel has since been used to associate Jews to the problem of trafficking, as evidenced by QAnon conspiracies which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Jewish men have been portrayed as traffickers since the early 20th century white slavery movement and these tropes have persisted into the 21st century. This has been achieved through the proliferation of the Jewish conspiracy by racist organizers, which maintains that the Jewish agenda is a “one world” government, that Jews manipulate racial strife, and that Jews have distorted modern history. It is upon these “foundational blocks” that the “racist movement builds its extraordinary ideology of antisemitism,” which has consistently appealed to the fears and longings of white America across historical moments, as Kathleen Blee has explained:

The antisemitism of racist groups flouts conventional thinking, teaching that the truth is deliberately hidden behind a veil of illusion...it is extremely wide-ranging, claiming to explain phenomena-the economy, government, media, and international affairs-that the uninitiated would see as unrelated to religion, ethnicity, or race. Even personal events, such as a boyfriend’s lost job, a miscarriage, or a husband’s imprisonment, are taken as evidence of the Jewish conspiracy controlling everyday life. (2002: pp. 89, 91)

Jews living within and outside the US have been blamed for nearly every social ill, including the orchestration of international prostitution rings, which is misleading.¹⁴⁵

Though there were Jewish men in major cities such as New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia who *were* involved in the prostitution trade, they were no more involved

¹⁴⁵ Helen Bullis, a Special Inspectress at Ellis Island, rejected the myth that an organized ring of Jewish white slavers were doing “any importing at the time I knew it, and it is doubtful if individual members did it very much. It was easier to get girls (already) here, with practically no risk” (cited in Bristow 1982, p. 157).

than other immigrant groups living in these cities at the time, including the Irish, the Italians, and the French. Despite being only one group involved in trafficking, however, Jewish people have been a constant focus of anti-trafficking efforts led by civilian groups and state actors alike, as American social worker and reformer Frances Kellor made clear in a 1907 report on prostitution in New York City:

While the French are said to be worse in their practices they are not, from the civic side at least, to be so much feared as the Jewish. The French people engaged in this business prefer to run their business as nearly compatible with the rules laid down by the police department as possible...the Jew on the other hand, has been taught early in life the value of morality and decency and does not take up this business unless he is thoroughly vicious and bad. (cited in Bristow 1982, p. 165)

While Kellor's ideas regarding the business of prostitution and procurers are undoubtedly simplified, her commentary signals to the important role that police departments have historically played in shifting public perceptions of prostitution to white slavery and trafficking depending upon the demographic designation of the persons involved. Jewish immigrant men were frequently portrayed as both enslaving white Protestant women and importing Jewish women from other countries for the purposes of prostitution, but this narrative is incorrect. Not only were most of the women working for Jewish pimps Jewish themselves, but they had chosen to enter sex work by their own volition after arriving to the US and experiencing the rigors of exploitation under industrial capitalism. In Edward Bristow's (1982) historical text, *Prostitution &*

Prejudice: The Jewish Fight Against White Slavery (1870-1939), he explains, “what everyone agreed about...is that most of the foreign-born women who practiced prostitution in the US turned to it after their arrival” (p. 157). In other words, prostitution, rebranded as “white slavery,” became increasingly imagined a domestic problem as immigrant women in the US found themselves in poorly paid, grueling, dangerous, and time-consuming working conditions, making sex work a more attractive and lucrative option. In the city of New York, for example, as Bristow explains, poor housing conditions and grueling industrial work incentivized marginalized women to turn to the sex trade:

Working in the garment industry was more than tedious, it was sweated and badly paid. Many of the Jewish women who turned to prostitution in New York simply opted out of the sweatshop. In a sample of thirty-four Jewish prostitutes who had violated probation in 1905, the preponderance had started their working lives in the garment industry, making shirts, coats, cloaks, shirtwaists, gloves, and curling feathers. (1982, p. 158)

Amidst widespread and longstanding fear and concern for the mythological Black rapist, anti-Black imagery projected by the white slavery movement was easily accepted as a matter of common sense by the American public. Such mythologies were useful for distracting the public from the violent realities of industrial capitalism and the indifference of the capitalists at the top of this new economy, because they positioned

minority groups as the primary threat to the well-being of white America. The influx¹⁴⁶ of Eastern European immigrants, many of whom were Jews from Germany, Hungary, Poland, Russia, and Belarus created an opportunity for the white slavery movement to circulate vague and mysterious conspiracies that served the same purpose, because the American population “need[ed] to be taught to hate the Jews” (Blee, 2002, p. 86).

As was previously discussed, while critical trafficking scholars have criticized the manner in which the anti-trafficking movement proliferates racist, antisemitic, and xenophobic discourses through colorblind language and in the wake of the white slavery crusades, their overall unfamiliarity with the movement’s historical and ongoing antisemitism has allowed the anti-trafficking movement to continue to exploit the American racial imaginary to garner power and profit without substantive critique. To better recognize the epistemological reproduction of colorblindness and Jewish racelessness, Judith Butler suggests, “more important than a single definition of antisemitism would be an account of its history and its various forms: the language, the attitudes, the actions and practices, the policies” (cited in Belew & Gutierrez, 2021, p. 162). However, defining and identifying antisemitism is complicated and often difficult to pinpoint if one does not know what they are looking for, as Judith Butler explains:

¹⁴⁶ This influx was largely a result of anti-Jewish pogroms cropping up all over Europe in the late 1800s that arose alongside the industrial revolution, changing not only the nature of work but also how societies and governments were organized. While these changes were beneficial for some, they were harmful to many others around the world and in countries such as Russia, Belarus, and France, age-old tropes about “the Jews” as financially exploitative of hard-working citizens were revived (Goldstein, 2012, pp. 207-210).

Antisemitism is sometimes cloaked as something else. It takes fugitive form when, for instance, a discourse emerges that presumes there is a group that owns all the banks...the same can be said about any reference to the 'blood libel'-a scurrilous rumor that has been tenaciously circulated against Jewish people for centuries...the more explicit forms of antisemitism not only subscribe to gross generalizations based on ostensible anatomical or physiological characteristics, the attribution of a 'Jewish character,' concocted histories, or the projection of sexual proclivities. (cited in Belew & Gutierrez, 2021, p. 162)

In the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, all the above forms of antisemitism were employed to portray Jews as the primary perpetrators of trafficking, known at the time as white slavery. Charles Mills (1997) suggests that the white/nonwhite dichotomy of the global racial polity is politically useful in the sense that it can capture the essential structure of contemporary race relations. Yet, because the European Jew has not always historically fit within this structure, gentiles (non-Jews) have capitalized on this outsider status, at times introducing internal, albeit somewhat muted antisemitic distinctions between Jews.

Returning to Ernest Bell's anthology, *Fighting the Traffic in Young Girls* (1910), for example, an anonymous contributor was careful to make these distinctions between Jewish immigrants in a chapter titled, "The White Slave Trade in New York City," stating that "It is absolute fact that corrupt Jews are now the backbone of the loathsome traffic in New York and Chicago. The good Jews know this and feel keenly the unspeakable shame of it" (cited in Bell, 1910, p. 188). While seemingly harmless in

distinguishing between the intraracial differences between “good Jews” and “corrupt Jews,” historical interracial comparisons between Jews, African Americans, Asians, and other immigrants in the context of trafficking reveal a much different depiction of Jews, as a monolithic and particularly insidious, organized criminal group at the top of the lower racial caste system (Bristow, 1982).

An American journalist from the early 20th century who generated more rigid antisemitic ideas was George Kibbe Turner, who wrote that there were “Jewish pimp-slavers” from Poland enslaving white Protestant girls and some of their own “Jewess” women in an article published in *McClure’s Magazine* (1909). His work was published in a cultural context where Americans were concerned by the influx of Jewish immigrants into the US who were fleeing antisemitism in Hungary, Poland, and other areas of the Russian empire during a period of rapid transformation (Bristow, 1982). In two articles, published 1907 and 1909, Turner linked political corruption in the cities of Chicago and New York, where many Jewish immigrants had settled, to an organized crime ring of Jewish white slave traders. Turner’s (1909) report specifically linked an international conspiracy of organized Jewish white slave traders to corruption via the center of the Democratic Party in New York City, Tammany Hall. As an organization that had helped elect many immigrants to office at various levels of government amidst a period of heightened xenophobia and nativism, Turner argued that the influence of Tammany Hall politicians was spreading throughout the country and threatened to expand the capacity of the explicitly Jewish white slave trade.

Turner’s ideas were highly praised at the time because this type of persistent antisemitic messaging appealed to US white middle class fears of race-mixing, stoking

myths about white slave trafficking proliferated by nonprofit organizations within the women's suffrage movement and the Women's Christian Temperance Union, which were then echoed by the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), among other nonprofit and for profit organizations (Blee, 2002; Edwards, 1997; Freedman, 2013; Gordon, 2017; Ware, 2015). Turner's field site was limited to houses of prostitution in Manhattan, but he reported to have witnessed an international sex trafficking ring of Jewish white slavers that extended outside of New York. Nonetheless, his articles about Jewish white slavers received such popular public reception that a federal judge commissioned philanthropist John D. Rockefeller Jr. to lead a grand jury to further investigate.¹⁴⁷ Not only was the grand jury unable to verify Turner's claims, but it was revealed the report was flawed by a misperception of social scale, as historian Paul Knepper (2012) has since pointed out: "It is one thing to say that immigrants manage a significant portion of prostitution in the area of New York and another thing to say that because there are immigrants from Europe in New York the city represents the headquarters of criminal activities that extend throughout Europe" (p. 784).

Even though the grand jury did not find evidence of white slavery in Turner's report, as the head of the grand jury commission, Rockefeller went on to incorporate the Bureau of Social Hygiene¹⁴⁸ in 1913 to conduct private research into global white slavery based on the lack of white slavery findings in the report. While nonprofits have existed since 1867, they were repurposed during this period of rapid industrialization for the

¹⁴⁷ Among the accused were Jewish New Yorkers of Tammany Hall and the Jewish Independent Benevolent Association (see Soderlund 2013: pp. 151-154).

¹⁴⁸ The Bureau of Social Hygiene was a private organization that funded studies in juvenile delinquency, policing, and administrative issues in the criminal justice system.

benefit of the capitalist elite like Rockefeller, who found utility in both their financial and pedagogical dimensions.

Rather than concern for the victims of trafficking, Soderlund (2013, p. 163) explains that Rockefeller's white slavery philanthropy may have been duly motivated by desires to ease the family's tarnished reputation in a context where labor organizations and muckraking journalists were attacking the power of unregulated corporations. In 1904 for example, an influential article in *McClure Magazine* (1904) had publicly brought to light and criticized the monopoly of industrialist Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company. Like their for-profit counterparts, from the early 1900s to the 1950s, nonprofit organizations operated with relatively little oversight while few states imposed taxes on corporations. Using the domain of white slavery as an "early experiment in philanthropic social control and public relations," it was the movement against white slavery and not industrial slavery that helped wealthy philanthropists like the Rockefellers launder their reputations (Soderlund, 2013, p. 163).

As anti-white slavery activists campaigned against the violent nature of prostitution as a form of sexual slavery in the early industrial era, the non-sexual labor often proved to be dangerous and often deadly for men, women, and children alike.¹⁴⁹ In New York City, on March 25th, 1911, a fire in a building owned by the Triangle Shirtwaist Company building killed 146 people, most of whom were Jewish immigrant women between ages 13 to their early-20s. A week after the fire, the Triangle Shirtwaist Company promptly reopened in a new building. Meyer Shoenfeld (1910), of the

¹⁴⁹ For example, when the Colorado miners went on strike while working for Colorado Fuel and Iron, a company that the Rockefellers owned 40% of, it turned lethal when a Colorado militia likely hired by the Rockefellers opened fire on the strikers, killing several on April 20th, 1914 (INCITE!, 2017, p. 4).

Brotherhoods of Tailors, echoed observations made by Jewish political theorist Emma Goldman (2013) that same year,¹⁵⁰ contending that white slavery was not about the immorality or criminality of foreign-born men but rather that “white slavery is the result of industrial slavery” (Bristow, 1982, p. 159). At the heart of his argument was the idea that poor women and men often found working as a manager, brothel keeper, or sex worker to be a more suitable profession, offering more money and with more flexible hours, than other avenues of employment. This was in consideration of the dangers of labor at the factory, which proved to be extremely dangerous, deadly in this case, and yet much less lucrative than the business of sex work (Bristow, 1982, p. 159).

Rigors of industrial slavery by far surpassed the harms caused by prostitution, but white slavery provided a unique and sexually titillating problem for campaigners. In addition to reproducing the image of a young white female victim (Doezema, 1998), it also bolstered a range of racist and antisemitic stereotypes of white slavers to stimulate public anxieties surrounding other causes related to age-of-consent laws, alcohol prohibition, women’s suffrage, and interracial relations. As interest, research, and campaigns surrounding white slavery persisted among the American middle class, despite being unsubstantiated, philanthropists, religious activists, and female reformers leading the cause were also joined by social scientists, doctors, criminal justice professionals, and corporate leaders.

¹⁵⁰ In her 1910 essay, *Traffic in Women*, Goldman asserted: “To ascribe the increase of prostitution to alleged importation, to the growth of the cadet system, or similar causes, is highly superficial...the procurer is no doubt a poor specimen of the human family, but in what manner is he more despicable than the policeman who takes the last cent from the street walker, and then locks her up in the station house?...As to a thorough eradication of prostitution, nothing can accomplish that save a complete transvaluation of all accepted values, especially the moral ones—coupled with the abolition of industrial slavery” (Goldman 2013: pp. 102-103).

Alongside Rockefeller, Henry Ford, the founder of the Ford Motor Company, poured metaphorical fuel on the white slavery panics when he published and distributed half a million copies of the infamous and antisemitic “Protocols of the Elders of Zion” in 1920,¹⁵¹ which Adolph Hitler would reference five years later in his autobiography titled *Mein Kampf* (1969). First published in Russia at the turn of the century before being brought to the US by anti-communist emigres, its progenitors claimed the fabricated document reflected the meeting minutes from a gathering of Jewish elders discussing plans for global domination through the control of the world’s banks and media. Playing on the fact that Karl Marx was a Jew, as were key figures in the revolution like Leon Trotsky, the Protocols characterized the rise of communism in Russia as a worldwide conspiracy that posed a threat to capitalism in the West.

This document was useful for the Ford family in a context where the American public held deeply antisemitic views because it allowed them to characterize labor organizing and government regulation on industrial capitalism as an underhanded international Jewish plot. In reality, what was happening was that widespread antisemitism among American Protestants offered the explanation for why Americans in the 1920s were boycotting Jewish businesses, spreading rumors about the clandestine sexual immorality of Jewish businessman, whose loyalties remained narrowly with The Jewish people, and forming “American” committees through congressional hearings to

¹⁵¹ After, Ford went on to print a series of 91 antisemitic articles under the heading, “The International Jew: The World’s Problem” in his newspaper, *The Dearborn Independent* (Gordon, 2017). In the 1920s and 1930s “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion” was an international sensation, originating in Russia but eventually spreading across the globe, translated into different languages for the US, Japan, Mexico, Germany, France, Poland, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Syria, and several surrounding Arab nations (Goldstein, 2012, pp. 250-251).

investigate screenplay writers, film producers, and stars in Hollywood, many of whom were Jewish, regarding their alleged membership within the communist party. Ironically, however, the 1917 February revolution had debased the Tsars and the Russian Orthodox Church, who had for centuries discriminated against Russian Jews and organized pogroms, and established a haven for radical Jewish socialists, writers, and artists; the rise of Joseph Stalin in 1924 brought in an era of intense repression and systematic murder of Jewish peoples in the newly formed Soviet Union (Frankel, 2008).

The discourses proliferated by propagandists of the white slavery movement had far reaching impacts on American culture and politics, influencing politicians, industrialists, and social movement organizers. Resonating with the sentiments of popular racist movements like the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), which was growing rapidly following reports such as Turner's "Daughters of the Poor" (1909), the release of the first blockbuster film, Birth of a Nation (1910), inspired antisemitic and racist vigilante violence in the name of real or symbolic young, white Protestant girls, including the murder of Jewish pencil factory superintendent, Leo Frank (1915) in Marietta, Georgia. In a context where the existence of a global Jewish conspiracy was perceived as an existential threat to the Western Protestant Christian way of life, the KKK in the 1920s also accused Jews of being financial swindlers, draining the economy, and operating as "middlemen" through the buying and selling of products (including women), rather than producing products themselves and thus offering no value to the US economy.

While antisemites disparaged Jews on these bases, white women were ironically eager to consume the products of Jewish entrepreneurs, such as films, clothing, and

cosmetics¹⁵² (Gordon, 2017). Thus, alluding to the contradiction that while Jewish people were imagined and treated as enemies of the nation, their contributions to society were deeply valued and integrated into American culture. As will be discussed in depth in the forthcoming chapter, the Women of the Ku Klux Klan (WKKK) aided their male counterparts in giving power to the Jewish conspiracy theory by exploiting their long-established image as a symbol of national identity in need of protection from non-white and immigrant men. Reinforcing the stereotype that Jewish business owners cheated their gentile customers because their loyalties remained to their own Jewish community, the KKK and WKKK worked together to boycott Jewish businesses. Vivian Wheatcraft of the WKKK referred to the powerful boycott machine the Klan had set up to target individual Jews and Jewish businesses as “poison squads of whispering women” or “whispering campaigns”¹⁵³ due to their ability to rapidly spread negative opinions about immigrant businesses and stories about enemies of the KKK (Gordon, 2017, p. 174).

While the KKK was successful with boycotting Jewish businesses, such as garment shops, at the local level, the popularity of well-established Jewish department stores such as Meier & Frank¹⁵⁴ and Hollywood movies (Bella Donna 1923; Manhandled 1924; A Thief in Paradise 1925) led the Klan to seek out ostensible narratives about Jewish sexual perversity to try and extinguish their success. This is evidenced in one pamphlet that was published before 1925: “What happens to the army of young girls who

¹⁵² Like the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s United States, Wendy Lower (2013) explains that in 1930s and 1940s Germany, “Nazi leaders condemned the entire cosmetics book of the 1920s as Jewish commerce, as a cheapening of the German femininity that turned women into prostitutes and led to racial degeneration” (p. 25).

¹⁵³ (Blee, 1991).

¹⁵⁴ By the 1920s Frank and Meiner’s department stores were the largest retailer west of the Mississippi (Gordon, 2017, p. 175).

are lost every year? From 60,000 to 75,000 of them disappear annually...the Jews get them and sell them as white slaves. They have a regular price list” (Gordon, 2017, p. 50). Kathleen Blee (1991) explains that the KKK sought to disseminate and normalize narratives of Jewish sexual perversions, “like carnival hucksters who promise ever more thrilling or titillating sights,” and that the racists who pedaled antisemitic ideas about Jewish traffickers suggested that “there are more deeply hidden secrets about Jews to be revealed to those deemed worthy of the knowledge” (Blee, 2002, p. 87).

Since “the difference between every day and extraordinary racism is the difference between being prejudiced against Jews and believing that there is a Jewish conspiracy that determines the fate of individual Aryans” (Blee, 2002, pp. 75-76), it can be said that the white slavery movement has played a powerful role in the reproduction of white supremacist antisemitic extremism in the US. Not only in the private sphere, but also through the political mechanisms of public institutions. Since religious discrimination is barred by the constitution, state actors in the white slavery movement did not directly produce conspiracy theories that explicitly named the Jews as running an international trafficking regime, nor directly target them for their faith or ethnicity.

They were, however, able to appeal to tropes permeating American culture to achieve the same end by using the antisemitic dog whistles. A similar strategy used by the War on Drugs to target the anti-war left and Black people (Alexander, 2010), people of influence in the federal government during the 20th century avoided direct reference to Jewish peoples themselves by designating locations stereotypically associated with their communities, such as ice cream parlors, theaters, dance halls (Bell, 1910). They also drew on the cultural influence of widespread conspiracy theories, such as those projected

by the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion” to rationalize the antidemocratic repression of Jewish dissidents and critics (The Jewish Peril, 2020).

Less than 10 years after writing her essay about the profitability of the anti-white slavery crusades, for example, Jewish intellectual Emma Goldman was deported from the US by the man who became the first director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), J. Edgar Hoover. This was achieved legally via the 1918 Immigration Act, which extended provisions to the 1903 Immigration Act to exclude suspected anarchists, communists, and labor organizers from the US. After Goldman had spoken out against the 1910 White Slave Traffic Act legislation, in her scathing essay, titled, “The Traffic in Women,” Hoover described her as “one of the most dangerous women in America” based on the following critique:

The ‘righteous’ cry against the white slave traffic is such a toy. It serves to amuse the people for a little while, and it will help to create a few more fat political jobs-parasites who stalk about the world as inspectors, investigators, detectives, and so forth. What is really the cause of the trade in women? Not merely white women, but yellow and black women as well. Exploitation, of course; the merciless Moloch of capitalism that fattens on underpaid labor, thus driving thousands of women and girls into prostitution. (Goldman, 2013, p. 92)

Goldman’s position on the topic of white slavery foregrounds criticisms of the white slavery movement that would emerge in the field of critical trafficking scholarship, but neither Goldman nor critical trafficking scholars fully centered Jewish people

themselves within the larger context of white evangelical Christianity. This absence has paved the way forward for anti-trafficking campaigners to obscure the antisemitism at the core of the contemporary movement. White slavery rhetoric served as the vehicle to spread antisemitic ideas throughout Europe and the US, which was useful for politicians and white power organizers who exploited these mythologies to advance their fascist ambitions.

As the white slavery panics began subsiding in the 1920s, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) needed to find a new reason to maintain relevance and continue expanding their reach and power. The FBI narrative evolved into the idea that they had scared all the traffickers away and back to their countries of origin but must become even more vigilant about who would be permitted to enter the country going forward. In the late 19th to early 20th centuries, during this period, a wave of brutal pogroms swept the Russian Empire, which led to the migration of 1.5 million Eastern European Jews to the US. Arriving from Russia, Austria-Hungary, and Romania, between 1884 and 1914, most settled in poor areas of New York City, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, and Chicago, oftentimes living in cramped and squalid conditions (Bristow, 1982, p. 151). White slavery myths about Jews were prominent in this context and cases such as the Leo Frank trials in Georgia cultivated public support for further antisemitic policies in the US which were influenced by Specialized Immigration Agents such as Marcus Braun,¹⁵⁵ who

¹⁵⁵ While Braun's antisemitic, anti-immigrant viewpoints about white slavery caused him to target fellow Hungarian Jews, even conducting research abroad to investigate white slavery in Yiddish-speaking areas, his anti-immigrant sentiment was by no means limited to Jews. He used the symbol of white slavery to minimize the trafficking of other groups and forms of labor exploitation as well, as he reported in 1908: "What is the clandestine importation of a few hundred Chinese or Japanese, or a gang of men under contract to perform certain labor...in comparison to the importation of Daughters of Eve... for the purpose of Prostitution? Why to me, it seems absolutely insignificant" (Delgado, 2012).

wanted to close the door on his fellow Hungarian Jews who wanted to move to the US (Bristow, 1982). Antisemitic white slavery myths about Jewish traffickers were also convenient for members of the Anti-Saloon League, the Ku Klux Klan, and temperance workers supporting the cause for prohibition, based on Jewish involvement in the commerce of liquor (Blee, 1991; Davis, 2012).

By 1924, Jewish restrictive immigration quotas were passed, such as Johnson-Reed Act 1924, which did not explicitly name Jews as the intended targets of this legislation, yet directly reduced the number of European Jews who could immigrate. Since this policy prevented immigration from Asia¹⁵⁶ and tightened immigration into the US from Eastern Europe, the white slavery movement declined after its passage because racist and xenophobic trafficking rhetoric had largely lost its utility, outside of policing interracial relationships between white women and people of color already living in the US. The immigration Act of 1924 became an important precursor to public sentiments towards Jewish refugees during the Holocaust, most of whom were denied entry into the country, not only on the unlikely basis that they were potential agents of the axis powers, but also because of antisemitic conspiracy theories that were crafted by the American people.

As the Hollywood film industry thrived in the decade leading up to World War II, where many Jewish directors and writers rose to power and cultural influence, Los Angeles came under attack from antisemites, who built on established conspiracy theories claiming that state institutions, international finance, and the media, were under the

¹⁵⁶ Previous anti-Asian legislation had also greatly curbed the entrance of Chinese Americans into the United States under the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882).

control of a Jewish shadow government (Carr, 2001). The works of Jewish filmmakers were under constant criticism by Christian Americans, including the KKK, which identified Hollywood as “a doubly important target for a major boycott as it was both Jewish and immoral” (Gordon, 2017, p. 176). In publicly denouncing the “filthy fiction” of Hollywood films they claimed, “reflected and legitimated erotic license” in American culture, the Klan alleged that Hollywood’s Jews operated a deliberate plot to destroy American morals” (Gordon, 2017, p. 176).

Jews who worked in the Hollywood film industry were not only attacked for their productions, but also because of how famous Jewish actors used their celebrity to mobilize against the Third Reich, by standing before congress in December of 1938, a month after Kristallnacht, to request that the US boycott German goods until the Holocaust cease (Carr, 2001). In addition to receiving countless hate letters for their actions, they were publicly criticized by figures like the “self-proclaimed ‘Bible Christian’” I.E. Schoening, who argued that the violence caused by Jewish filmmakers in Hollywood exceeded that of the Holocaust and implied the US should not intervene: "Pray tell me, who is the greater sinner, Hitler in his treatment of the Jews and Christians or the movie industry producers whose rotten movie-plays are corrupting the minds of American boys and girls and turning them into criminals and sex perverts (Ross, 2002, p. 622). By both minimizing the crimes being perpetrated against Jewish peoples in Europe and characterizing Jewish filmmakers in the US as a corrupting force that preys on the innocence of American children, the cultural and political landscape was set for both groups during World War II.

Although Jewish Americans had some level of support from other people in the US, the cultural weight of antisemitism continued to ramp up alongside the intensification of the Holocaust. Five days after the opening of the Auschwitz concentration camp, on March 17, 1933, 23,000 people had gathered at Madison Square Garden to protest the treatment of German Jews (Wallace, 2018), but roughly the same number gathered in the same location on February 20th, 1939, under Nazi banners and a portrait of George Washington, for the German American Bund Rally (Jewish Virtual Library, 2023). The German American Bund was dismantled after the US declared war on the axis powers, due to perceptions that the organization's existence posed a threat to national security. However, American antisemites continued their cause in more inconspicuous ways in a context where explicit antisemitism might draw criticism of suspicion of treason.

Such an instance occurred in 1941, when renowned pilot and Nazi sympathizer Charles Lindbergh told a crowd in Des Moines, Iowa, "Instead of agitating for war, the Jewish groups in this country should be opposing it in every possible way for they will be among the first to feel its consequences" (Lindsay, 2012). Mirroring Lindbergh's rationale, influential journalists published articles suggesting that the Holocaust was fabricated by the Jews to pull the nation into war it should not be involved in (Lindsay, 2012). By harnessing the trope that Jewish people control the media, these antisemites attempted to sway the public from heeding the urgent calls to action being made by Jewish Americans, many of whose European relatives were actively being abused and murdered by the Third Reich and their collaborators.

Another historical moment that exemplifies this roving Jewish racelessness occurred the following year in 1942, when a passenger ship called the SS St. Louis was denied permission to port in Miami out of suspicion that those on board may be German spies.¹⁵⁷ Of the nearly one thousand Jewish refugees that were turned away by President Roosevelt Franklin and J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), who claimed they posed a national security threat to the US, roughly a quarter of the passengers were subsequently killed in concentration camps upon their return to Europe (US Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2021). It is unlikely that any of these passengers on the SS St. Louis were German spies, as those who had ordered the ship away claimed, but it is equally unlikely that protecting the US from espionage was the latter's primary motivation in this matter.

Between 1939 and 1945, the Nazi regime manifested its racial fantasies through their attempt to systematically eradicate the entire planet's Jewish population, which resulted in the forced expulsion and deaths of over six million via countless techniques ranging from gas vans and chambers to execution by firearms, death marches, starvation, exposure and disease, forced labor, sexual violence, and brutal experimentation (Klee, Dressen, & Reiss, 2020; Lower, 2013; Rosen & Monster, 2023).¹⁵⁸ Coupled with the eugenics arguments of Madison Grant (1916), Hitler rationalized this genocidal project through the Jewish conspiracy theory, which he expressed in *Mein Kampf*, in which he contended that:

¹⁵⁷ While some Americans and Cubans (where the SS St. Louis was initially docked) were concerned that Jewish refugees were going to take American and Cuban jobs, another popular myth was that the Jews on board may have been coerced into becoming spies for the Nazis and thus threatened US national security (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2021).

¹⁵⁸ There was also widespread looting of Jewish communities during the Holocaust (Rothfeld, 2002).

The Jewish doctrine of Marxism rejects the aristocratic principle of Nature and replaces the eternal privilege of power and strength by the mass of numbers and their dead weight. Thus, it denies the value of personality in man, contests the significance of nationality and race, and thereby withdraws from humanity the premise of its existence and its culture. As a foundation of the universe, this doctrine would bring about the end of any order intellectually conceivable to man. And as, in this greatest of all recognizable organisms, the result of an application of such a law could only be chaos, on earth it could only be destruction for the inhabitants of this planet. (1969, p. 60)

Born and raised at the height of the white slavery crusade era, Adolph Hitler's antisemitic viewpoints were undoubtedly shaped by the white slavery movement and the immigration policies it catalyzed, and echoing the American anti-trafficking movement's discourses became a useful tool of his genocidal project:

In no other city of Western Europe could the relationship between Jewry and prostitution and even now the white slave traffic, be studied better than in Vienna...An icy shudder ran down my spine when seeing for the first time the Jew as an evil, shameless, and calculating manager of this shocking vice, the outcome of the scum of the big city. (1969, p. 78)

From the moment the Holocaust came to an end in 1945, the right and the left have drawn on this unique Jewish history to speak to real and perceived social injustices

and the people who perpetrate them. Understanding why the image of explicitly “Jewish” traffickers are not well known among the US mainstream today, allowing antisemitic tropes to persist unabated to the service of the anti-trafficking movement in the neoliberal age, requires that critical trafficking scholars incorporate the history of antisemitism in the US into their historical narrative of the trafficking movement. Doing so, demands acknowledging how the language of American antisemitism in the anti-trafficking movement shifted away from white slavery at the start of World War II.

As Bristow (1982) points out, “While the origins of the problem of white slavery in Jewish life are more indistinct than we would wish, the end of the story can be dated, all too decisively, September 1939” (p. 322). On that date, the Third Reich ramped up its mission and invaded Poland; leading to violent occupations of conquered territory, the implementation of harsh measures against non-Jewish Poles, the establishment of Jewish ghettos where thousands would die and others transported to concentration camps and death camps all over Europe, and the start of WWII with the German invasion of Poland. In a context where European Jews were being murdered by the millions, Jewish organizations began to mobilize through the nonprofit sector to provide support to survivors.

In the absence of knowledge of how the function of the racial contract (Mills 1997: p. 102) serves as a “political strategy for controlling multiplicity,” regarding levels of responsibility and culpability by limiting the figures from this history to Nazis vs. Jews, the Holocaust appears to be an aberration in European history: “distancing itself theoretically both from positions that would render it cognitively opaque, inexplicably sui generis, and from positions that would downplay the racial dimension and assimilate it to

the undifferentiated terrorism of German fascism.”¹⁵⁹ Far from an aberration in history, sociologist Laura Kipnis (1999) helps explain how white ignorance of racialized and raceless histories has made it so that in US culture, we have rarely if ever been:

More beset by fantasy than in our assertions about the purity of our own motives, and in our own fantastical belief in our own capacity for rationality. Mainstream culture constructs elaborate fantasies about what it purports it's not- subcultural, foreign, pornographic, violent- which propel, and are enacted in, these highly publicized rituals of control and punishment...at work in the cultural fascination with policing...the overarching fantasy is that the powerfully monstrous bad thing is somewhere else...that it's 'other.' Violence isn't here, it's there...not in the family, but in that Satanic cult. (Kipnis 1999: p. 7)

The belief that the Jewish elite were running and international trafficking syndicate lost traction in the US in the 1930s, but the architecture of the Jewish conspiracy theory has stayed the course of history and continues to influence the anti-trafficking movement today through the raceless language of QAnon trafficking conspiracy theories such as #PizzaGate and the New World order, which maintain an unstated emphasis on the influence of powerful Jews. As will be discussed in the following section and proceeding chapter, the QAnon movement, which has been harnessed by the anti-trafficking movement, continues to draw on the cultural power of

¹⁵⁹ Mills (2007) is clear that he is not denying the severity or magnitude of the Jewish Holocaust as the world's first major genocide specifically using the methods of the industrial era but rather, he is denying the singularity and unique deviancy of this racial atrocity among Europeans (p. 104).

Jewish tropes and the Jewish conspiracy in its raceless iterations, in which white women have played and continue to play an important role (Bracewell, 2021; Tiffany, 2020). To bridge the gap between how these tropes evolved from the white slavery movement to the contemporary anti-trafficking movement that emerged in the 1990s, the following section traces the history of Jewish racelessness in antisemitic discourses about trafficking in the mid to late 20th century.

Part II: Post-WWII

Just as African American, Asian, and Latino servicemen had faced racism from white Protestants, the more than a half million Jewish men and women who had fought in the European and Pacific theaters had commonly faced antisemitism, which continued after they returned home after the war (Ades, 2018). The people of the US took great pride in their defeat of the Third Reich and liberated the concentration camps in 1945, but this new sense of national self-actualization effectively whitewashed the fact that the values, strategies, and objectives of the Nazi party were supported and celebrated by a significant proportion of the US population before, during, and after World War II.

Karen Brodtkin (2000) has argued that Jewish success is not solely a product of unique Jewish talent, but also because powerful social barriers in the US made their social mobility more possible than, for example, African Americans, as the latter were not eligible for services from the GI Bill following WWII. However, while these social barriers were removed for American Jews, the same could not be said for Jews in Europe and around the world who had survived the Holocaust, many of whom had been displaced after being forcibly removed from their homes and made to work in

concentration camps to the point of starvation and death. For those who survived, they faced overwhelming barriers from entrance into nearly every country around the world. While the timeline of Jewish expansion into whiteness is often portrayed as monolithic and linear in the US, Jews have always fluctuated between being perceived by outsiders as white and non-white, with centuries of unaddressed and perhaps unconscious antisemitic ideology.

Although the Allied forces had, in conjunction with European Jewish resistance, effectively ended the genocide of Jewish peoples by the Nazi regime, in its aftermath, the few who survived faced severe mental and physical trauma, poverty, statelessness, and hostility from neighboring countries who, while sympathetic to their plight, were also unwilling to take them in. The US military, whose country was hostile to immigrants, refugee or otherwise, reincarcerated several hundred thousand Jews in “DP” camps throughout Europe, designating them as “displaced persons” awaiting asylum. Faced with complaints from soldiers and Jewish army chaplains regarding the mistreatment of the Jews into DP camps, President Harry Truman sent investigators overseas to observe their treatment and interview officers, relief workers, soldiers, and Jewish DPs. After touring 30 DP camps, on August 24th, 1945, investigator Earl G. Harrison, dean of the law school at the University of Pennsylvania reported back to President Truman:

We appear to be treating the Jews as the Nazis treated them except that we do not exterminate them. They are in concentration camps in large numbers under our military guard instead of S.S. troops. One is led to wonder whether the German people, seeing this, are not supposing that we are following or at least condoning

Nazi policy...many displaced persons and other possible non-repatriables are living under guard behind barbed-wire fences, in camps of several descriptions (built by the Germans for slave-laborers and Jews), including some of the most notorious concentration camps, amidst crowded, frequently unsanitary, and generally grim conditions in complete idleness with no opportunity, except surreptitiously, to communicate with the outside world, waiting, hoping for some word of encouragement and action in their behalf. (Harrison, 1945)

Harrison observed that many of the US soldiers sent abroad to guard these camps viewed the Jewish DPs as (cited in Goldstein, 2012, p. 292): “‘different,’ even dangerous...many soldiers and officers viewed ‘statelessness’ as if it were ‘a loathsome disease.’ Others seemed to think that DPs were in camps because they had done something wrong, when in fact they were only there because they had no other place to go.” The US, like many other countries, provided Jewish refugees with no solution to what Harrison viewed as the central problem-statelessness.

As previously discussed, following the passage of the “1903 Immigration Act, which prohibited the entry of anarchists in reaction to the assassination of President William McKinley” refugees and immigrants from Eastern Europe were treated with great suspicion and prejudice (Orchard, 2014, p. 101, citing Zucker & Zucker, 1987, pp. 4–5). Under director Hoover’s leadership, the FBI used the White Slave Traffic Act and similar legislation such as the 1918 Immigration Act to monitor, surveil, harass, arrest, and even deport suspected communists and anarchists. Although Hoover referred to communism as an “evil work” and “a cause that is alien to the religion of Christ and

Judaism” (Hoover, 1947) during a House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)¹⁶⁰ hearing, federal records demonstrate that the FBI believed there to be an explicit connection between Jews and communism and that at least half if not more than all the communists in the US were Jews (Imhoff, 2017). So, while this policy did not explicitly name Jews as the primary target of this policy, like Emma Goldman, many of the people targeted by the FBI at the start of the Cold War were Jewish people of influence.

HUAC achieved its greatest fame and notoriety with its investigation into the Hollywood film industry beginning in October 1947, when the committee began to subpoena screenwriters, directors, and other movie-industry professionals, many of whom were Jewish, to testify about their known or suspected membership in the Communist Party, association with its members, or support of its beliefs. Among the first film industry witnesses subpoenaed by the committee were 10 men who decided not to cooperate. These men, who became known as the "Hollywood Ten," cited the First Amendment's guarantee of free speech and free assembly, which they asserted legally protected them from being required to answer the committee's questions (Ross, 2002). Notably, half of the “Hollywood Ten” were from New York and 6 of them were Jewish.¹⁶¹ For their resistance, the ten were sentenced to prison for contempt of Congress, two were sentenced to six months, the rest to a year.

¹⁶⁰ Formed in 1938, HUAC investigated activities of both German-American Nazis during World War II and suspected communists. House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) was the most prominent and active government committee involved in anti-communist investigations.

¹⁶¹ Alvah Bessie, Herbert Biberman, Lester Cole, John Howard Lawson, Albert Maltz, and Samuel Ornitz were directors and screenwriters in Hollywood and all Jewish. Herbert Biberman was also the original organizer of the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League for the Defense of American Democracy.

On May 14th, 1948, the day Israel was established as world's only Jewish state, the leaders of seven surrounding Arab nations orchestrated military interventions to prevent the entrenchment of Jewish refugees in Palestine, most of whom were Holocaust survivors who had been stripped of their citizenship status in Europe. Jews who resided in the US faced persecution as well, including Jewish American veterans, who had played key roles in the Allies victory (Ades, 2018). Under J Edgar Hoover, the FBI sought to destroy the reputations of Albert Einstein, J. Robert Oppenheimer, and several other progressive Jewish scientists after World War II. Hoover also waged a campaign against suspected Jewish communist, actor Charlie Chaplin,¹⁶² whom Hoover described as “one of Hollywood's parlor Bolsheviki” (Ditmore, 2006, p. 216). After being investigated by the FBI in 1955, Jewish actor Philip Loeb died by suicide following being blacklisted from Hollywood, which had rendered him no unable to financially provide for his disabled son. Days after Loeb overdosed on barbiturates in a New York hotel room, the FBI cleared him of being a member of the Communist Party (Jones, 2010).

Amidst the Cold War, the anti-communist sentiments of Americans were undergirded by the contradiction of the Soviet Union's atheistic orientation and its unfounded association with Jewish conspiracy theories, which repelled the government's crosshairs from the criminal behaviors of white Christians. Seeking to understand why so many French civilians, for example, had conspired with the Nazis, the French world historian and Auschwitz survivor Jules Issacs determined that it was through “the teaching of contempt” for Jews and Judaism in Christian church that “Christians had knowingly or unknowingly been spreading ideas that not only ‘departed from historical

¹⁶² Charlie Chaplin was not Jewish but refused to say so publicly out of principle.

truth' but also distorted and contradicted truth to the point that those ideas 'may justly be termed myths...more appropriate to legend than to history" (Goldstein, 2012, p. 298). In the years following the war, American Christians continued this trend along with other self-identified American Christians, many of whom do not present as white, by spreading antisemitic myths through conspiracy theories through the language of their faith, while at the same time, using it to shield themselves from the state. Whereas Christian religious groups consistently have maintained control of historical narratives describing their victimization, the dominant narrative of Jewish peoples' victimization has only remained under their ownership to the degree that other religious groups (namely Christians) could analogize it with their own oppression.

In a similar albeit different domestic matter, increasingly liberal attitudes towards multiplicity have afforded Mormons to convey to the public that critics, including government officials, raid Mormon communities not because they are anti-polygamy but because the US government is anti-religious freedom. While both the Mormons and Jews identify as religious, ethnic, and cultural groups, both of whom have established colonies on indigenous lands, only the former's self-described persecution is viewed as legitimate in the US. This is not only because they are more closely associated with Protestant Christianity as a religion, but also because their colonization of indigenous lands replicates the colonization practices in this context, which has enabled them to maintain and expand their control of property in Arizona, Utah, the US, and throughout the world.

Antisemitic and ahistorical, these sort of contradictory dynamics that cast Jews as violent colonizers of the state of Israel, while Mormons the victims of anti-religious persecution in the US. This persecution myth is illustrated by the fact that J. Edgar

Hoover was willing to reach far to police communists, anarchists, and Jews in the US, but when his advice was solicited by Arizona Governor Howard Pyle leading up to the 1953 raid on the Mormon polygamists in Short Creek, Hoover laughed: “I have made a personal policy of never touching anything to do with religion. It’s too much of a hot potato” (Bradley, 1993, p. 124). At that time, the average age of marriage for females in the FLDS was 16 and it was not uncommon for them to be 14 and 15-years-old (Bradley, 1993). Additionally, the County Welfare Department discovered that a large number of women in the town-some of whom were minors-were petitioning for support for ten or more children and rumors that 12- and 13-year-old girls were being traded in the community with men ages 50 and up (Bradley, 1993). When the FBI investigated the community for suspected crimes of white slavery in 1952, however, they claimed to have found no evidence of white slavery in Short Creek.¹⁶³ The disparity in Hoover’s treatment of Jews and the Mormons speaks not only to the significance of the cultural association between trafficking and Jewish peoples in the mid-20th century, but also how the Mormons have largely escaped accountability for their crimes against children, which will be discussed extensively in chapters five and six.

In a context where Jewish racelessness was the fact that African Americans faced many of these same forms of systematic prejudice on top of others. Anthropologist Karen Brodtkin illustrates the complexities of these dynamics in her critical essay, “How Jews Became White Folks and What that Says About Race in America” (2000). After WWII, Brodtkin explains that legal rights extended to Jewish American veterans, particularly

¹⁶³ However, in the FBI’s 1952 report they concluded that “immorality, if any, indulged in by the parties was merely incidental and did not constitute the primary purpose of the travel” (Bradley, 1993, p. 124).

access to the 1944 GI Bill, conveyed a sense of victory over antisemitism for Americans in the United States.¹⁶⁴ However, despite the upward mobility this racially based privileged legislation afforded Jewish veterans, the failure to extend these same rights to their African American veteran counterparts demonstrated an ongoing problem with institutional racism in the country.

Although Jews had increasingly assimilated into whiteness, around the time when the 1953 raid on Short Creek polygamists was mischaracterized as being motivated by religious persecution rather than the sexual exploitation of children, Jews continued to face persecution as a distinct racial, ethnic, and religious group based on longstanding mythologies. In addition to being frequently barred from the privilege of being able to purchase houses, attain certain forms of employment, and from holding public office in the decades following the second world war (Brodkin, 2000), the existence of Satanic secret societies added onto the structure of the three-pronged Jewish conspiracy theory. This discursive transformation not only allowed antisemites to continue to draw on the symbolic power of Christianity at a time when the faith was synonymous with patriotism during the cold war, but also to avoid accountability in a context where explicit antisemitism was no longer acceptable in the public realm following the Holocaust.

In the eight decades after Jewish immigrants were commonly referred to as aliens, spies, and communists by antisemites in the white slavery movement, the characterization of this imaginary threat had taken on an even more bizarre and mystical character that came to inform the anti-trafficking movement. Mythologies like the Zionist Occupied

¹⁶⁴ The GI Bill gave Jewish and Christian American veterans alike access to educational benefits, preferential hiring, financial support during job searches, low-interest home loans, and small loans for start-up businesses.

Government (ZOG) preserved the explicitly antisemitic character of “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” but those that came about in the decades that followed expressed its three-pronged conspiracy through raceless language, such as the New World Order (NWO), the Illuminati, Freemasonry, and most recently, QAnon (Belew, 2018; Rothschild, 2022). Far-right publications like the influential novel *Turner Diaries* (Pierce, 1979), *The New World Order* (Robertson 1991), and *Dark Agenda: The Illuminati Protocols Exposed* (Knight, 2020), and *Pedophilia & Empire* (Hagopian, 2021, p. 273, 277, 302), reinforced the idea that "Talmudic heresy traditions converge[d] with freemasonry to deliver Luciferian bloodlust of pedophile sex rings" consisting of “intelligent alien beings” and “demonic supernatural forces” that “thrive on the blood of defenseless children.

As Joshua Trachtenberg (1943) wrote of “anti-Jewish prejudice” following the second world war, the religious dimension of Jews as an ethnic group positions antisemites to frame it as “demonological,” which “renders it different, in expression and intensity, from other manifestations of racial or minority antipathy” (pp. xiv-xv). By the 1980’s, the “Satanic panic” was in full swing, as Americans parents feared that satanism and devil worship on the rise as well as child pedophilia rituals, which were unfounded. The Satanic panic emerged at a time when an increase in two-income households led to an increased demand for daycare services in the US. Since working parents had more anxieties about placing their children in the hands of daycare workers more than previous generations, they were more willing to accept the notion of ‘stranger danger’ (Beck, 2015) In addition to the influence of fringe conspiracy theorists, journalists, members of congress, and law enforcement contributed to these anxieties.

Following the publication *Michelle Remembers* (1980), a book co-authored by Lawrence Pazder and Michelle Smith, who was the former's patient and eventually became his wife, allegations of "ritual child abuse" were abound in the US. Through the pseudo-scientific therapeutic approach called recovered-memory therapy, Smith claimed to have unlocked repressed memories of her ritual abuse in 1954 by members of the Church of Satan, before she was saved by divine intervention. Although these claims were entirely discredited and criticized, the story he promoted was widely publicized in the news media and well received by the American public.

Before Pazdin was a guest on the Oprah Winfrey show in 1990, he became a consultant for alleged victims of ritual child abuse in various capacities and his book was referenced by legal prosecutors in cases where the defendants were identified as Satanists (Cheit, 2014). Most notably, during the McMartin Preschool trials that began soon after the publication of his book, Pazdin was hired as a consultant for the case. The McMartin family, who ran a daycare in Manhattan Beach, California, were falsely accused of subjecting hundreds of children in their care to Satanic rituals and pedophilic abuse. The alleged perpetrators, one of whom was identified by a child as Hollywood action film star Chuck Norris, were alleged to have flushed children down toilets into underground tunnels and secret chambers where they were abused (Eberle & Eberle, 2003). Although these accusations were completely unfounded and the charges were eventually dropped, this event nonetheless struck fear into the hearts of American families, many of whom were likely unconvinced by the verdict.

Morphing and evolving away from their overt predecessors into forms that were palatable to the American public in the wake of the Holocaust, during a historical period

when the anti-trafficking movement was dwindling, antisemitism thrived through raceless iterations of blood libel in conspiracy theories and manifestations of the Satanic panic. Thus, laying the foundation for the QAnon Pizzagate scandal that will be discussed in the upcoming chapter, which would arise after the anti-trafficking movement had been detached from the Jewish conspiracy theory for nearly four decades and new laws were developed.

It was within this context that a shift in feminist politics from grassroots activism to professional activism, through partnerships with law enforcement and other state entities, elevated a “victim-centered approach.” According to journalist Allison Bass (2015), the term “sex trafficking” was first used in the following decade by feminists who believed that prostitution was fundamentally exploitative. The broad notion of “sexual exploitation” that followed, which has since come to encompass activities ranging from sexting to sexual assault in prison, has since been harnessed to target sex workers and people of color for criminalization as was discussed in the introduction.

Amidst an immigration wave from South America, Central America, and the Caribbean, the anti-trafficking movement reemerged in the 1990’s, just as had occurred in the late 19th century in response to the arrival of immigrants from eastern Europe. While the threat posed by immigrants at the turn of the second millennium was unfounded, trafficking courses appealed to the racist and xenophobic fantasies of white Americans, who were either unwilling or unable to acknowledge how their nation’s foreign policy had contributed to their displacement. As Jo Doezema explains, trafficking discourse was reignited in a context where Americans feared that the sexual violence of

immigrant men and widespread availability of female sex workers were threatening their way of life:

Communities feel under threat through immigration and multiculturalism; in the third world, communities worry about the perceived threat to tradition by encroaching Western values...all over the world, communities are caught up in identity crises in the face of displacement, mass migration, and globalization. The myth of 'trafficking in women' is one manifestation of attempts to re-establish community identity, in which race, sexuality, and women's autonomy are used as markers and metaphors of crucial boundaries. (Doezema, 2002, p. 24)

In the age of globalization, unlike the white slavery movement and its afterlife, the anti-trafficking movement shifted its concerns to the exploitation of foreign girls by American men, thus ignoring the possibility that "these women have engaged in some form of sex work in their home countries and see work abroad as a chance to improve their circumstances" (Buffington, Luibhéid, & Guy, 2014). In response to the above concerns, various laws were passed to deter American men from exploiting immigrant women and girls for the purposes of sex, even in cases where it is consensual; in line with the victim centered approach that remains dominant today in the anti-trafficking movement and continues to discount the agency of sex workers and targets people of color for criminalization, including people imagined as "globalists." It was in this context that the US came to define trafficking for other nations, whose foreign aid was contingent upon their institutionalization of the former's conception of the problem as laid out in the

Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA, 2000)¹⁶⁵ is also able to influence the ways in which human trafficking is understood abroad is the fact that all foreign (and domestic) NGOs who receive US government anti-trafficking funds are required to sign a “Prostitution Loyalty Oath”¹⁶⁶ (Zimmerman, 2013).

The victim centered approach was codified in federal law with the passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, which among other features, added “new criminal provisions prohibiting forced labor, trafficking with respect to peonage, slavery, involuntary servitude, or forced labor, and sex trafficking of children or by force, fraud, or coercion” (TVPA, 2000, cited in US Department of Justice, 2023). After the TVPA was reauthorized in 2003 and 2005, in 2008 it was modified to permit the “prosecution of sex traffickers who recklessly disregard the fact that force, fraud, or coercion would be used against the victim,” which made it possible for all sex workers to be charged with trafficking (TVPA, 2000). Around this time, as the definition of trafficking broadened, the anti-trafficking movement shifted its focus towards domestic trafficking issues,

¹⁶⁵ Embedded in the TVPA 2000 is the U.S. Tier Ranking System provision. The tier ranking system allows the U.S. government to make annual assessments of other countries’ anti-trafficking efforts according to how successfully their government has complied with the TVPA minimum standards and U.S. government procedures to eradicate human trafficking, on a Tier 1-3 scale. This ranking system is used to generate a yearly Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report and as a warning to non-compliant “Tier 3” countries who then become subject to U.S. sanctions. For example, under this provision the U.S. President can withhold non-humanitarian, non-trade related U.S. assistance to any Tier 3 country. Scholars have raised concern with what Chuang (2010) describes as a “unilateral economic-sanctions regime” (p. 1680) in that it presents the U.S. as the moral authority on anti-trafficking efforts, reasoning that the Tier Ranking system “reinforces imperialist and hegemonic relations between those in power and those not in power” (Desyllas, 2007, p. 67).

¹⁶⁶ This anti-prostitution pledge states that under no circumstances will the NGO assist or support anyone who is willingly involved in or advocates for the legalization or decriminalization of prostitution (Zimmerman, 2013), making the United States government, according to Musto (2009) “the de facto gatekeepers and manager of trafficking discourse and policy” (p. 286).

amidst concerns that resources were being relegated to foreigners at the expense of American victims:

This is not an issue of discrimination or immigration. But...if you would rescue a 15-year-old Thai girl who is being used in your town and she gets services as a trafficked victim and she's with a 15-year-old American girl who is being sold, treat them the same, please. Don't call the 15-year-old a prostitute and put her in jail and take the other to the federal government and give her services. (Family Policy Alliance, 2000):

The grievances of the anti-trafficking movement shifted back to the home front alongside the rising influence and accessibility of the internet. In addition to creating a means for sex workers to share useful information with one another, such as health tips and warnings about dangerous clients, the internet enabled them to coordinate in-person exchanges without the need for a pimp. Further, it established new opportunities to make money online through sex work, such as chat rooms, web camming, and pornography, which were typically safer and often more profitable than physical encounters. Despite these benefits, however, the passage of legislation like the Fighting Online Sex Trafficking Act (FOSTA) and the Stop Enabling Trafficking Act (SESTA), which were quickly enacted into federal law with support from anti-trafficking experts like Dominique Roe-Sepowitz, who testified before congress that the law was necessary to effectively combat sex trafficking in the emerging technological landscape.

Legislation like the TVPA and FOSTA/SESTA have had disastrous consequences for sex workers, especially those who are poor, non-white, and undocumented. While one might assume that anti-trafficking experts would advocate for policies that protect people from sexual violence and exploitation, they have consistently produced the opposite effect. As the types of behaviors that fall under the legal definition of trafficking expand alongside carceral capacities of policing and corrections, the anti-trafficking movement becomes more detrimental to the well-being of marginalized groups living in the US. In addition to enacting legislation and coalitional interventions that render people who buy and sell sex increasingly vulnerable to criminal and state-sanctioned harms, the experts tasked with defining the scope and nature of the problem are ever-more equipped to exploit racial fantasies of the American public to garner power and profit. This not only detracts resources from social movements that serve the expressed needs of oppressed groups like sex workers,¹⁶⁷ but also has significant consequences for how those persons labeled as victims and perpetrators are imagined and treated in society beyond the issue of trafficking.

While it had largely been detached from the anti-trafficking movement since its reemergence in the 1990's, the Jewish conspiracy theory had persisted and was reinvigorated following Pizzagate in 2017, which through online radicalization catalyzed the QAnon movement and all its associated harms. Due to its antisemitic roots, "Jews" can be substituted for "traffickers" almost seamlessly in the discourses proliferated by the contemporary anti-trafficking movement. As previously noted, however, and as will be

¹⁶⁷ The "Prostitution Loyalty Oath" (Zimmerman, 2013) requires organizations seeking grant funding for combating trafficking to explicitly denounce the validity of sex work as a form of labor.

discussed and further contextualized in the following chapter: identifying antisemitism in this movement can be difficult. The reason is because for most people in the US and abroad, “Jews are an abstract entity” and for racists, “Jews are an abstract enemy” (Blee, 2002, p. 60) because “antisemitism rooted in a belief in invisible Jewish conspiracies...requires no specific or personal referent” (Blee, 2002, p. 90).

Distinct from anti-Black racism pervasive throughout anti-trafficking discourse, which relies on historically racist references to “pimp-traffickers,” “gorilla pimps,” and “gang traffickers,” antisemitic references to alleged Jewish traffickers are more subtle. Rather than explicitly naming Jewish people as white slavers, as had been the case in the early 20th century, contemporary anti-trafficking discourses rely on dog whistles such as “Jeffrey Epstein,”¹⁶⁸ “the Hollywood elite,”¹⁶⁹ “George Soros,”¹⁷⁰ and the Rothschilds¹⁷¹ to signal an association with Jews and international trafficking rings. Additionally, rather

¹⁶⁸ Although Jewish financier, Jeffrey Epstein, was only convicted of procuring an underage prostitute, there are widespread allegations among QAnon conspiracy theorists that he was the mastermind of an international human trafficking operation; one involving the exploitation of children by powerful people, mostly democrat politicians and Hollywood celebrities on his private jet or island. A new iteration of blood libel, one theory maintains that his victims were tortured so their blood could be harvested and ingested for its life-giving properties (Hitt, 2020). Another theory, which is equally antisemitic, is that he worked in conjunction with Mossad to gain leverage over the global elite, by recording them in sexual encounters with minors. Conspiracy theorists claim that the Jewish father of Epstein’s wife and accomplice, Ghislaine Maxwell, had worked for Israeli intelligence and the Soviet Union (Burke, 2019).

¹⁶⁹ The historical origins of this antisemitic trope will be discussed extensively in the following chapter, but today the term “Hollywood elite” is most commonly referred to in the context of a conspiracy theory surrounding Jeffrey Epstein (Burke, 2019).

¹⁷⁰ She did not invent this dog whistle, but Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene has repeatedly signaled to antisemites by criticizing Hungarian-Jewish billionaire George Soros and questioning his citizenship. While the American Jewish Committee does not believe that *all* criticisms of George Soros are antisemitic, such as critiques of his politics, they argue that: “when Soros is used as a symbol for Jewish control, wealth, and power, the criticism may be an updated version of traditional antisemitic tropes (see conspiracy theory, control, Jewish figures, cabal, globalist)” (American Jewish Committee, 2023).

¹⁷¹ Numerous conspiracy theorists have made references to “the Rothschilds,” a known Jewish family who have symbolic of anti-Jewish rhetoric since the 19th century (Rothschild, 2022). Contemporaneously, Marjorie Taylor Greene has claimed that the Rothschild family has been wielding “state-of-the-art Jewish space lasers” to shoot down Santa Claus and ignite forest fires in California to cultivate public support for climate change initiatives (Borowitz, 2021; Chait, 2021).

than naming New York City's Tammany Hall political machine to signal to Jews, contemporary anti-trafficking discourses instead rely on "Democratic pedophiles" (Stanton, 2020) and the "Deep State"¹⁷² to appeal to the conscious and unconscious antisemitic sentiments of the American population.

Further, just as antisemites can express their attitudes through criticism of Israel without directly referencing the Jewish people, the contemporary anti-trafficking movement often identifies states and cities that are "hubs" where trafficking is allegedly rampant, such as New York, California, and Chicago (Koyama, 2011). While those attuned to Jewish American life may recognize the significance of these locations, which are home to the largest populations of Jews in the US,¹⁷³ these references enable antisemites to signal one another and make insinuations about the populations who live there. Therefore, demonstrating why reckoning with the boundary between implicit and explicit antisemitism has become exceedingly complex in an era of seeming colorblindness and Jewish racelessness, as will be sufficiently exemplified in the context of Arizona's anti-trafficking movement and the greater US in the second half of the following chapter.

¹⁷² According to Belew (2018), the "deep state" represents the evolution of previously established white supremacist conspiracies like the "Zionist Occupied Government" (ZOG) and New World Order (NWO). Popularized by Donald Trump, and often said in conjunction with his "drain the swamp rhetoric," this is a phrase that has since become widely adopted by far-right politicians Steve Bannon, Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Green and Lauren Boebert, and the larger Republican party, used synonymously to refer to Democratic politicians and the Jewish cabal.

¹⁷³ New York City is home to 1.6 million Jews, the largest Jewish population of any city in the world, even above Jerusalem (City of New York 2022). Additionally, Los Angeles, California is home to 565,000 Jews, the second largest Jewish population in the United States (Aronson, Brookner, Saxe, Bankier-Karp, Boxer, Seeskin, & Dutwin, 2021). For the Jewish population in the city of Chicago, see (Aronson, Brookner, Saxe, Bankier-Karp, Boxer, Seeskin, & Dutwin, 2020).

Conclusion

Many critical trafficking scholars' references to the racist history of the early anti-trafficking movement mark a period between the 1880's and early 1920's, when it was called the white slavery movement, and then return to the movement's revival in the 1990's. However, within the gaps of this anti-trafficking history is an important albeit under examined narrative. Many people in Europe and the US may be prone to believe that the recent uptick in antisemitic violence is a relatively new social problem. However, as demonstrated in this chapter and as will be further illustrated in the one that follows, antisemitism has been an American tradition since Eastern European immigrants first set foot on US soil and became a transatlantic phenomenon in the mid-1920's and throughout the 1930's (Glenn, 2014).

Tracing antisemitic discourses from the white slavery movement to the reemergence of the anti-trafficking movement in the 1990's in its colorblind and raceless forms, indicates that there is reason to be concerned for the future of the Jewish peoples both domestically and abroad. The opacity of Jewish life and history in the Christian world allows them to be targeted through stark contradictions, such as the belief that Jews are simultaneously involved in a global communist conspiracy and at the same time captains of industry, media, and finance; that Jews are white supremacists that are simultaneously conspiring with people of color to dismantle the Western world; and that Jews are a violent people facilitating the genocide of the Palestinians, but went willingly to gas chambers during the Holocaust.

Considering how the establishment of anti-trafficking coalitions can exploit the antisemitic attitudes of the American population to generate profit and dissemination of

colorblind and raceless rhetoric through expanding categories of people designated as “other” (traffickers), suggests that the US is following a similar trajectory as Germany in the early 20th century. Failure to acknowledge the severity of this phenomenon, as well as other signs of rising fascism,¹⁷⁴ is a symptom of white ignorance, a denial of the connection between the 20th C. white slavery crusades, the contemporary anti-trafficking movement, and global white supremacy.

Given Europe’s brutal history of racist colonization, exploitation, and genocide, the Holocaust should not be viewed as an aberration, but rather the expected outcome of the technological advancement and the brutal efficiency of modern society.¹⁷⁵ Yet, the mass genocide of six million Jews in Europe during WWII was a groundbreaking historical moment because it marked the use of industrial era methods -such as mechanized transportation, electronic communications, automatic weapons, electric fences, and gas chambers- to more swiftly and efficiently carry out genocide than other any other regime had been able to in the past. Since the power of technology has grown

¹⁷⁴ The definition of “fascism” offered by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is: “an ultranationalist, authoritarian political philosophy. It combines elements of nationalism, militarism, economic self-sufficiency, and totalitarianism. It opposes communism, socialism, pluralism, individual rights and equality, and democratic government. Fascism places the importance of the nation above all else. The unity of the national community is prioritized above the rights of individuals. This leads to an intense interest in defining which groups belong or do not belong to the national body. Fascism is characterized by strident, often exclusionary nationalism; fixation with national decline; (real or perceived) and threats to the existence of the national community; and embrace of paramilitarism. In fascist states, violence is accepted—even celebrated—if it serves or advances the national community. Fascists define the national will as advancing the interests of the national community. This usually means protecting or elevating the rights of the national community above the rights of those seen as alien; removing obstacles to national unity and suppressing those seen as challenging it; expanding the size and influence of the national state; often, also seeking to expand territory through armed conflict” (2021a).

¹⁷⁵ As Sven Lindquist’s (1997, pp. 160, 172) argues in his book titled, *Exterminate All the Brutes*: “The modern industrial application of a policy of extermination on which European world domination had long since rested...And when what had been done in the heart of darkness was repeated in the heart of Europe, no one recognized it. No one wished to admit what everyone knew...It is not knowledge we lack. What is missing is the courage to understand what we know and draw conclusions.”

even more exponentially since the Nazis were defeated in 1945, the rising trend of antisemitism, to which the anti-trafficking movement is contributing, poses an unprecedented threat to the ongoing survival of the Jewish people.

With an ever more expansive and public education system of Christo-fascist¹⁷⁶ policy and curriculum¹⁷⁷ intense privatization of basic necessities in a period of unprecedented wealth inequality and digital banking systems, as well as the potential for online radicalization where nearly everyone has access, a fascist regime would have incredible capacity to influence and coerce people in precarious positions to their cause. Not only could civilian paramilitaries and other white power groups be used to surveil and capture any individuals designated as undesirable, but the capacities of border patrol, homeland security, all branches of the military, and international intelligence apparatuses would make escape all but impossible. Further, with the state of militarized policing institutions, ever advancing knowledge of American family lineage through websites like Ancestry.com, and sophisticated biometrics technologies, it would be all but impossible to conceal one's identity within the nation's borders.

¹⁷⁶ A deeply contested term, fascism holds contempt for liberal ideology, socialism, and democratic rule, believing instead in the supremacy of one national, ethnic, or religious group as well as obedience to a powerful, charismatic leader with an unapologetic and violently exclusionary approach to achieve this order (Stanley 2020). The central motivator behind fascist movements is to make the nation stronger, more successful, more powerful, and more expansive. In the context of this study, I define the term Christo-fascism as a fascist movement that is oriented by Christian theology, in the sense that it is used to identify the superior individual/group and rationalize their political domination.

¹⁷⁷ See Figure 4 below, p. 173.

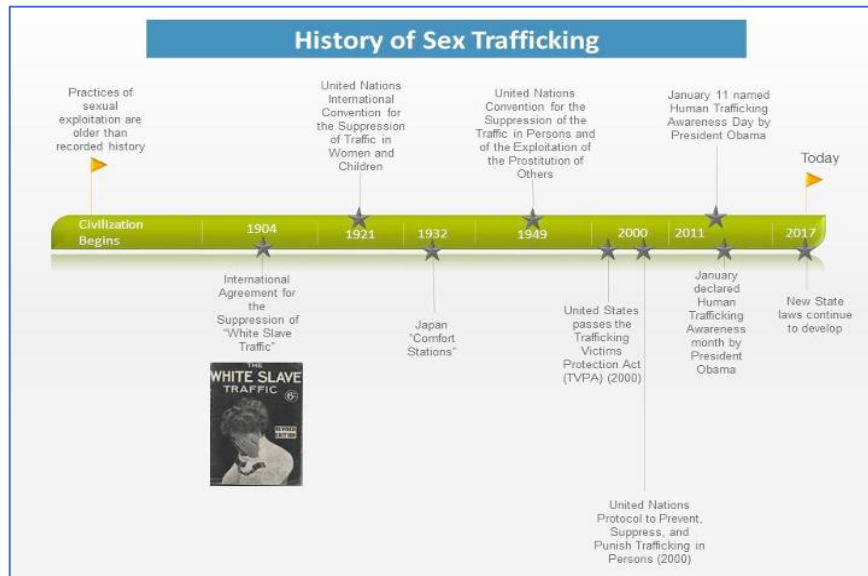


Figure 4. Timeline from the ASU-McCain Institute Online Trafficking Human Trafficking History Curriculum

Second, it was the first European-led genocide in which Europeans inflicted mass casualties on themselves by creating a racially scientific fiction that characterized Jewish peoples as genetically inferior others; whose ongoing existence was not only a threat to the Aryan race, but also were bound for extinction according to Darwinian evolutionary theory. Christian institutions continue to hold great influence in the public and private spheres, but the American people have never been more accepting of and dependent upon the financial funding, scientific theory, and the knowledge these Christian institutions help produce. Since the beliefs and values of the religious and secular remain deeply entangled with one another in the American psyche, it is possible that these diametrically opposed ideologies can be harnessed to reinforce one another, which was fundamental to the rise of the Third Reich.

Since the end of World War II and the Holocaust, the American people seem to have increasingly detached themselves from the notion they are the saviors of the Jews,

and the significance of how the US was able to rise to achieve global dominance and usher in the neoliberal age, through both spiritual and scientific lenses. On the right, this collective memory of exceptionalism has culminated in the fascist turn, provoking a political landscape in the US where Israel is commonly understood as the center of a Jewish conspiracy. In conjunction with Jihadism, which is almost exclusively focused on regimes that violate Islamic law or are sympathetic to the West, a significant proportion of people around the world support this entire spectrum of antisemitic narratives.

Many countries in the world had contributed to the Third Reich's efforts to eliminate the entire Jewish population less than a century ago, whether through their direct participation, entrepreneurial exploitation, refusal to admit to refugees fleeing the Holocaust, or general indifference (Nelson, 2015). Most of those who fought to defeat the Nazis were primarily concerned with Hitler's plans for global domination rather than the well-being of the Jews, who were in most cases denied sanctuary in other nations.¹⁷⁸ Those who survived the Holocaust were left stateless, impoverished, and traumatized in refugee camps, many of which were the same concentration camps that they had such been enslaved in by the Nazis, amidst a largely uncaring and hostile world and at the mercy of two nuclear superpowers that both contributed to the Holocaust. Because most people do not understand Jewish culture, their history, or antisemitism in the age of the

¹⁷⁸ To minimize their own contributions to the Holocaust, people throughout the world have scapegoated German Christians as the sole perpetrators, but other groups in Germany also played key roles, as did other organizations and nations which are generally not associated with the Axis powers. In *Moroni and the Swastika* (2015), Nelson articulates a forgotten history of German Mormons' participation in the Holocaust, such as their role in the engineering of gas chambers and association with members of the Nazi high command, including Adolf Hitler. As previously remarked, the US had rejected Jewish refugees, as had Cuba, Poland, Austria, Italy, and Switzerland also refused them entry.

social group's ostensible racelessness, they are susceptible to religious and racist arguments like other marginalized groups.

CHAPTER 4

WHITE WOMEN'S RACISM AND THE US ANTI-TRAFFICKING MOVEMENT

Introduction

Critical trafficking scholars who have written about white slavery have focused on the harms of white Christian Americans in the anti-trafficking movement (Farrag, Flory, & Loskota, 2014; Zimmerman, 2013), as well as the role that “carceral feminism” (Bernstein, 2007) plays in the context of trafficking, where anti-trafficking actors, often women, use calls for “abolition” as a way to liberate women from trafficking by putting men behind bars for sex crimes. However, returning to Chuang’s (2014) notion of exploitation creep, when examining how broad the meaning of “trafficking” is presently through awareness campaigns, secondhand interviews, and observation of professional training, it does appear to reflect some sort of women’s liberation. This is white women’s liberation under white supremacy.

Historian Ann Taylor Allen (1997) has argued that: “Women, while they remain in the female sphere are thus endowed with innocence of the crimes of the modern state, but at the price of being placed outside of modernity and indeed outside of history itself” (p. 351). This chapter aims to make these women’s leadership and involvement in the anti-trafficking movement of the past and in modern times, including the harms they have caused, visible. Drawing on critical trafficking studies literature written about this movement’s broad history (Boris & Berg, 2014; Bromfield, 2016; Delgado, 2012; Grittner, 1990; Knepper, 2012; Soderlund, 2013), feminist scholarship (Collins, 2000; Bumiller, 2008; Maynard, 2015; Smith, 2006), critical race studies (Crenshaw, 1989;

Hall, 2006; Jones-Rogers, 2019; Sullivan, 2014) and understudied work about the roles of women in far-right extremist and racist social movement history (Belew, 2018; Blee, 1991, 2002, 2018; Gilmore, 1996; Lower, 2013; Newman, 1999; Ware, 2015), this chapter considers what roles bourgeois white women have played in the US anti-trafficking movement of the past to determine how these historical legacies impact the anti-trafficking movement in the US and Arizona today. To answer this question through the interrelated frames of white ignorance and the nonprofit industrial complex (NPIC), the first part of this chapter describes how bourgeois white women involved in philanthropy beginning in the late 19th and early 20th centuries shaped the US anti-trafficking movement. To elucidate the legacies of these social movement actors, the second part of the chapter describes how this same social group of women in the anti-trafficking movement continue to inflict harm on vulnerable populations they purport to help through awareness and intervention in the US and Arizona today.

Part I, titled *The Historical Role of White Women in the US Anti-Trafficking Movement*, focuses on how women in the anti-trafficking movement have reproduced white supremacy, similar to the early 20th century, through their efforts to raise awareness, enact policies, and instigate vigilante violence in response to sexual violence against women and girls. Since the early 20th century, bourgeois white women have played a central role in the production and dissemination of racist anti-trafficking mythologies. These mythologies characterized white women as the victims of people of color, including immigrants, and catalyzed the creation of anti-trafficking policies such as the Kate Bushnell Bill (1889) and the White Slave Traffic Act, also known as the Mann Act (1910). These policies contributed to the formation and expansion of the Federal

Bureau of Investigation (FBI) (Delgado, 2012; Pliley, 2010) as well as the implementation of anti-trafficking interventions that unjustly criminalized people of color and immigrants and stoked vigilante justice.

Part II, titled *The Legacy of White Women in the US Anti-Trafficking Movement*, examines how contemporary campaigners have continued the social processes of formal and extrajudicial punishment on these same groups through anti-trafficking language framed by colorblindness and Jewish racelessness. While the mythologies of the anti-trafficking movement today do not explicitly define the problem along the lines of race or religious identity, the research they produce has generated new, albeit historically familiar categories for identifying victims and especially traffickers through tropes such as the “gorilla pimp,” and “gang trafficker” (Project STARFISH, 2018) and the “sneaker pimp” (Williamson & Close-Tolar, 2002). The way the trafficking problem and people portrayed as traffickers and trafficking victims are conveyed to the public are used to rationalize contemporary anti-trafficking policies that reproduce the same social hierarchies as their antecedents of the anti-white slavery crusades. Since the resulting policies and interventions mirror those of the past, not only are these disproportionately women-led anti-trafficking coalitions unable to address the trafficking problem, but they are harmful to society at large by reproducing racist tropes and frequently criminalizing the very people they claim to help.

The NPIC framework refers to a complex, coalitional “system of relationships between local and federal governments, the owning classes, foundations, and nonprofit/NGO social service and social justice organizations” (Munshi & Willse, 2007, p. xii, cited in INCITE!, 2017) which directly feeds into the prison industrial complex

(PIC) (Davis, 1995). The NPIC offers a useful framework for understanding how the processes of coalitional anti-trafficking activity that occurred during the 20th Century look much like they do today, as many leaders and activists of historic organizations such as the National Women's Suffrage Association and the Women's Christian Temperance Union found more ideological commonality with law enforcement agencies and vigilante groups such as the KKK through the language of trafficking than they did with early civil rights activist Ida B. Wells and the anti-lynching crusades (Freedman, 2013; Ware, 2015). Stated differently, by examining how these different groups used the theme of trafficking to organize and wield political power in the 1920s through the NPIC frame, critical scholars will have a better understanding of how gender and whiteness intersect, emerging in anti-trafficking organizing through the literal structuring of institutions committed to shared ideological white power today.

Since the summer of 2020, anti-trafficking coalitions have sought to distinguish the work of professional organizations such as Polaris Project and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) from Save the Children campaigns (Landers & Ruelas, 2020; Roose 2020; Zadrozny & Collins 2020) that have proliferated throughout the far-right, racist, antisemitic QAnon movement in the US. Although the national public response to QAnon has been met with widespread dismay, dismissal, and ridicule, this is not the first time in history that the mainstream anti-trafficking movement has been faced with competition from white supremacists also concerned about trafficking. Examining the ways that professional anti-trafficking campaigns coexist alongside racist and antisemitic movements in both the present and past, as well as the ways that trafficking discourses emerge, overlap, and play off one another, a larger

picture begins to unfold around the colorblind and raceless politics of the mainstream anti-trafficking movement that reveal a deliberate manufacturing of a problem expansive enough to reach as many people as possible.

Through a reveal of distorted, colorblind and raceless assumptions about trafficking, past and present, this chapter examines how historically harmful ideas about race, religion, sexuality, and slavery have been wielded by both mainstream anti-trafficking groups and far-right racist groups, such as QAnon and the KKK. Throughout the history of the US anti-trafficking movement, this has occurred in ways that are often indistinguishable from one another, during times of significant demographic shifts, technological advancement, economic downturn, public health crises, and anti-intellectualism. It focuses on how white bourgeoisie women have leveraged issues such as temperance, suffrage, sexual violence, and lynching, by framing them in racist language to secure and advance their own political and cultural positions in society at the expense of groups who are often more vulnerable than themselves.

Part I: The Historical Role of White Women in the US Anti-Trafficking Movement

The history of the contemporary anti-trafficking movement in the US has its roots in late-19th Century England, amidst the rapid social changes of the industrial revolution. In 1882, William T. Stead, a British muckraking journalist, published a four-part series of articles in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in London, England. Stead coined the term, “governance by journalism,” to convey a form of reporting that could stir anxieties among mass audiences and move them to act to, in turn, generate significant social and legislative reform (Soderlund, 2013). William Stead was inspired to write this series after being

approached by a vice campaigner and city official named Benjamin Scott, who alleged that British girls were being procured to work as white slaves in brothels throughout London by white slave traffickers.

Stead became an international sensation for his groundbreaking investigative journalism, eventually informing the passage of the Criminal Law Amendment Act (1885), after his reporting on the white slave trade of women and children in London, titled *The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon* (1882). Distinguished from “sexual immorality,” which Stead claimed police should not interfere with, he argued that new forms of “criminal sexuality” were manifesting in “the sale and purchase and violation of children, the procurement of virgins, the entrapping and ruin of women, the international slave trade in girls,” as well as other “atrocities, brutalities, and unnatural crimes” (Stead, 1882). These dramatic claims were based on three pieces of evidence, including, “social facts in the form of interviews, aural confirmation in the form of a scream, and embodied proof in the form of an unwilling virgin” (Soderlund, 2013, p. 39).

These less than convincing forms of evidence were collected through Stead’s own questionable research into the problem, which foreshadowed how anti-trafficking movement actors would approach the issue across the US. To conduct his study, Stead hired Rebecca Jarret, a retired sex worker and brothel keeper, to procure a thirteen-year-old girl named Eliza Armstrong. By orchestrating her purchase through a third party, Stead sought to demonstrate how easily and cheaply he could traffic a white virgin child for purposes of prostitution. After Jarrett purchased the girl from her mother,¹⁷⁹ she

¹⁷⁹ According to Gretchen Soderlund (2013), Jarret alleged that she had told Mrs. Armstrong that Eliza would be working as a maid for a wealthy Londoner.

drugged Armstrong with chloroform and took her to a medical examiner to test for proof of virginity. Upon confirmation from the examiner, Armstrong was then placed in a brothel by Jarret, as instructed by Stead, who was waiting there to witness and document the presence of the unwilling white virgin. When Armstrong awoke, she saw Stead's figure and allegedly screamed, "There's a man in the room! Take me home; oh, take me home!" Stead left the room and subsequently held this as evidence of her being trafficked in *The Maiden Tribute*, demonstrating one of the first case studies of white slavery to exemplify the larger problem in England's major cities (Stead, 1885, p. 81).

William Stead, whose work was published not long after the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in England, was referred to by one British newspaper editor as the "John Brown of these white slaves of the legalized and illegal brothels of Europe" (Soderlund, 2013, p. 81). Stead's work marked the beginning of what would become a tradition of using a specific case to make wider generalizations about the nature and scope of white slave trafficking of national and international proportions. Throughout the late 19th Century, his findings spread throughout Europe with the help of the printing press and eventually reached the US. A white bourgeois woman from New York named Frances Willard, the President of the national Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) at the time, was taken by the details of Stead's account. She described *The Maiden Tribute* as "a veritable spiritual experience" that "so stirred the heart of womanhood that were the hidden life of our great cities known," it would foster a massive movement to combat the cause in the US (Soderlund, 2013, p. 79). Willard, inspired by the 1885 report, began weaving white slavery discourse in her temperance work.

Willard spent the next several years campaigning against alcohol through both the language of temperance and white slavery, which were both burgeoning movements at the time that appealed to the racial fantasies of white Americans. According to Willard, “the colored race multiplies like the locusts of Egypt” when Black men imbibe alcohol, which perfectly coalesced with her contention that white women were frequent victims of sexual violence at the hands of men of color. This popular sentiment was not limited to so-called “backward” southern conservatives but was in fact also shared by many northern “progressive” and mainstream white women, who held political influence at the national level (Ware, 2015). Willard’s assumptions reflected broader, shared assumptions about non-white, non-Protestant men that were tied to fears of race-mixing, sex and sexuality, and threats to the traditional family.

Willard would establish the Suppression of Social Evil department within the WCTU, which discursively aimed to eradicate the problem of white slavery in the US among other issues. The following March in 1886, Willard changed the name of the Suppression of Social Evil department to the “Department of Social Purity,” to modernize the Christian fundamentalist image the initial name hinted towards and appointed a white Christian medical doctor named Dr. Katherine Bushnell as head. Although some researchers, law enforcement, and other sources claimed the problem was negligible in this context, the WCTU commissioned Dr. Bushnell to investigate female white sexual slavery in 1888 (Soderlund, 2013). After observing young, white women working in brothels in logging towns in northern Michigan and Wisconsin, Bushnell decried the horrors of white slavery in an article published in the WCTU’s newspaper, the *Union Signal*. Discounting the agency of the young women working in the brothels

she observed, Bushnell claimed that the white slavery problem in London as Stead had reported, was also pervasive “between the lumber districts of the upper peninsula of Michigan and American cities” (Soderlund, 2013, p. 91).

The work of bourgeois white female professionals and philanthropists like Willard and Bushnell, as well as other WCTU members like Bessie Kushman, was deeply influential upon journalists whose work reached even broader audiences in the US. Antisemitic tropes about “Jewish pimp-slavers” as threats to Protestant American women were reproduced by American journalists such as George Kibbe Turner in his 1909 report in *McClure Magazine*, "The Daughters of the Poor: A Plain Story of the Development of New York City as a Leading Centre of the White Slave Trade of the World, under Tammany Hall." After Turner had traveled to red light districts in New York City to observe what he called “white slavery,” he generalized his findings as a national problem. Continuing and exacerbating the American tradition of proliferating racial mythologies, Turner’s work fanned the flames of the white slavery movement with his assertion that Jewish men were at the center of an international conspiracy to traffic white women. In 1910, religious white slavery activist Ernest A. Bell published an anthology of essays about white slavery:

Unless we make energetic and successful war upon the red-light districts and all that pertains to them, we shall have Oriental brothel slavery thrust upon us from China and Japan, and Parisian white slavery, with all its unnatural and abominable practices, established among us by the French traders. Jew-traders, too, will people our ‘levees’ with Polish Jewesses and any others who will make money for them.

Shall we defend our American civilization or lower our flag to the most despicable foreigners-French, Irish, Italians, Jews, and Mongolians? We do not speak against them for their nationality, but for their crimes. (Bell, 1910, p. 259)

Following a similar method to Turner within this context, during an influx of immigrants from Eastern European and Asian countries to California, Ernest A. Bell sought to warn Protestant Christian Americans about the threat they posed to the moral and physical integrity of white women. In his book titled *Fighting the Traffic of Young Girls or War on the White Slave Trade* (1910), Bell contended that Jews and Chinese men, the latter of which he referred to as “yellow slavers,” were forcing their own women into sexual slavery in the US which, in turn, produced an imagined environment where white women were highly susceptible to ending up in these foreign brothels and forced to have sex with non-white men. Like Turner, Bell was particularly focused on the harms of the white slave trade perpetrated by Jews in politics and the entertainment districts of New York City:

Out of the Red-Light districts have come the new development in New York politics-the great voting power of the organized criminals. It was a notable development not only for New York but for the country at large. And no part of it was more noteworthy than the appearance of the Jewish dealer in women, a product of New York politics, who has vitiated, more than any other single agency, the moral life of the great cities of America in the past ten years. It is an absolute fact that corrupt Jews are now the backbone of the loathsome traffic in New York and

Chicago...no punishment is too severe to inflict upon the procurers in this vile traffic. (1910, pp. 188-189)

These men's ideas were highly praised at the time not only because these types of messaging appealed to white middle class fears of race-mixing, which stoked myths about "white slave trafficking" but they also downplayed the significance of Black chattel slavery and the harms of transatlantic slave trade.¹⁸⁰ On one of the first pages of the anthology, Bell promised readers that within the contents of the text they would be shocked and outraged by, "THIRTY-TWO PAGES OF STRIKING PICTURES showing the workings of the blackest slavery that has ever stained the human race" (Bell, 1910, p. 3). In this way, Bell drew on the progressive language of abolition to reinforce white innocence in the American imagination by equating Jewish men of the time to the perpetrators of atrocities against African Americans under chattel slavery.

These tropes produced by Turner regarding Jewish white slavers in New York, Chicago, and other major cities throughout the US also shaped high-profile white slavery cases like that of Leo Frank in 1913 (Library of Congress, nd). A successful Jewish pencil factory superintendent from New York, Frank was accused of the rape and murder of his 13-year-old white employee named Mary Phagan, who had worked for the National Pencil Company in Atlanta, Georgia, attaching erasers to pencils for ten cents an hour prior to her death. Cedric Robinson (2007) explains how the racial dynamics

¹⁸⁰ "Verily the 'Black Slave Trade' of other days was humane by comparison with this inconceivably heartless traffic of the 20th century, with unintended satire denominated 'White!'" (cited in Bell, 1910, pp. 339-340).

between Jewish New York businessman, Leo Frank, were able to be exploited by the media in contrast to the image of the poor, white Protestant teenage victim:

Mary Phagan had been refashioned by the press...the published photographs of Mary Phagan were altered: Phagan's flat nose was Aryanized; her thick eyebrows thinned glamorously; her hair styled beyond the skill of the hairdressers to whom she had access. In actual life her appearance too closely resembled the notoriously incestuously, poor white Appalachians whom eugenicists had campaigned to eliminate from the American gene pool. But in death, Phagan's modified self could serve as an emblem of the threat posed by Jews to the white American race, her manufactured innocence and prettiness a proof of race virtue. (Robinson, 2007, pp. 113-114)

Further complicating this case was the fact that there had initially been another suspect, an African American janitor named Jim Conley, who was employed at the National Pencil Company and admitted on the stand that he had helped move Phagan's body. Leo Frank's lawyer attempted to play on these complex racial dynamics, defending antisemitic attacks against his Jewish client with anti-Black racist logic. Despite these attempts, "class animosity and anti-Semitism superseded Negrophobia" (Robinson, 2007, p. 112). After a widely publicized two-year long trial, Leo Frank was found guilty and sentenced by a judge to life in prison. Although this case would eventually go to the Supreme Court, where his initial conviction would be overturned in a 7-2 vote, an angry mob, unsatisfied with this outcome, broke into Frank's jail cell, kidnapped him, and

drove him to Mary Phagan's hometown of Marietta, Georgia (Library of Congress, nd). There, he was tortured and lynched, and then photographed, posthumously, in front of a massive crowd.

The extrajudicial lynching of Frank was what sparked the simultaneously founding of the Antidefamation League (ADL) and the second revival of the KKK (Lebovic, 2013) in 1915. Many of the men who participated in Frank's murder, who identified themselves as the "Knights of Mary Phagan," were instrumental to establishing the KKK of the 1920s at Stone Mountain outside of Atlanta, Georgia just months after his lynching (Gordon, 2017). Unlike the first KKK, which focused disproportionately on physical violence and terrorizing African Americans throughout the South, the second KKK sought to professionalize itself and appeal to the broader, white mainstream as they expanded their enemies list to disseminate the idea that Jews, Catholics, anarchists, and communists were also a threat to the nation's white women in addition to Black men and sought to subvert traditional American values and ideals (Gordon, 2017; Grittner, 1990).

The same year that Frank was murdered, America's first major blockbuster film titled *Birth of a Nation* (1915) reinforced racist tropes of Black men in white America's political imaginary, by portraying them as animalistic rapists who preyed upon white women while the KKK was depicted as the saviors of white women. These tropes were further reinforced by President Woodrow Wilson who spoke, without basis, to the myth of the Black rapist, the white savior, and white victim behind *Birth of a Nation* after screening the film at the White House. On March 21st, 1915, Wilson gave legitimacy to the racist narrative projected by the film when he assessed: "It's like writing history with lightning. My only regret is that it is all so terribly true" (Benbow, 2011).

The popularity of *Birth of a Nation* among white middle and upper-class Americans, inspired, in part, by Wilson's remarks and by the publicity of the two yearlong trials of Leo Frank¹⁸¹ both fueled support for the KKK and led to a spike in recruitment (Gordon, 2017). Although some in the media sought to condemn the Klan as full of misled bigots and uneducated hicks, this sort of criticism afforded the KKK more publicity among the mainstream white middle-class, which helped grow their membership. At the height of their power, the second wave of the KKK was deeply enmeshed with the American mainstream, registered as fraternal orders within school systems, and had many members who were educated schoolteachers, lawyers, law enforcement, Democratic and Republican congressmen, senators, and 40,000 Protestant Christian ministers in their organization (Gordon, 2017).

Central to the growth of this organization was the formation of a women-only auxiliary of the group, the Women of the Ku Klux Klan (WKKK), which came to play a key role in the white slavery movement at the same time white women secured the right to vote in 1920. The WKKK, which established its headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia, quickly grew to more than half a million members. To bolster their ranks and garner support from the wider public, the women and men of the Klan distributed flyers warning the public against falling prey to "negro white slavers" and passed out thousands of recruitment cards with the message, "remember, every criminal... every white slaver, every brothel madame-is fighting the KKK" (Blee, 1991, p. 80).

¹⁸¹ According to Cedric Robinson (2007): "one model for Flora's ('Lil' Sis') suicide in *Birth of a Nation* was the killing in 1913 of thirteen-year-old Mary Phagan" who died, according to the lead prosecutor on the case "because she wouldn't yield her virtue to the demands of her superintendent," Leo Frank (p. 112).

A white woman named Elizabeth Tyler, who had previously been active in the movements for eugenics, suffrage, and temperance, became a central public relations figure in the second wave of the KKK and helped recruit members from the WCTU, the suffrage movement, and the Daughters of the American Revolution. As chapters of the WKKK popped up across the country, men and women of the KKK pushed propaganda about Jews, Catholics, and people of color through their two Klan-operated radio stations and 150 print newspaper publications.¹⁸² With the leadership and support of women, the second Klan was able to implant bigoted ideas in areas of the US where such ideas had previously held little to no influence on the political landscape (Gordon, 2017).

The early women's rights movement had developed simultaneously with the growth of the abolition movement. Alongside political commitment to women's issues such as suffrage, many American women were also abolitionists. Vron Ware (2015) describes several reasons why white women supported the anti-slavery movement. For example, Ware describes the religious language that was pervasive throughout women-led abolition campaigns, referring to biblical passages to suggest that "women were generally thought to 'feel' and 'suffer' more than men, and would therefore be more able to imagine themselves 'also in the body' of the oppressed slaves" (p. 61).

Another reason that compelled white women towards abolitionism was their ability to empathize with the oppression of Black women as women, themselves. According to Ware, messages that elicited the strongest reaction from white women was propaganda that "identified the specific oppression of women slaves: either as objects of

¹⁸² For example, one Klan-operated newspaper publication operating out of Georgia, called *Searchlight*, held the motto: "Free speech, free press, white supremacy" (Gordon, 2017).

lust and brutality and the hands of white male overseers, or as victims of a system that denied them any kind of ‘natural’ domestic existence” (2015, p. 62). However, once people living in slavery had been formally emancipated in 1865, white women’s focus on securing the right to vote led to a fraying of tentative solidarity among themselves and African American women.

White women were outraged by the court’s decision to, from what they understood, put the social and political status of Blacks before women. This moment marked “a crucial part of the context in which the white woman’s movement defined its own interests in the postbellum period” (Newman, 1999, p. 4). Now, instead of drawing upon the slavery metaphor to draw connections between themselves and Black humanity, white women drew upon the slavery metaphor to distance (and thus, morally elevate) themselves from Blackness. Documenting the life histories of numerous women in the WKKK of Indiana, Kathleen Blee (1991) states that “common routes into the 1920s women’s Klan” stemmed from women’s “prior involvement in...electoral politics...or women’s suffrage” (p. 118). During this period, there was growing concern for the general decline of public morality based on the perceived threat posed by immigrants, Blacks, and religious minorities and the specific issue of sexual violence against white Protestant women.

This section has thus far demonstrated how bourgeois white women who participated in movements for suffrage, temperance, and white Protestant racist nationalism have informed the broader white slavery movement through their awareness campaigns in the US. Under the strategic banner of white slavery, white Protestant women and men were able to mirror one another’s views on race, religion, and gender

politics to advance a range of personal and political agendas. British muckraking journalist William Stead's influence on people like Francis Willard and Katherine Bushnell of the WCTU, as well as the head of public relations Elizabeth Tyler of the WKKK, spread racist mythologies that informed state policy and inspired vigilante violence across the nation. The influence of the awareness campaigns of racist movements in the early 20th century had great impact on both state policy and extra-judicial interventions like lynching campaigns.

The passage of the White Slave Traffic Act of 1910 made it illegal to traffic white women or girls for purposes of "prostitution" or "any other immoral purpose" (White Slave Traffic Act, 1910). This piece of legislation would have long lasting impacts on the anti-trafficking movement, most notably, because it concealed the racist logic that enabled its creation, by shifting the discourse from the explicitly racialized language of 'white slavery' to that of the 'traffic in women.' Yet, social consequences of the resulting policies and anti-trafficking interventions continued to impact communities of color and white women in interracial relationships.

Jack Johnson, for example, was the first famous African American heavyweight boxing champion¹⁸³ who was also publicly stigmatized among white society for his frequent sexual relationships with white women (Langum, 1994).¹⁸⁴ According to Cedric Robinson (2007): "The national myth of the Black rapist of innocent white women had been employed to patrol Black men for generations and more importantly, of course, to

¹⁸³ Interestingly, Johnson's widely publicized takedown of white male boxer, Jim Jeffries, received more viewership than any other film until 5 years later, when *Birth of a Nation* came out (see Robinson, 2007).

¹⁸⁴ Johnson married 4 white women in his lifetime, a fact that enraged white America, men, and women alike, including women of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (see Cedric Robinson, 2007, p. 111).

mask the reality of white rapists" (p. 111). Simultaneously, white America sought to portray Black Americans as terrified of white fighters and white society, more broadly. However, as Johnson rose to fame, these seemingly "natural" white/Black dynamics crumbled: "Johnson ruptured whole fragments of the myth, and with a vengeance his fight films documented that terrible truth: he was not only uncovered but contemptuous of his white opponents" (Robinson, 2007, pp. 111-112).

In 1912, Jack Johnson was pulled over by law enforcement while traveling across state lines with his white fiancée, Lucille Cameron. Even though Johnson and Cameron were engaged to be married, the police arrested him as a "white slaver" and identified Cameron as a prostitute and victim of white slavery. After Cameron refused to testify against Johnson, the case was dismissed by the judge, and they were married (Soderlund, 2013). Although this case clearly exemplified how the White Slave Traffic Act had little to do with addressing violence against women, the legislation continued to function to police sexual relationships between white women and all men who were not married, especially if they were not white Protestants.

By the 1920s, the phrase *white slave traffic* had evolved into the *traffic in women* to encompass a wider range of international concerns surrounding the illegal organized movement of women, weapons, and drugs. *Traffic in women* also made theoretical room for the possibility that in addition to white women, women of color could, too, become trafficked. Ironically, this was in a context where Black women had not only been denied legal protection from sexual violence for centuries but were legally trafficked under chattel slavery and the convict lease system (Haley, 2018), which is a fact remains largely ignored by the mainstream anti-trafficking movement today. Expanding the possibility of

victimhood to women of color, however, had little influence on how campaign leaders continued to use racialized tropes to inform meanings of traffickers and victims.

Already well-attuned to the rhetorical power that white slavery had on American middle-class audiences, racist tropes about violent Black, Brown, and immigrant men continued to be used by campaigners to raise awareness about the traffic in women in the movements for suffrage, temperance, white protestant nationalism, and eugenics movements. Instead of drawing upon the slavery metaphor to make connections between themselves and Black humanity, as they had in the past, white women in the early 20th century drew upon the slavery metaphor to distance (and thus, morally elevate) themselves from Blackness, and to advance their own interests. As American feminist scholar Angela Davis (1981) puts it: “women’s rights advocates” felt that they “had committed a strategic error in subordinating themselves to the cause of abolitionism” (p. 73). Davis’ assertion is further substantiated by feminist historian Vron Ware (2015), who attributes the deterioration of these already fragile relationships to different groups needing to narrow their objectives to achieve the right to vote:

Within a short space of time, many younger white women who became involved in the movement for women’s suffrage in the second half of the nineteenth century had become convinced that their rights should come before those of former slaves, and that women’s interests would only be hindered by being linked to the demands of black people. At the heart of this belief was the fear that white women needed protection from black men. (Ware, 2015, p. 201)

Although progressive white women who opposed Black chattel slavery in the 19th century had drawn attention to the suffering of Black women under chattel slavery to further the cause of abolition, claiming they had been denied their “natural” roles as wives and mothers through family separation, many of the same white women (and others) made it clear following this historical moment that there was a distinct split between their interests and those of Black women when it came to causes of temperance and suffrage. This did not, however, inhibit white women from attempting to recruit Black women to the white suffrage movement, in they were allowed to participate to the degree that they remained subordinate to the movement’s white leaders. This was, perhaps, best exemplified in the 1913 women’s suffrage parade in Washington D.C., where Black suffragettes were made to march behind the whites (Ware, 2015).

Although progressive white women had collaborated with Black women to advance the cause of abolition, a longstanding contention around the myth of the Black male rapist continuously defined the trajectory of the US women’s movement since the 1880s that continues to this day (Gilmore, 1996; Ware, 2015). In 1892, the investigative journalist, suffragette, and newspaper editor, Ida B. Wells, poked gaping holes in the theory of Black criminality perpetrated as sexual aggression against white women in her pamphlet called “Southern Horrors” (Wells-Barnett, 1892). This influential and controversial publication illustrated her internationally recognized research, which found that of the number of Black men hung for rape, only a third of them were even alleged to be rapists. Wells uncovered evidence that suggested that, in many cases, sexual relations between Black men and white women were often consensual and yet, kept secret to avoid stigma and criminalization. These well-founded fears were not directed exclusively at

white men, however, because as Wells once concluded, “if the women in the South were all ‘pure of heart and sound in head,’ we should hear of fewer lynchings” (quoted in Ware, 2015, pp. 195-6).

Irrespective of Wells’ findings, organized lynch mobs persisted in systematically threatening, terrorizing, and committing mass murder of African Americans throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. In addition to the role played by judges, politicians, lawyers, and other professionals who were members of the KKK engaging in these lynch mobs, law enforcement played a central role in these acts of vigilante terrorism, which were purportedly in response to the sexual violation of a white woman by a man or men of color. According to Ware (2015) what made the participation of law enforcement notable, whether in the Klan, as part of a lynch mob, or both, is that their participation as public officials rendered a socially acceptable justification for this violence among polite white society, who understood lynching during this period as:

A natural outcome of abolition; it was thought inevitable that former slaves would wish to take revenge on whites, who would feel threatened by their liberty...it was this assumption that made millions of people throughout the US condone the behavior of the lynch mobs, either through silence or by voicing approval. Lynching was certainly the ultimate of historical white justice and black death-and it was carried out in the name of defending the honor of white women. (Ware, 2015, p. 172)

The myth of the Black rapist provided white women in the WCTU, women's suffrage organizations, and the WKKK alike with a distinct platform and formation of their own controlled space in relation to white men. To support the anti-lynching crusades would require these women to relinquish their privileges as whites and acknowledge the intersecting oppressions of being both Black *and* a woman in the US. This simply did not happen. Blee (1991) has argued that dismissals of white women's involvement in racist movements as merely a reflection of patriarchal influence has been "unable to account for historical fluctuations and variability in women's participation in racial politics" (p. 685).

Examining how trafficking storylines in the 20th C. translated across temperance campaigns, campaigns for women's suffrage, and campaigns led by the women of the KKK uncovers how the violent role of white women in the white slavery crusades has largely remained a historical blind spot in US collective memory. On the heels of the 19th C. abolition movement and following the end of the Civil War, what began as an explicitly racist movement targeting immigrants and people of color as violent "white slavers," overtime transformed into a gender-based movement issue that became discursively and conveniently detached from race, as white women shifted the language of "white slavery" to "the traffic in women." Through the lens of white ignorance, the people leading the anti-trafficking movement who may be "psychologically and socially functional," also hold a set of "local and global cognitive dysfunctions," resulting in "the ironic outcome that whites will in general be unable to understand the world they themselves have made" (Mills, 2007, p. 18).

This form of ignorance is produced and reinforced through the NPIC in campaign materials, professional training, and the dissemination of historical narratives for

purposes of co-opting and controlling the dominant ideology informing this movement's history. Although women and people of color have gained increased formal rights since the 20th and 21st centuries as individuals, this emphasis on their rights as individuals continues to conceal how the production of racist tropes through colorblind and raceless language about traffickers detracts from the state harms perpetrated against immigrants and people of color as families and communities. Whereas this one described the historical role of bourgeois white women in the white slavery movement, the following section describes how this social group has continued to produce harmful discourses that to advance their personal and political goals in the contemporary US, with emphasis on Arizona and the QAnon conspiracy theory in the last 10 years.

Part II: The Legacy of White Women in the US Anti-Trafficking Movement

The extant strategy of connecting the trafficking problem to politically charged issues is not unique to the US anti-trafficking movement today. White power groups have historically drawn upon culturally significant, relevant, or in vogue sort of issues to compel more moderate whites towards their movement. In the 1920s, for example, a particularly interesting approach of the KKK was to appeal to women through the language of feminism and equality to expand membership and grow their organization (Belew, 2018; Blee, 1991; Gordon, 2017). Since the passage of the White Slave Traffic Act of 1910, the language of trafficking has evolved, shapeshifted, and taken on a colorblind and raceless character, which continues to harm women and communities of color.

As critical trafficking scholar Tryon Woods puts it, the ways in which contemporary anti-trafficking campaigners draw parallels between the transatlantic slave trade and human trafficking, often referred to as “modern slavery,” signifies how today’s movement is “mired in an ahistoricism symptomatic of our anti-Black world,” obscuring “the ongoing calculus of slavery’s afterlife” (2013, p. 122). The colorblind and raceless imagery projected by significant anti-trafficking organizations and groups they work in conjunction with today, continue to characterize major cities in the US as trafficking “hubs” where white women and especially girls are the most common targets of victimization (Koyama, 2011). Continuing the legacy of their explicitly racist predecessors, these unsubstantiated representations still circulate today in forms that are seemingly immune to anti-racist critics, but they continue to harm people labeled as “victims” and “traffickers” alike.

The willingness of local anti-trafficking organizations and their representatives to code men, typically of color, as “pimps,” “gorilla pimps,” and “gang traffickers,” through the language of trafficking was exemplified during my observations (D. Roe-Sepowitz, field observations, November 23rd, 2019) of local anti-trafficking entities such as the Arizona State University Sex Trafficking Intervention Research, when leaders of the organization extended this willingness to dismiss the criticisms of sex workers, who are disproportionately depicted as women of color, referred to in professional trainings and educational materials as “bottom bitches” and “lot lizards” (D. Roe-Sepowitz, field observations, November 23rd, 2019). I found similar references to these kinds of terms in other online trainings, such as “Inside the Mind of a Trafficker,” anti-trafficking leaders referred to traffickers and “gorilla pimps” interchangeably and also characterized pimps

as “parasitic...like a mosquito” (D. Steele, field observations, September 26th, 2018).

Given that these interventions are informed by colorblind racist typologies of traffickers and taught to the community, the representations of trafficking being presented are conducive to policing sexual relationships of people who are poor and often people of color.¹⁸⁵

Not only in the sense that this work promotes racial profiling through colorblind trafficking language, but also because trafficking often equates people who pay for sex, as well as those who are in consensual relationships with sex workers,¹⁸⁶ as traffickers. For example, during a “Sex Trafficking 101” professional training for teachers and administrators, the language of “boyfriend” and “trafficker” were used interchangeably, to tell a story about a former client one of the training facilitators had worked with:

I had a woman come into the drop-in center a year ago, her boyfriend had gone to jail the day before and he was with her, but we wouldn't let him come in and first of all-he was very chaotic. Like he was pacing, I think he was high and so we said, you can stay out here-here's some coffee and some food and relax. She'll be here for an hour or two and she was pregnant. She needed medical care, she needed things-we give them bags of hygiene kits and products- and he proceeded to get himself arrested. He couldn't calm down, he was banging on the windows, we had

¹⁸⁵ This critique of anti-trafficking trainings is an argument that has also been made by Shih (2021), who speaks to how the typology of traffickers represented by anti-trafficking trainings was defined by race, nationality, and sexuality.

¹⁸⁶ Here I am speaking to anti-trafficking interventions like Project ROSE. By targeting sex workers for punishment by the criminal justice system, they are coerced under the threat of violence to present themselves as victims, often by demarcating their consensual partners as traffickers to escape repercussions.

police on the scene just for our own protection-they were undercover-but he was so chaotic that he eventually got arrested and she came and sat with me and said, ‘you’ve ruined my life.’ And I said, ‘I’m so sorry I didn’t know how can we support you? Where are you gonna go tonight?’ She said, ‘you don’t understand. He is EVERYTHING to me. He’s all I have. No one else believes me. I don’t have a family; I don’t have anything else. YOU have taken away the one person that I can count on’-and she believed it with her whole heart. So, when we’re working with a survivor, we have to remember the bond with that trafficker. We teach people that you can love people and not be with them-as opposed to like, ‘that’s bad. Getting choked and beaten is a bad thing.’ (D. Roe-Sepowitz, field observations, November 23rd, 2019)

Often, simplistic, and paternalistic explanations offered as evidence of the need for intervention by anti-trafficking experts overlapped with crude portrayals of sex workers and pimps as people of color. For example, the ASU STIR Research training materials are widely disseminated throughout different anti-trafficking organizations in the state, including brochures citing the pervasive problem of “pimps as predators” with the depiction of a young Black male pointing a gun at the reader and brochures citing the increasing role that domestic and foreign gangs play in sex trafficking, such as the Latin Kings, Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13), and SUR-13.

The sort of imagery promoted by anti-trafficking organizations, whether intentional or not, seemed to justify and explain the state-sanctioned racist violence conducted by law enforcement agencies. However, the formerly fringe conspiracy group

on the rise in this country called QAnon,¹⁸⁷ which exists as a colorblind and raceless version of the longstanding Jewish conspiracy theory associating Jews with an international child sex trafficking network, is also causing great harm. Because it holds widespread cultural influence and appeals to a voter base of white Christian nationalists in the US and abroad, it is in this moment critical to examine how QAnon is impacting the anti-trafficking movement today.

Christianity has long been entangled with racist and antisemitic mythologies within and beyond the US, including Nazi Germany and France. While the explicit language of antisemitism has receded behind closed doors in the contemporary US, the anti-trafficking movement continues to be dominated by evangelical Christians, many of whom continue to demonize Jewish peoples through racially ambiguous conspiracy theories that mirror ancient antisemitic tropes. Those who identify as members or adherents of QAnon, which is often interwoven with Christian beliefs, believe that missing American children are part of an international clandestine child pedophile ring run by a “global cabal” that controls the US government and mainstream media (Bracewell, 2021). Although QAnon believers describe this group of global elites as Satanic in nature, given that the word “cabal” is derived from “Kabbalah,” a term referencing Jewish magic and mysticism, it can be said that this is a raceless dog whistle¹⁸⁸ for Jews in government and Hollywood (Ross 2002). In this way, they have

¹⁸⁷ Followers believe that there is an anonymous person or group of people named “Q” who are providing the public with secret codes and messages. QAnon operates through the social media platform, 4Chan, now known as 8Chan for purposes of revealing an international child trafficking conspiracy ring that will eventually be taken down by the former President Donald Trump and high-level US military generals.

¹⁸⁸ In the American Jewish Committee’s (2023) “Translate Hate Glossary,” they explain that a “cabal” has been used historically as a coded term for Jewish control.

effectively produced a new iteration of the longstanding antisemitic myth of “blood libel,” which proposes that Jews abduct Christian children for the purpose of ritual sacrifice, by contending that children are being trafficked by global elites who torture and consume the blood of their victims to extend their own lives (Trachtenberg, 2002).

QAnon is also considered by many to be explicitly anti-Semitic at its core, given that its adherents have fixated on the belief that child trafficking is a problem fueled by Jewish elites in Hollywood, Jewish financier George Soros, and conspiracy theories about the Rothschild family, a frequent target of antisemites (Burley, 2021; Rothschild, 2022). QAnon supporters also claimed Mr. Robert Mueller’s FBI inquiry into Russian interference in the 2016 US election was really an elaborate cover story for an investigation into pedophiles, but when the analysis concluded with no such bombshell revelation, the attention of the conspiracy theorists drifted elsewhere.

More than a year before “Q drops” began to occur on the website called 8Chan in October 2017, what became the QAnon movement began in March 2016, when a conspiracy theory called #Pizzagate based on a lie circulated on the internet concerning Hillary Clinton, Clinton campaigner John Podesta, and emails about buying pizza as secret code for buying child sex trafficking victims.¹⁸⁹ Eventually, Clinton’s alleged involvement in an underground child sex trafficking ring led a man to conduct a one man rescue operation of these children, of whom he believed to be being held in the basement of a Washington DC pizza parlor called Comet Ping Pong. Following an armed attack on

¹⁸⁹ Originally, this conspiracy theory was born following leaked emails between Hillary Clinton and Clinton campaigner John Podesta based on the belief that Podesta’s references to buying “pizza” was secret code for buying children for sexual exploitation. This single conspiracy about Hillary Clinton and John Podesta’s involvement in child sex trafficking was used to make broader generalizations about the corruption and criminal activities of the wider Democratic party.

the pizza parlor by the QAnon follower in 2017, he was forced to abandon the operation after realizing that not only was there not a child trafficking operation occurring there but that the restaurant did not even have a basement. While this event should have stifled the power of this conspiracy theory, as he was subsequently arrested, a movement of self-described “digital soldiers” began to enlist themselves into an army of concerned citizens and fervent online “researchers” who view themselves as truth seekers and the frontline against the Jewish, Democrat-run cabal.

In the years following this event, QAnon followers began using #Pizzagate to proliferate falsehoods during the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic, stating that child sex trafficking was now occurring in underground tunnels in New York City. Fleeting headlines in less traveled corners of the internet featured photos of an errant tan sweatshirt crumpled on a bench in New York City near FEMA tents, which QAnon followers claimed was a near lifeless “mole child,” made unrecognizable as human due to repeated rape and physical abuse. Within this context, the high-profile sex trafficking case of Jeffrey Epstein was used by the QAnon movement to tie Pizzagate to dozens of politicians, celebrities, and socialites, was twisted to substantiate their conspiracy theory.¹⁹⁰

While seemingly laughable, the ideas of the QAnon movement have led its members to carry out criminal acts, they have had a significant influence on American culture and politics as well as generated an international following (Wendling, 2021). This was especially true after its adherents began to integrate the presidency of Donald J.

¹⁹⁰ Among those named by QAnon conspiracy theorists as linked to the global cabal included then New York Governor Andrew Cuomo and epidemiologist Anthony Fauci, among others (Rogers, 2020).

Trump into their conspiracy theory, who they painted as a messianic figure and the last line of defense against the deep state. As Trump faced criticism for his behaviors and policies, he drew on the Jewish conspiracy theory to delegitimize them, claiming that the mainstream news media was controlled by an international cabal that sought his ruin because he was working to expose the international child trafficking ring linked to the democratic party. As these ideas penetrated the American mainstream, dozens of conspiracy theories emerged from everyday people on social media platforms that exacerbated the mythologies of trafficking that pre-existed the QAnon movement. Over time, influential figures like the right-wing radio host and conspiracy theorist Alex Jones¹⁹¹ and American rapper Kanye West,¹⁹² who both identify as Christian, have gone on public and social media antisemitic rampages; where references to “Jew Hollywood” and “Jew movies” urging sexual vice were frequent (Gordon, 2017, p. 50), as were accusations directed at Jewish men for the charge of white slavery.

On June 14th, 2020, a married couple from Scottsdale, Arizona, who subscribed to QAnon beliefs began spreading a conspiracy about missing children being trafficked by the Wayfair furniture company, which gained traction as a talking point among local

¹⁹¹ Alex Jones has long proliferated the Jewish conspiracy theory in various forms, including explicitly calling out the “Jewish mafia” for a range of society’s social ills. For example, after the “Unite the Right” white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia August 2017, where white male marchers carried tiki torches and chanted in unison, “Jews will not replace us!” Alex Jones announced that many of the attendees were not actual white supremacists but rather “leftist Jews” there “in disguise,” to discredit white supremacists and incite violence. As the QAnon movement gained popularity, he has shifted his antisemitic language to fit the conspiracy theory, even claiming to have had direct communication with the mysterious “Q” (Anti-Defamation League, 2017; Stanton, 2020).

¹⁹² While he has not explicitly stated that he is a QAnon adherent, it is within the context of the movement that West suddenly expressed his antisemitism. After receiving significant attention from a Twitter post where he vowed to go “def con 3 on JEWISH PEOPLE,” while in the same Tweet asserting that he was not antisemitic, he was interviewed on October 17th, 2022, by CNN’s Chris Cuomo regarding his remark. During the interview, West clarified that his “death con 3” remark was prompted by “Jewish record labels” that have “taken control” of US culture by the “Jewish underground media mafia.” He added, “It’s like modern-day slavery...and I’m calling it out. That’s what ‘DEFCON three’ meant.” (Haworth, 2022).

anti-trafficking coalitions (Robinson, 2021; Roose, 2020; Williams, 2020). Upon drawing a connection between a Wayfair “Samayah” desk for sale online, which the couple claimed was suspiciously overpriced, this led them to the conclusion that the unusually named desk could only be a child for sale. They linked the name “Samayah” to a young woman named Samayah Muman who was listed as “missing” on the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). They also proceeded to draw the same conclusions between another Wayfair “Annabelle shelf” and a girl listed as missing on the NCMEC website named Annabelle Wilson. The Wayfair issued a statement about the fact that these items were industrial grade and therefore accurately priced, and Samayah Muman herself came forward to debunk the conspiracy theory,¹⁹³ but it quickly spread from Twitter and moved to Reddit, Instagram, and Facebook, and other social media platforms.

Although the Wayfair theory is outlandish and baseless, it gained national attention from social media users and journalists beginning in the summer of 2020, and brought attention to the anti-trafficking movement. When Arizona anti-trafficking expert, Dr. Dominique Roe-Sepowitz, was asked about the issue during an interview with a reporter from the *Arizona Republic*, she “said she cannot speak to the veracity of the Wayfair conspiracy theory, but she appreciates the opportunity to raise awareness of human trafficking, which ‘happens every day’ in Phoenix”¹⁹⁴ (Robinson, 2020). As the

¹⁹³ Sameyah Mumin took to YouTube to dispel the myths about herself and assure an unsettled group of people that she was safe, as her old NCMEC profile was being shared widely across the internet. (Rickytime, 2021). Wayfair human trafficking girl reaction part two. (Video). YouTube.

¹⁹⁴ This is similar to how, after Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Green had spread QAnon theories online. Rather than deny its legitimacy entirely, however, which would risk alienating her followers who still clung to QAnon, she stated that that “any source of information that is a mix of truth and a mix of lies is dangerous,” suggesting that while she had identified “misinformation, lies, things that were not true in

leading anti-trafficking scholar in the state with prominence at the national level, without outright condemning the validity of the QAnon conspiracy, harmful myths about trafficking, regardless of intention, it gives legitimacy to those persons who spread misconceptions concerning the scope and nature of the trafficking problem in the US. As anti-trafficking experts have come to platform antisemitic conspiracy theories, already problematic and mythological mainstream anti-trafficking discourses have become even more harmful to society.

The Wayfair conspiracy gives permission to people in her coalitions, such as Kristie Barnett-Sexton, the daughter of the founder¹⁹⁵ of Dream City Church in Phoenix, to spread QAnon beliefs, unabated. According to the official website of the annual Stop Traffic Walk, a fundraiser for her father's church, Barnett-Sexton "is responsible for the vision and strategy behind this event that will promote community involvement and raise awareness for the Phoenix Dream Center... the nation's largest human trafficking rescue & rehabilitation operation."¹⁹⁶ Because Roe-Sepowitz was unwilling to deny validity to the Wayfair conspiracy theory, who works in conjunction with Kristie Barnett-Sexton, the latter's references to QAnon conspiracy theory in relation to trafficking hold more weight. Since the summer of 2020, Barnett-Sexton has used the social media platform Instagram to proliferate QAnon conspiracies other raceless language about, for example,

these QAnon posts," that it the conspiracy was not entirely untrue. Considering her position in the federal government, such claims hold significant power and authority (Levin, 2021).

¹⁹⁵ Pastor Tommy Barnett originally founded Dream City Church in Phoenix and has expanded his global megachurch brand with the help of his sons, Luke, and Matthew Barnett, to locations in Los Angeles, California, New Mexico, Utah, and 270 other Dream Centers around the world.

¹⁹⁶ "The Dream City Foundations' Stop Traffic Walk raises funds and awareness for Where Hope Lives, the largest human trafficking rescue and recovery operation in North America. This is meant to be a family event where families, friends, and co-workers gather to show support for the victims of human trafficking. Registration is free, but walkers are encouraged to raise funds to support the mission" (Dream City Foundation, 2019).

a “global cabal” in her anti-trafficking awareness campaigns to attract support, without falling under criticism from anti-trafficking experts.

A month after the emergence of the Wayfair trafficking conspiracy, on July 16th of 2020, Barnett-Sexton made her first known Instagram post that indulged the conspiracy and drew on its widespread popularity among the American public to garner support for organizational interests. In this post, Barnett-Sexton neither explicitly expressed her adherence to the conspiracy, nor did she outright deny it, just as Roe-Sepowitz had two days previously:

Whether or not you want to believe the Wayfair sex trafficking scheme is true, you should be ASKING QUESTIONS instead of looking the other way...questions like these deserve answers...why were there multiple listings for the SAME cabinet, each labeled with DIFFERENT girls’ names? Why were some of these names extremely unique and strangely spelled and they happen to be names of missing children? ...Regardless of whether you think this is real, CHILD TRAFFICKING IS REAL, and it is a HUGE, fast-growing, swept-under-the-rug problem...in the world of trafficking, the younger the child the higher their value. Some of the youngest victims have the umbilical cord still attached. (kristiebarnettsexton_ Instagram page July 16th, 2020)

Two weeks later, Barnett-Sexton made another post that appealed to the followers of QAnon’s conspiracy theories surrounding vaccinations and mask restrictions amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the theory that vaccines were part of a plot orchestrated

by the Democrat party-led deep state and “big pharma” to depopulate the planet and facilitate the global cabal’s child trafficking operation (Blaskiewicz, 2013; Dickinson, 2021). While not explicitly expressing her support for the QAnon conspiracy, Barnett-Sexton claimed that requiring children to wear masks enabled child trafficking by making it more difficult to identify victims; suggesting either that the threat posed by trafficking superseded the need to protect them from COVID-19, and/or that the virus was a hoax created by pedophilic Democrats they did not need to be protected from:

Did you know that a child in AMERICA is over 66,000x more likely to be human trafficked than to get Covid-19? So DO YOU REALIZE that by requiring children over the age of 2 to wear a mask, you are making child abduction and human trafficking SO MUCH EASIER on the offenders? (kristiebarnettsexton_ Instagram page July 31st, 2020)

In addition to exploiting the antisemitic trafficking tropes that have long occupied the American imaginary through the raceless language of the QAnon conspiracy, Barnett-Sexton also took advantage of the anti-Black racism that was stoked amidst anti-police protests organized by the social justice movement Black Lives Matter following the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on May 25, 2020. In a context where white supremacists around the globe were circulating the phrase “ALL LIVES MATTER” to express their opposition to this movement for racial, reproductive, sexual, and gender justice from a perspective of racelessness, she made a post suggesting her support for this political position in a manner that was contemporaneously linked to

QAnon conspiracy theories. By sharing the phrase “CHILD LIVES MATTER,” which was commonly communicated by participants in “Save the Children” rallies taking place across the country at that time (most of whom were organized and attended by QAnon followers), her anti-trafficking awareness campaign was attractive to both the racist “ALL LIVES MATTER” and antisemitic QAnon movements through sanitized language that was insulated from criticism (kristiebarnettsexton_ Instagram page August 3rd, 2020).

Barnett-Sexton continued this trend in the fall of 2020, roughly one year after the news of Jeffrey Epstein’s child trafficking ring returned to the public spotlight following his arrest and suicide, which sparked new conspiracy theories in the QAnon movement.¹⁹⁷ She did this by referencing the belief that Epstein was somehow involved in the global cabal’s child trafficking operation, which implicated Hollywood elites and the antisemitic trope that Jews control the mainstream media in the US, which were particularly relevant at the time while Donald Trump was president. On August 10th, 2020, for example, she made a post, stating:

The real pandemic is human trafficking...many ask WHY we don’t hear much about this issue...here’s why! Human trafficking is well protected by people in power, Hollywood, politicians, and the wealthiest most powerful people in the world. These people control the media making the battle much more difficult to fight. But this evil is real. (kristiebarnettsexton_Instagram page August 10th, 2020)

¹⁹⁷ Many QAnon adherents doubt the validity of Epstein’s suicide while he was serving time in prison.

The related statements of Barnett-Sexton and Roe-Sepowitz serve as powerful examples of how coded racist and antisemitic tropes about child traffickers in the QAnon conspiracy are proliferated to generate support for causes related to anti-trafficking. Such claims made by these experts blur the line between a Satan worshipping cabal of pedophiles, most of whom are imagined as Democrats and Jews in Hollywood, and the “real” anti-trafficking movement. These approaches are, however, not unique to anti-trafficking coalitions in Arizona. The non-profit organization called OUR, for example, is a Utah-based anti-trafficking non-profit that orchestrates civilian-led operations to “rescue” children who they identify as victims of sex trafficking. Just as Roe-Sepowitz had spoken to how the QAnon movement served the anti-trafficking movement by drawing attention to the issue in 2020, OUR CEO Tim Ballard claimed that “some of these theories have allowed people to open their eyes. So now it’s our job to flood the space with real information so the facts can be shared” (Zidan, 2021).

Whereas experts like Ballard have focused on the benefits that QAnon conspiracy theories have provided their organizations, others have since recognized and communicated the harms they have caused to the anti-trafficking movement in the US. In February of 2021, the federal anti-trafficking nonprofit Polaris Project published a report titled “Countering QAnon” (2021), which described how the widespread influence of the QAnon movement has caused extensive problems for the anti-trafficking movement. Specifically, by spreading misinformation that is hindering their capacity to combat trafficking by diverting potential supporters and funding through online radicalization. Based on a claim made by terrorist scholars Farah Pandith, Jacob Ware, and Mia Bloom (2020), which maintains that women have an “inherent altruism and desire to protect

children,” the Polaris report claims that women are particularly susceptible to QAnon rhetoric and trafficking related conspiracy theories. In addition to their concerns about competing with the organizations that explicitly subscribe to QAnon, the radicalization of women is of particular concern to the authors, who “play an integral role in violent extremist movements and terrorist organizations” (Countering QAnon, 2021, p. 9; Dickson 2020).

Recently, many women have been radicalized by QAnon conspiracy theories, played a central role in their proliferation, and even carried out acts of terroristic violence in relation to them. Among these women who have been radicalized include online “mommy bloggers” (Dickson, 2020; Gillespie, 2020) health and wellness social media influencers (Sy & Nagy, 2022; Tiffany, 2020), as well as two women, Ashlie Babbitt, and Roseanne Boyland, who were killed during the insurrection at the capitol on January 6th, 2021 (Thanawala, Dazio, & Martin, 2021). Many of the women who went to this event held the belief that if Donald Trump was not re-installed for a second term as US President, he would not be able to effectively free all the alleged missing trafficked children being held captive by bloodthirsty Democrats. Most notably, Bill and Hillary Clinton, whose photographs with Jeffrey Epstein and Prince Andrew prompted QAnon followers to draw connections between the Democratic Party, global elites, Hollywood, and an international cabal.

The consequences of anti-trafficking experts refusing to dismiss the validity of QAnon conspiracies are, perhaps, best exemplified by their impact on Ashli Babbitt. Babbitt, a 35-year-old veteran of the US Air Force, had been deployed for military service at least seven times to places including Afghanistan, Iraq, Kuwait, and Qatar

(Lee, 2014). According to her family, after retiring from the service, Babbitt became embroiled in right-wing conspiracy theories like QAnon. While she had been posting nativist rhetoric fueled by President Donald Trump for years, at the height of the QAnon movement in 2019, she began making posts expressing her concern for the problem of trafficking:

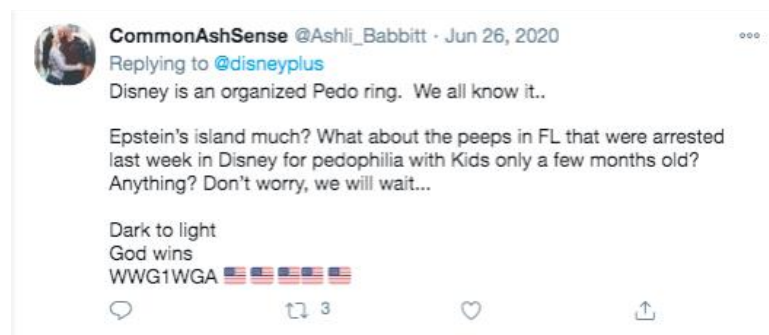


After her husband reportedly had requested she not attend the event, Babbitt was shot and killed by DC Capitol police while trying to break into the house chambers of the US Capitol on January 1st, 2020. Babbitt and others were motivated by the belief that the 2020 Presidential election had been rigged by the deep state to circumvent Trump's return to power. In a conspiracy theory fueled berserk, she and thousands of other QAnon followers had stormed the capital with the intention of disrupting the peaceful transfer of power and exposing a global child trafficking ring. This motivation was made clear by a

post she made a few hours before her death, which referenced the QAnon slogan, “Where We Go One, We Go All” acronymically:



In the wake of the event, Babbitt was characterized as a martyr for QAnon and the Republican party, who had been unjustly cut down by police during a peaceful protest (Biesecker, 2022). People such as Ashli Babbitt have carried out violent criminal acts that were directed at the child trafficking operations of a fictional Jewish elite defined in raceless symbols, as evidenced in the quote below:



However, the harms that have been caused by these conspiracy theories are not limited to family annihilators,¹⁹⁸ vigilantes, and terrorists,¹⁹⁹ as QAnon are conducive to

¹⁹⁸ The QAnon conspiracy has also inspired people within the anti-trafficking movement to carry out murderous acts against their own families based on other aspects of the theory. For example, a 40-year-old Santa Barbara, California man named Matthew Coleman was the director of an anti-trafficking nonprofit organization called “LoveWater” which proclaimed to use surfing to heal and empower trafficking survivors as a form of surf therapy (Vigdor, 2021) and, as a company, committing themselves to “passing on the love of surfing to people of all ages, ethnicities and life backgrounds.” While the language of trafficking had inspired him to help others, the QAnon conspiracy theory drove him to murder his two children in 2021, on the basis that his wife, Abbie Coleman, had passed “lizard people serpent DNA” to their children and thus he had to have them destroyed (Edhat Staff, 2022). After he was arrested by the FBI, officials said he claimed he was “saving the world from monsters” (Duggan, 2021).

¹⁹⁹ In historian Jeff Sharlet’s (2023) book, *The Undertow: Scenes from a Slow Civil War*, he explains how the story of Ashley Babbitt represents the familiar old white slavery trope—that of the fictional white, female victim in contrast to the myth of the Black male rapist. Sharlet argues that the fact that Babbitt was shot and killed by a Black law enforcement officer protecting US politicians and the US Capitol during the

acts of racist state violence. One such organization that currently remains active, despite being under investigation by the state of Utah for allegations of money laundering (Hartman, 2021) and the sexual abuse of children in their anti-trafficking operations overseas (DeLynn, 2020), is OUR. After the FBI denied Tim Ballard’s request to conduct anti-trafficking operations overseas, he retired from his position as special agent to create his own nonprofit organization in 2013, of which he has been and remains CEO. Founded in 2013, the stated mission of OUR is to “lead the fight against child sex trafficking and sexual exploitation around the globe... to the darkest corners of the world to assist law enforcement in rescuing children and ensure ongoing aftercare... [and] provide critical resources to law enforcement and preventative efforts that benefit at-risk children worldwide (About Us 2023).

The lines between nonprofits, state actors, and fascist vigilantes have become blurred by groups like OUR. Concealing its paramilitary nature behind the image of civilians like Ballard and Pastor Brian Steele of the DCC, it recruits former members of the US military and intelligence agencies, as well as state officials like Utah Attorney General Sean Reyes, to orchestrate raids in conjunction with state agencies both domestically and abroad. According to 2013 I-990 tax records required to obtain their

January 6th insurrection has allowed for a strange, albeit familiar historical mythology to unravel about the actual details of that day. One myth about this story that is strangely reminiscent of the Leo Frank case is regarding Babbitt’s age. As discussed earlier in the chapter, as the press continued to report on the murder of Mary Phagan, she became increasingly more innocent, whiter, and higher class in contrast to the Jewish New Yorker, Leo Frank. Shartlet explains that while much of the media initially reported Ashlie Babbitt’s true age at the time of her death, 35, that a mythology has been created around her that has made her smaller, younger, and more innocent regarding discrepancies in her age as well as her physical description at the time of the insurrection. Although Babbitt was carrying a knife, Sharlet traced numerous media outlets that described her as “unarmed” at the time of her killing.

501c3 charity status, OUR originally described its anti-trafficking nonprofit as being comprised of former members of the US military and intelligence community:

RESCUE TEAMS ARE COMPRISED OF HIGHLY SKILLED EX-NAVY SEAL, CIA, AND OTHER OPERATIVES," a description on a 2013 990 form read, a tax form that all 501c3 charities are required to make public. "THESE TEAMS WORK IN CONJUNCTION WITH AN [sic] IN FULL COOPERATION WITH LOCAL POLICE FORCES AND GOVERNMENTS TO LIBERATE CHILDREN AROUND THE WORLD" (cited in Merlan, 2020).

In 2020, OUR was described by journalist Anna Merlan (2020) as an "aggressive, muscular, faux military" anti-trafficking operation consisting of what are typically "dramatic" rescue raids. These are operations where "OUR operatives pretended to be grinning johns in foreign countries, attempting to buy children" (Merlan, 2020). Typical of international OUR sting operations, Ballard and a team of hand selected volunteers travel to places like Colombia to "rescue" victims of child trafficking. The organization pays a third party, typically local law enforcement agents, to arrange encounters to procure children for these rescues, many of whom are unwittingly transported from nearby brothels for this purpose.

After the child is lured to the location of the sting, often unaware of their involvement or under coercion, where American OUR volunteers pose as sex buyers. Then, "as the deal was being struck, local police would burst in" shouting and wielding weapons, often to the shock and dismay of the children (Merlan, 2020). These raids are

professionally filmed and circulated online to garner support for the OUR's mission to combat child sex trafficking before the children are either released to return to their respective brothels or placed into the custody of police. Not only have these sting operations failed to address the trafficking problem in any substantial way, but this approach has often traumatized children, who are coerced into this dangerous situation, exploitatively filmed, and then returned to the world of commercial sex work while surrounded with an aura of suspicion.

People who are considered to be anti-trafficking experts, such as Roe-Sepowitz, have called out OUR's vigilante operations, but since 2014 she has also attracted criticism as a civilian who wielded state power to orchestrate ineffective and harmful interventions in Phoenix. Just as Ballard has deployed the language of trafficking to garner power and profit, as the progenitor of Project ROSE, Roe-Sepowitz worked with Phoenix police following their profiling and arrest sex workers, to coerce them into her own research and prostitution diversion program (Roe-Sepowitz, Gallagher, Hickle, Loubert, & Tutleman, 2014). Yet, this is not the only way in which the strategies of these anti-trafficking experts align, given that Ballard also has circulated QAnon conspiracy theories online from an ambiguous position to seduce racist and anti-Semitic circles; stating that "with or without Wayfair, child trafficking is real and happening!!!" and that "law enforcement's gonna flush that out and we'll get our answers sooner than later, but I want to tell you this: Children ARE sold that way!" (Bixenspan, 2020). Since authorities like Ballard and Roe-Sepowitz do not dismiss connections between the human trafficking problem in the US and fascist conspiracy theories like QAnon, not only does this discredit their expertise and suggest that their motives depart from addressing real-world

trafficking problems but suggests that their capacity to wield state institutions poses a threat to global security.

While failing to dismiss QAnon conspiracy theories should be the cause for their dismissal from positions of influence, experts like Roe-Sepowitz are able to continue making recommendations for more funding on behalf of anti-trafficking coalitions between law enforcement, government entities, and nonprofit organizations. One of these organizations is the federally funded nonprofit, Polaris Project, which in addition to appealing to the political right to secure financial backing, at times has appropriated the language of victimhood and social concern carried by the social groups the political right identifies as the root of all social ills. As fascist movements grew rapidly in power and scope during the widespread protests for racial justice in 2020, the Polaris Project claimed it was urgent that state-sanctioned coalitions between law enforcement, government entities, and nonprofit organizations receive more funding. Although experts like Roe-Sepowitz, who endorses Polaris Project, were contributing to the proliferation of conspiracy theories from within the anti-trafficking movement, Polaris claimed that considering growing QAnon conspiracies and right-wing extremism, that anti-trafficking coalitions urgently required additional resources to protect themselves from white supremacist terrorist groups who opposed their efforts to identify and discredit online misinformation:

To speak forcefully and quickly against disinformation...will inevitably make the organizations a target of white supremacist and far-right extremist groups intent on perpetrating violence. Funds must be specifically appropriated for anti-human

trafficking organizations to bolster their security and technology apparatus so they can defend themselves against cyber, physical, and reputational threats. Policymakers, experts, and practitioners should support multi-disciplinary partnerships that take a complex systems approach to understanding disinformation (Countering QAnon Report, 2021, p. 15).

The conflicting messages of Polaris Project’s “Countering QAnon Report” and the experts who endorse it like Roe-Sepowitz, who refuse to dismiss the validity of far-right conspiracy theories, speaks to the financially and professionally opportunistic nature of the awareness campaigns facilitated by contemporary anti-trafficking coalitions. In accordance with the NPIC, she is monitoring the anti-trafficking movement by controlling public dissent about the dominant trafficking narrative among people like sex workers who are critical of the criminalization of sex work while simultaneously refusing to dismiss the validity of far-right conspiracy theories about trafficking, expanding the capacity for falsehoods, and reasserting her authority in the movement. Because sex workers are calling for the decriminalization of sex work as an important anti-trafficking intervention, the risk of supporting sex workers is risking the divestment of police and police funding through state contracts for her nonprofit. QAnon conspiracy theorists, however, are generally in support of more policing in response to trafficking and likely do not impede in terms of threatening Roe-Sepowitz’s opportunities to conduct research and advocacy.

Just over a year after she publicly described the Wayfair conspiracy as an opportunity to raise awareness to the problem of human trafficking, and Barnett-Sexton

used the language of QAnon using her Instagram platform, Roe-Sepowitz, representatives of the DCC, and others who quietly proliferate QAnon conspiracies from within the coalition, signed a letter calling for the condemnation of public figures who endorse it (Freedom Needs Truth 2020, October 21st):

An open letter to Candidates, the Media, Political Parties, and Policymakers:

As service providers, survivors, human and labor rights advocates, law enforcement officials, researchers, and policy experts, we know human trafficking is real. For decades we have worked to raise awareness, enforce the law with a victim-centered approach, identify and aid survivors in their recovery, address underlying root causes, and establish policies to end this horrific crime. It is with this collective and collaborative history in mind that we say we are alarmed and deeply disturbed by the intentional spread of conspiracy theories and disinformation about sex trafficking aiming to sow fear and division to influence the upcoming election. Any political committee, candidate, public office holder or media that does not expressly condemn QAnon and actively debunk the lies should be held accountable. Instead of actively propagating or silently condoning disinformation that harms trafficking victims and survivors and dismantles years of bipartisan cooperation, we offer the real facts about human trafficking. This is an issue where Republicans and Democrats have historically put real differences aside in service of a greater truth: Americans stand united against human trafficking.

The majority of trafficked youth are not abducted by strangers or Hollywood elites — they are abandoned by failing and under-resourced systems. There is not a deep state cabal of Democratic politicians and Hollywood celebrities who traffic children for sex. No major political candidate or party supports or condones pedophilia or human trafficking. We work on these issues. We would know. As a diverse field, we acknowledge a spectrum of experiences, views, and approaches. We disagree a LOT. On this though, we stand UNITED and we reiterate: Anybody who lends any credibility to QAnon conspiracies related to human trafficking actively harms the fight against human trafficking.

Signed,

*Polaris Project
Shared Hope International
McCain Institute for International Leadership
Arizona State University Office of Sex Trafficking Research Office*

The Phoenix Dream Center

By refusing to dismiss the validity of the Wayfair conspiracy, while openly denouncing broad, far-right conspiracy theories, in coalition with other organizations, Dr. Roe-Sepowitz has been careful to not personally cut off any avenue through which she could partner financially with to address trafficking. While she was unwilling to deny the locally derived Wayfair conspiracy to maintain support from people living in the metro valley area of Phoenix, by denying legitimacy to the QAnon conspiracy at the national level, her legitimacy as an expert is not thrown into question. Further, denying that trafficking QAnon conspiracy theories have any validity also serves to raise awareness of and direct resources towards her coalition, which might have otherwise been diverted towards other groups that subscribe to it, protecting her professional expertise from being degraded, challenged, and co-opted by others on the far right.

Through the lens of the NPIC, it appears that she, along with the Phoenix Dream Center, the McCain Institute, and other organizations who signed onto the letter, are monitoring, and controlling criticisms of their anti-trafficking narratives and corresponding interventions. In response to the impact of anti-trafficking interventions on sex worker's lives, many sex workers have called for the decriminalization of sex work and the centering of their voices in anti-trafficking legislation and discourse. In doing so, they are trying to make a world safer for themselves by destigmatizing sex workers' labor and identities, as well as divesting from policing and investment in the criminal justice system as solutions to trafficking. Whereas the sex worker's rights movement threatens the future of Roe-Sepowitz's anti-trafficking work, much of which is dependent upon

partnering with law enforcement, QAnon conspiracy theorists may help expand her work, as they are generally in support of policing, particularly in response to sex trafficking.

Conclusion

More than a demonstration of political bipartisanship, this chapter deconstructs how diverse coalitional relationships between anti-trafficking organizations, far-right extremists, and law enforcement, are maintained through distinct and overlapping colorblind and raceless discourses concerning human rights, gender equality, and violence against women and children. It explains how, in a climate of burgeoning fascism, fueled by the QAnon conspiracy theory, anti-trafficking coalitions are exploiting the white ignorance of the American public to attract support for their cause. This is occurring not only through anti-trafficking experts who openly support the QAnon conspiracy, but also because of those who refuse to consistently denounce it as an illegitimate and racist narrative.

The harms caused by the anti-trafficking movement in the contemporary US cannot be understood without acknowledging how it reproduces the longstanding racist and antisemitic conspiracy theories and mythologies that characterize people of color and immigrants as a sexual threat to white women and children in the context of trafficking. Such historical amnesia²⁰⁰ enables anti-trafficking coalitions to continue to subject sex workers, people of color and immigrants to state-sanctioned violence through the production of race-neutral discourses that serve the same function as their racist

²⁰⁰ By examining the racism and antisemitism produced by individual actors, male and female, in anti-trafficking coalitions from the 20th C., it becomes evident why contemporary anti-trafficking coalitions are invested in a pattern of forgetting the origins of this movement and instead parallel their work to the 19th century abolition movement.

predecessors in the white slavery movement. In addition to spreading this white ignorance, by expanding the categories of people and behaviors that fit under the umbrella of trafficking, anti-trafficking coalitions render more and more people vulnerable to racist vigilantism and state violence at the hands of law enforcement.

Even though anti-trafficking activism and legislation is often championed as a “bipartisan” social justice issue today, this chapter has demonstrated how anti-trafficking coalitions between law enforcement officers, academic researchers, religious leaders, CEOs of nonprofits, and politicians, reproduce white supremacy through their awareness campaigns and interventions. These coalitions offer a critical story in social history about the precarity of anti-trafficking regarding categories of race, class, and the protection of certain people versus penalty and punishment by default for others and give rise to violent radicalization movements through quiet or overt support for extremist groups such as the KKK of the 20th century or the contemporary QAnon movement.

By understanding how philanthropists, police, and academic researchers from nonprofits, law enforcement agencies, as well as public and private research institutes organized around this issue in the name of combatting sex work during the early 20th Century US, we are now better equipped to understand how the historical policies, relationships, rationales, and ideologies that have shaped the state’s understanding of sex trafficking, as well as the manner in which various manifestations of sex trafficking emerge across geographic, demographic, political, economic, and temporal lines. Moving forward, the following chapter will draw on this broad context to frame the history of anti-trafficking coalitions in the US during the 20th century, to foreground a discussion of

the trafficking problem in Arizona and specifically the town of Short Creek and the coalitional response there.

CHAPTER 5

ORIGINS OF THE FLDS CHURCH AND THE MORMON PERSECUTION MYTH

Introduction

While the previous chapter traced the transformation of the historical myth that Black and Jewish men are particularly prone to the trafficking of women and children in the early 20th C. and the 1990s, this chapter examines a lesser known period of the white slave trafficking phenomenon between the 1940s and 1950s. Specifically, based on a review of Mormon archival research, this chapter describes the emergence of and resistance to the FLDS by providing a brief history of the relationship between Mormon sectarianism, the US government, and charitable organizations. It seeks to debunk the myth that Mormon fundamentalists such as those from the FLDS represent a distinct and historically persecuted religious and ethnic minority in the US.

This is achieved by demonstrating that since the founding of the Mormon Church in 1830, both monogamous and polygamous Mormons have become increasingly accepted by the Christian majority. The Mormons have repeatedly come under fire from gentiles and members of their own church on the basis of widespread sexual abuse of children (Bennion, 2016; Bistline, 2004; Bradley, 1993; Jones, 2012; Quek, 2016) and the exploitation of children for purposes of labor (Allsup, 2020; Carlisle, 2018; Survivor's Podcast, 2018; Torribio, 2021),²⁰¹ but they represent the anti-trafficking coalitions' interventions into their communities to be directed at their spiritual practices.

²⁰¹ According to former FLDS member, Carolyn Jessop, many FLDS women were paid less than \$3.25 per hour to sew garments for an FLDS-owned company in Short Creek (Jessop & Palmer, 2007).

Specifically, their spiritual practice of plural marriage among consenting adults, which is detached from the cruel arithmetic of intergenerational Mormon polygamous families.

Although the FLDS have less been absorbed into mainstream society than have their Latter-Day Saints (LDS) counterparts, following the schism in the church that occurred in 1890 over the issue of polygamy, both groups have assimilated further into whiteness as the LDS has become increasingly embedded in the nation's political, economic, and cultural landscape. By moving into isolated areas like Short Creek and Bountiful in lesser numbers than previous settlements before the split in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois, the FLDS were largely able to avoid public scrutiny and criminalization, despite their continued practice of polygamy and underage marriages. The historical description in this section becomes increasingly detailed as it approaches white slavery raid in Short Creek that took place in 1953, where several patriarchs were arrested and charged with crimes tantamount to trafficking.

The second section describes how the FLDS took control of the persecution myth after the 1953 raid was characterized by journalists as an undue intervention against a rural Christian community for purposes of "white slave trafficking" (Bradley, 1993). Drawing on insights collected from Mormon historians, legal scholars, and sociologists, government reports, newspapers, and magazines, it describes the production of the persecution myth through which the Short Creek Dream Center (SCDC) rationalizes its victim centered interventions today, as is discussed in the following chapter. By outlining the features of this discourse through the lens of white ignorance, it becomes clear how the SCDC can exploit the American public's understanding of the trafficking problem within and beyond Short Creek through the NPIC.

Part I: The Roots of the Persecution Myth in the History of Mormonism

To project an image of the Mormons that is congruent with white protestant ideals in the US, important parts of the history of the Church have been chipped away from the dominant narrative of this religious group in mainstream culture. The LDS Church have, for example, taught their own people and the wider American public to believe that Mormon fundamentalist groups like the FLDS “split off” from the true Mormon church over the issue of polygamy. However, the FLDS Church argues that it was in fact the LDS that split off from the FLDS, as the FLDS are the ones who have continued the practice of polygamy according to the original doctrine outlined by the founder of Mormonism, Joseph Smith.²⁰² While mis-historicization has divided the LDS and FLDS, both sects of the Mormon church have both characterized themselves as persecuted religious and ethnic minorities, and remain deeply entangled politically, economically, and culturally to this day.

The Mormons portray Joseph Smith as a religious martyr for the larger Mormon cause, who was wrongfully persecuted for his religious beliefs by the government and vigilante mobs, without acknowledging key aspects of this history. This persecution myth is in the service of willful ignorance, which is evident if you travel to Nauvoo, Illinois to learn about the history of Joseph Smith, where the topic of polygamy is glaringly absent from the town’s guided tours, museums, and theatrical reenactments of what it was like to live in Nauvoo in the 1840s (field observations, August 19th, 2020 – August 22nd, 2020). In the same vein, if you drive 30 minutes outside of Nauvoo to the town of Carthage and

²⁰² According to Calvin Wayman, an apostate from the Centennial Park group next to Short Creek, fundamentalists are taught to believe that they are simply allowing the mainstream LDS Church to borrow their temples in Salt Lake City (Sola, 2023).

tour the Carthage jail where Joseph Smith was incarcerated before being shot out of a window by an angry mob, the relationship between Joseph Smith's death and polygamy is also nonexistent (field observations, August 20th, 2020).²⁰³

By separating their own history from the FLDS Church, the LDS Church has not only obscured Joseph Smith's practice of polygamy, but also the fact that he had married six girls between the ages of 14 and 17-years-old (Compton, 1997, pp. 4-6). Altogether, the men considered the Founding Fathers of Mormonism, Joseph Smith, Hyrum Smith, and Brigham Young all had many, many wives, with Young having 55. Many of these men's wives were underage, biologically related, and given to their husbands by their own fathers. Smith's practice of underage marriage was continued in the FLDS Church with little recourse from outsiders, as was exemplified by the Prophet Warren Jeffs, who is spending life in prison for the sexual assault of girls he took as plural wives, one as young as twelve. Failure to recognize these connections between Joseph Smith and the early Mormon Church in Utah requires not just an ignorance, but a willful ignorance of the history of the Mormon Church in Nauvoo, Illinois, and its connections to the FLDS Church in Short Creek, situated on the border between Arizona and Utah.

Initially, Joseph Smith and his followers sought to establish a settlement in Kirkland, Ohio,²⁰⁴ and then Independence, Missouri,²⁰⁵ before settling in Nauvoo,

²⁰³ In August 2020 I traveled to Nauvoo, Illinois to learn about the origins of the LDS Church and visit Carthage Jail, where Joseph Smith was murdered.

²⁰⁴ In July 1838 approximately 500 Mormons left Kirkland, Ohio for Independence, Missouri after experiencing hostility and persecution from non-Mormons in the surrounding region (Kettley, Garr, & Manscill, 2006).

²⁰⁵ Jackson County, Missouri is where Joseph Smith formally sought to establish the first "Zion" (Park, 2020, p. 26). However, on October 30th, 1838, a group of vigilantes stormed into a known Mormon outpost called Hawn's Mill in Missouri and murdered 17 men, women, and children to chase them out of Missouri and scare off other Mormons from trying to settle there. Thousands of Mormons left the state. (See Park, 2020, p. 30).

Illinois,²⁰⁶ within “a border state, known for its politically diverse population, ambitious leaders, and pluralistic religious marketplace” (Park, 2020, pp. 17-18; Smith, 2011). Joseph Smith’s aggressive strategy to implement a “theodemocratic”²⁰⁷ society for his followers caused the early Mormon pioneers to move from state to state because their religious values encroached on American ideals of individualism, capitalism, the separation of church and state, forcing gentiles in a defensive posture. Even prior to learning of Joseph Smith’s preaching of polygamy to his most elite followers, the Mormon’s practices of political, economic, and cultural communalism, including trading amongst themselves and voting in blocs, made them unpopular with gentiles living outside of their communities, including more established Christian denominations, who feared they would take over completely (Park, 2020).

Before establishing the city of Nauvoo, the religious radicalism, and countercultural beliefs among a rapidly growing Mormon settlement in Jackson County, Missouri began to concern neighboring settlements “to levels that frightened the original settlers, who saw them as religious zealots threatening their way of life-including, perhaps, the institution of slavery” (Park, 2020, p. 27). Outsiders were concerned that the institution of Black chattel slavery in the US was being rivaled by how the Mormons practiced a form of economic communalism to grow their church, as they relied on the

²⁰⁶ Most people in early Nauvoo came from Missouri or from England (Smith 2011). Notably, all three of the towns are located on a state or national border. Kirkland, Ohio, borders Canada, Independence, Missouri is on the Kansas-Missouri border, and Nauvoo, Illinois is located on the Mississippi River and borders Iowa.

²⁰⁷ According to Dr. Mathew Bowman (2012) in his book, *The Mormon People: A Making of an American Faith*, Joseph Smith preached a “theodemocratic” society, meaning that he believed that society should be run according to government by righteous council-meaning people called by God. Under this societal structure, the Mormons would move into frontier towns, form a religious commune, and solidify political power, and then claim the town for God.

rapid reproduction of their own children to work for church-owned businesses for little to no money. Separating themselves from the larger US economy by using white child laborers from their own group may be chalked up to racism among Mormons, although this was very unlikely to be the case.

While Mormons today are notorious for their prejudices against racial minorities such as Native Americans, Jews, and African Americans,²⁰⁸ early teachings of Joseph Smith offered “a remarkably universalistic approach to race, similar to the projects of earlier evangelical movements that pushed for abolition” (Park, 2020, p. 70). Although the topic of race has shifted throughout the history of the Mormon Church,²⁰⁹ during this period the passage from the Book of Mormon professing that “all are alike unto God...Black and white, bond and free, male and female” took preeminence (cited in Park, 2020, p. 70). Joseph Smith welcomed African Americans and Native Americans into their group²¹⁰ to maximize recruitment and grow the size of his flock, but this also led to problems from within and beyond the group. The church’s racial diversity and encouragement of new members who owned slaves to abandon the practice caused their neighbors in pro-slavery Missouri to grow “anxious of the church’s perceived antislavery positions” (Park, 2020, p. 70).

²⁰⁸ Joseph Smith originally wrote in the Book of Mormon of his people as being “white and delightsome” in 1830, changing the phrase to “pure and delightsome” a decade later. Likewise, in the LDS Church, Black men were not able to hold the Priesthood until 1978.

²⁰⁹ Mormon historian Benjamin Park’s (2020) text, *Kingdom of Nauvoo: The Rise and Fall of a Religious Empire on the American Frontier* makes a unique argument about the history of the Mormon Church, by demonstrating how the political, social, and economic context of early Nauvoo reveals how this history reflects a story about Mormon culture situated within the wider US culture. Park (2020) explains that Joseph Smith, his followers, and the city of Nauvoo were “products of their nation and times” (p. 4). In that the practice of polygamy among Mormons has been shaped by both local and national politics—these products of race, gender, and religion continue to shapeshift to this day to fit contemporary understandings of society.

²¹⁰ Jane Manning and Elijah Abel are two of the most well-known African American Mormons to originally join the church. Abel was ordained into the Priesthood under Joseph Smith in Kirkland, Ohio (Park, 2020).

In addition to suspicions regarding the Mormons' lukewarm anti-slavery position, their neighbors questioned the allegiance of Mormons to the US based on their relationship to people indigenous to the Americas. Not only in the sense that they allowed indigenous people to join the church, but also because their theology dictates that the Mormons are the true tribe of Israel who had traveled to North America from Jerusalem (Mariottini, 2006). Although the Mormons' relationship with Native Americans would in the following decades become contentious, hostile, and genocidal, as well as reinterpreted within these changing visions by Mormon leaders, which would allow them to assimilate in white Christian culture, during this period it drove a wedge between themselves and mainstream America.

Politicians accused the Mormons of becoming too friendly with Native Americans, reflecting what they believed to be "a grand conspiracy... between the Mormons and Indians to destroy all the white settlements" (Park, 2020, p. 145). On October 27th, 1838, the governor of Missouri issued an executive order, known as the "Extermination Order" declaring that "Mormons should be treated as enemies, and must be exterminated or driven from the state if necessary for the public peace" (Park, 2020, p. 30). Upon learning of this order, vigilante groups took it upon themselves to carry out this order and massacred numerous Mormon men, women, and children before driving the nascent religious group out of Missouri and into Nauvoo, Illinois, right on the edge of the Mississippi River.

On top of their amicable relationships with people of color, the Mormons faced additional problems in the new Zion they were building in Illinois. Residents of Illinois perceived the Mormons as being inherently anti-American on the basis that they were a

closed society that only traded amongst themselves and rejected the notion of a separation between church and state. As the Mormons quietly re-wrote the US constitution for “the Kingdom of God to replace the government of men” (Park, 2020, p. 2), the people of Illinois saw the culmination of these practices as exemplifying an “open rebellion against America’s democratic system” (Park, 2020, p. 9). Outsiders’ criticisms of the beliefs and practices among Mormons intensified as word got out that Joseph Smith was privately preaching gospels perceived as anti-Christian and anti-American values, including polygamy with underage girls.

Leading up to Joseph Smith’s death in 1844, there were around 200 men and nearly 700 women practicing polygamy in Nauvoo (Park, 2020). Mormons claimed that polygamy was supposed to bring order and stability into a chaotic, fallen world, but outsiders feared it would undoubtedly cause their church to quickly expand rapidly and displace established authorities. Criticisms came from within the community as well, however, as Smith dissolved the female-led Mormon Relief Society after his first wife, Emma Hale Smith, led the charge of speaking out against polygamy.²¹¹

In the last few months of Smith’s life, polygamy became an open secret, and the Mormons were preparing to head West to avoid being destroyed by people living in the surrounding community. Before they could leave, Joseph Smith was arrested and taken to Carthage jail after declaring martial law over Nauvoo and setting fire to the *Nauvoo Expositor* printing press for publishing an article about his practice of polygamy. Before

²¹¹ Joseph Smith’s first wife, Emma Hale Smith, was among those who protested the practice of polygamy as well as several of Smith’s plural wives he took after Emma (Park, 2020). Upon learning that her husband had taken plural wives without her knowledge, Emma Smith was concerned what this would mean for herself and her children. Joseph Smith agreed to give her a certain amount of land in Nauvoo for herself and her children to assure her that they would be taken care of (The Joseph Smith Papers, 1843).

his trial, however, an angry mob of men with their faces darkened stormed into the jail and shot him out of a window before tarring, feathering, and ultimately killing him. With the outcome of the subsequent trial undoubtedly influenced by Smith's unpopularity, all five of the men who were charged with his death were acquitted (observations, August 19th, 2020 – August 22nd, 2020; Park, 2020).

Without a defined direction for leadership in the church after Smith's murder, a close confidant, follower, and fellow polygamist, Brigham Young, rose to prominence. A defining factor in the emergence of his leadership was his mission to convert people in England to Mormonism, many of whom migrated to Nauvoo and at the community's peak made up around a quarter of the town's inhabitants (Park, 2020). Young led thousands of Mormon followers from Nauvoo westward in 1847,²¹² with many people dying from starvation, disease, and war as they encountered indigenous peoples along the way to Utah. Although the Mormon church had been more amicable to indigenous peoples than other white Christian colonists under the leadership of Smith, when Mormon settlers encountered Native Americans of the Potawatomi and Omaha tribes concerned for the influx of Europeans onto their homeland, Young told them that the land belonged to God and his chosen people. Young and his followers murdered and dispossessed many people indigenous to the land during this migration, including peoples from the Ute, Southern Paiute, and Dine tribes, eventually settling in what is now Salt Lake City, Utah.²¹³

²¹² This moment in Mormon history reflects the original split in the Mormon church when Brigham Young went to Utah while Emma Smith stayed behind with her son in Nauvoo and formed the Reformed Latter-Day Saints (RLDS) Church.

²¹³ By the start of the 20th C., Native Americans indigenous to Utah had experienced 96% land loss to the Mormons. Mormons stole land and committed genocide of 18,000 native people. In 1857, while disguised

Following Smith's initial tolerance for racial integration²¹⁴ it was Young's priority of having the Mormon Church become accepted in mainstream white society, which required the Church's embrace of white supremacy. Like in Nauvoo, in Utah: "Living on the edge of the American nation, both geographically and culturally, led Mormons to be especially concerned about their social standing as they attempted to balance theological desires for racial integration with complicated appeals for white citizenship" (Park, 2020, p. 144). These desires to be accepted as white would cause Young and other leaders of the group following the reign of Smith to affirm their opposition to "radical abolitionism" through the adoption of race-based restrictions. Perhaps, most cogently, the denial of the privilege to hold Priesthood to Black people in the Mormon Church (Park, 2020, p. 70), which was a policy that outlasted the Civil Rights of 1968 by a decade (Eldon, 1978).

Even though the Mormons had taken steps to integrate into mainstream American culture during this period by adopting white supremacist views, their substantial land gains and growing society in the West alerted Republicans and Protestant Christian women, who regarded Mormon polygamy as a threat to the traditional Christian value of monogamous marriage in the US. 19th C. suffragettes targeted Mormon women in Utah, as they made condemning polygamy a condition of membership (Jones, 2012, p. 155). The fact that the majority of anti-polygamy activism during the late 19th and early 20th centuries was led by women, is instructive in the sense that "the gendered character of the

as Native Americans, the Nauvoo Legion of Salt Lake massacred more than 120 men, women, and children traveling from Arkansas to California in a wagon train. No one would be convicted of this crime until 1874, as there was little oversight on the Western front where the Mormons had been expelled (Walker, 2011).

²¹⁴ For example, shortly before his death, at the end of 1843, a recently freed Black woman named Jane Manning led a group of African American converts from the Northeast to Nauvoo. Manning was in part compelled to join Joseph Smith's church because of its open policy towards people of color. She worked in Joseph Smith's home as a maid (see Park, 2020, p. 141).

opposition” to polygamy “was powerful evidence of the gendered nature of the problem” (p. 264).²¹⁵ However, the relevance of race relations for anti-polygamy activism had yet to be realized. Shortly before the Civil War, the Republican party ran on their first national platform; declaring war on what they referred to as “the twin relics of barbarism: slavery and polygamy” (Wills, 1890). While the Republican party platform harnessed the language of slavery in the wake of the 19th century abolition era to bolster public criticism of the Mormons who had the capacity to expand exponentially and influence politics based on the rapid reproduction of children through polygamy, there were additional reasons why some evangelical Christian Republicans and Christian women were critical of the early Mormons (Edwards, 1997).

A popular narrative began to arise about Mormon white slave traffickers immigrating into the US from England and Scandinavia to prey on white girls and take as polygamous wives (Kelly, 2019). While Mormons were in fact moving into the country, the idea that individual men were doing so to prey on young women did not acknowledge how they were entering already established polygamous family units, likely looking to expand. By framing Mormon immigrants as a threat to the dominance of white protestant monogamy, this characterization spoke to the political, economic, and cultural heart of American society (Park, 2020).

²¹⁵ Notably, however, I found that one of the most interesting aspects of Mormon culture in American life has been the evolving role of women across different groups. Contrary to what may be popular assumptions, Mormon women have held significant power in both monogamous and polygamous families. Anti-polygamy feminists often proclaimed that Mormon polygamy enslaved women and yet Mormon women had voting power within the church itself since it was founded and Joseph Smith’s wife, Emma Smith, led the first women’s Mormon Relief Society that continues to exist to this day. Mormon women were also some of the first suffragettes in the United States who achieved the right to vote and serve in positions of political leadership. The first female mayor of Kanab in 1912 and there was an all-female city council where three of the five women gave birth while in office (Ventry & Sanders, 2020h).

Regardless of where wives were being obtained for Mormon polygamy, Christian anti-polygamy activist, Angie Newman, articulated how the framework of “white slavery” applied to seemingly disconnected social problems. Newman condemned spiritual commitments between one man and multiple wives as “illicit alliances,” arguing that plural wives within these polygamous marriages were equivalent to prostitutes working within the brothel system. In other words, the Mormons had simply substituted “the Harem for the Home” (Newman, 1886). Campaigners like Newman raised awareness about the sexually deviant behaviors within Mormon polygamy through sensationalized media stories in Republican-backed newspapers and lobbied for the arrests and imprisonment of Mormon men (Edwards, 1997, p. 20).

In opposition to the Republican party platform, many Democrats fought for the rights of Mormon plural families, because they believed the polygamy issue spoke to the common cause to have the patriarchal right to control, govern, and organize one’s family as they saw fit. Notably, during the Civil War, the pro-slavery Democrats argued that protecting and “defending slavery concerned more than defending human bondage. Above all, it concerned a way of life that placed close-knit social and family relationships at its center” (Sullivan, 2006, p. 78). In a context where Democrats had framed the Civil War as a federal incursion on their way of life at its most intimate, they offered support for Mormons, understanding that Mormon polygamy, like chattel slavery, “was a household matter” (Edwards, 1997, p. 21).²¹⁶ In other words, they reasoned that if the federal government could intervene into private polygamous Mormon family life, then they would intervene into private monogamous Christian family life too.

²¹⁶ Mormon polygamists refuse to enlist a single soldier to fight in the Civil War (Abanes, 2002).

25 years after the abolition of chattel slavery with the passage of the 13th amendment in 1865, the Mormon Church had come to govern Utah. With the federal government allowing the territory to attain statehood on the condition that polygamy be outlawed, the President of the Mormon Church, Wilford Woodruff, outlawed the practice in 1890, but this did not put a stop to polygamy and the new law's enforcement remained at the discretion of the LDS Church. Like the abolition of slavery, where newly emancipated Black Americans were given little to no economic reparations, Woodruff outlawed polygamy without clear guidance or financial support for families already living in polygamous arrangements (Bradley, 1993).

The formal criminalization of polygamy in 1935 made the practice a felony, ushering in a period where Mormons became increasingly monogamous and advanced their assimilation into mainstream Christian society (Bradley, 1993). Mormon polygamists who resisted this change were excommunicated by the LDS church, giving birth to the sect known today as Mormon fundamentalists.²¹⁷ Believing that the church had prioritized the agenda of the federal government over the doctrine laid down by the founding prophet Joseph Smith, a diaspora of Mormon fundamentalists from Utah was initiated. The FLDS moved across the US and into Mexico and Canada, so that they could continue to practice polygamy without interference. One of those places was the geographically isolated region of Short Creek, Arizona.

Knowing that the FLDS are a migratory group with many offshoots and outpost locations is key to understanding the connections between the raids conducted on the

²¹⁷ Many Mormon polygamous families were excommunicated under Wilford Woodruff even though Woodruff himself privately refused to give up his own nine wives following his 1890 manifesto (Bradley, 1993).

FLDS during the white slavery and anti-trafficking movements in the 20th and 21st centuries: specifically, the 1953 raid on the FLDS in Short Creek, Arizona and that which occurred in El Dorado, Texas, in 2008. While “a central community had been crucial to the Mormon faith,” the FLDS theorized that “if they remained a minority spread across several towns and cities” they could circumvent public criticisms faced by “other marginalized religious faiths-like Catholics, Jews, and Shakers who mostly drew ire only when they formed a large, centralized body” (Park, 2020, p. 19). For this reason, Mormon fundamentalists in the group that is today known as the FLDS strategically formed small and isolated communities on the outskirts of Salt Lake City (Wall, 2007; Wall 2015) Colorado (Bradley, 1993), the border of Idaho and Canada (Hanson, 2015), in Nevada, North Dakota (Sola, 2023), South Dakota (Jeffs, 2013) as well Short Creek.

By dissolving their central base, the FLDS were able to maintain the closed practice of polygamy by intermarrying within the community by procuring polygamous wives from their other rural, isolated outposts, which allowed them to avoid public scrutiny and criminalization. Although this approach was effective to some degree, the rising influence of the white slavery movement at the turn of the 20th century prompted a series of raids on the FLDS in Salt Lake City and Short Creek in 1944, based on their practice of polygamy and arranged marriages to underaged girls (Bradley, 1993).²¹⁸ For

²¹⁸ In 1944, fifteen Mormon polygamist men were arrested in what was known as the Boyden Raid and sent to Utah State Prison on charges including unlawful cohabitation, kidnapping, engaging in sex with a minor, and for violating the White Slave Traffic Act (Kimbel, 2020). Of those arrested included John Y. Barlow, Joseph W. Musser, and Joseph Lyman Jessop. One case drawn under the White Slave Traffic Act was the case of Heber (Fred) Kimball Cleveland, who had transported a girl across state lines from Salt Lake City, Utah to Evanston, Wyoming for purposes of sex. Another case entailed a defendant who had assisted in the transportation of a fourteen-year-old girl for sex from Provo, Utah to El Paso, Texas, and then to Short Creek, Arizona. Other men were prosecuted for transporting young girls for sexual purposes, including polygamous marriages, from the United States to Mexico. The attorneys representing the State of Utah

many Americans following the case, after a series of articles were published in the fundamentalist publication *Truth Magazine* (1944),²¹⁹ these raids were viewed as government overreach into the lives of white, rural, Christian communities, but similar interventions would follow within a decade.

While the momentum of the white slavery movement was waning during the 1940s, the voices of those in favor of the FLDS Church's religious freedom were crushed two years later. During the proceedings of *Cleveland v. US* (1946), the United States Supreme Court interpreted white slavery, based on the White Slave Traffic Act (1910), to prohibit polygamy as an "immoral purpose" for "the transportation of women across state lines." This decision made possible the 1953 raid in Short Creek, which is today enshrined as a central persecution myth used to characterize the experiences of those in the community that continues to live there today. If the harms caused by anti-trafficking interventions in Short Creek are to be comprehended, the political, economic, and cultural context surrounding this event must be understood.

Governor Howard Pyle, a self-proclaimed evangelical Christian, had not initiated the 1953 raid upon his own religious bias but at the request of an LDS Church member and Superior Court Judge of Mohave County, Jesse Faulkner.²²⁰ Although he lived four

found all fifteen men were found guilty of crimes including white slave trafficking, sentenced to up to five years in the Utah State Prison.

²¹⁹ *Truth* magazine is still in circulation to this day on the internet and when I traveled to Nauvoo, Illinois in August 2021 I also found old copies of the magazine for sale at a locally owned Mormon bookstore (Nauvoo, Utah, field observations, August, 2021).

²²⁰ It is unknown whether Faulkner was truly motivated by his stated reasons or if he was unofficially representing the LDS church. Despite the way the FLDS have primarily articulated the gentile state as the most significant source of their persecution, it is important to acknowledge how members of the LDS Church itself has also played a hand in this work as was the case with the 1953 raid in Short Creek, despite close connections between members of these two sects. In addition to Rulon Jeffs attending high school with the future president of the LDS, for example, he had gained enough political status in the church to marry the daughter of a powerful LDS apostle before he began practicing polygamy and identifying as a fundamentalist (Bradley, 1993).

hours away from the town in Kingman, Arizona, Faulkner claimed to be concerned about the population boom in Short Creek. The reasons for Faulkner's complaint are unknown, but cattle ranchers who lived in the surrounding area matched his position on the basis that the growing town of Short Creek would increase their taxes through the school system (Bradley, 1993).

Based on an initial investigation into the community, conducted by a California-based company hired by the Arizona Governor, Pyle felt confident that the raid was a necessary intervention for the children of Short Creek, who he viewed to be victims of white slavery. Fearing that the public would perceive a raid into a small rural town would appear like a military invasion of the country, however, he decided that by keeping Mormon leaders informed of the raid and in touch with local law enforcement who knew the FLDS. Hoping to facilitate "a police action in the role of the Good Samaritan," Pyle kept LDS Church Apostle Delbert L. Stapley abreast of the situation in Short Creek, as well as the Council of Twelve, of whom Pyle asserts "were one thousand percent cooperative, a hundred percent behind it" (Bradley, 1993, pp. 124-125). Rather than being motivated by their concern for the people living in the community, the LDS Church saw the prospective raid as an opportunity to use its publicity to further distance themselves in the public's eye from the fundamentalists, who still practiced polygamy. Mormon bishops and Mormon Relief Society presidents were also made aware of the upcoming raid and began quietly soliciting volunteers from their churches to house children that would eventually be removed in the raid (Bradley, 1993). Others who were at the scene of the raid that July morning included Utah national guardsmen from the town of St. George, 70 Arizona Highway Patrolmen, 102 state troopers, deputy

sheriffs,²²¹ liquor control agents, social services, attorneys, and dozens of reporters from the *Arizona Republic*, *Life Magazine*, *Arizona Daily Star*, and *Associated Press* (Bradley, 1993).

State officials in Arizona and the LDS Church in Utah anticipated that they would receive ample support by the public following news of the raid to rescue what Pyle referred to as, “the innocent chattels of a lawless commercial undertaking of wicked design and ruthlessly exercised power” from “the co-operative enterprise of five or six coldly calculating men who reap all of the profits” (Bradley, 1993, p. 208). They could not have been more incorrect, given that much of the community was actively involved in the practice of marrying underage girls and other crimes. Shortly after the raid on that early July morning in 1953, Governor Pyle announced over the radio:

It is no surprise that some of these vicious conspirators are former convicts.²²² They have been shielded by the geographic circumstances of Arizona’s northernmost territory—the region beyond the Grand Canyon that is best known as The Strip. The community of Short Creek is 400 miles by the shortest road from the Mohave County seat of Kingman. Short Creek is unique among Arizona communities in that some of its dwellings are actually in another state. (Bradley, 1993, p. 14)

²²¹ According to Bradley (1993), Sheriff Alfonso Nyborg, whose wife played an important role in the 1955 Congressional hearing following the raid in 1953, was considered the Short Creek deputy sheriff at the time and paid \$12,500 by the prosecution side with Mohave County Sheriff Frank Porter, who was also paid \$12,500 set aside by the Arizona legislature.

²²² Here he is referring to the men arrested in the Boyden raid of 1944.

The raid was widely publicized in newspapers like *The Arizona Republic* and in photospreads with *Life Magazine* as an infringement on religious freedom and regular American families (Bradley, 1993). Initially, one of the community leaders present during the raid, who later became the Prophet, Leroy Johnson, told law enforcement: “If it’s blood you want, take mine! We have run for the last time” (Bradley, 1993).²²³ Within a span of minutes, the entire community of 400 people was rounded up by police. Of the 122 people named in the warrant, 85 had their principal home in Arizona.²²⁴ Of those who didn’t escape to the Utah side of the border during the raid included 36 men and 8 women who were arrested. Although the raid had been prompted by suspicion of white slavery, many of the charges also included rape, statutory rape, cohabitation, polygamous living, and misappropriation of school funds, and they were all given a blanket charge of conspiracy against the United States (Bradley, 1993, p. 131). Drawing on the language of abolition to justify the raid and subsequent charges, Governor Howard Pyle also drew on the language of abolition to condemn the men and women of the FLDS who facilitated underaged marriages to men with multiple wives:

Arizona has mobilized its total police power to protect the lives and future of 263 children...the product and the victims of the foulest conspiracy you could possibly imagine... a community-many of the women, sadly, right along with the men-unalterably dedicated to the production of white slaves (according to) the wicked

²²³ Historian Martha Sontag Bradley has recorded that at least some of the 122 people who had a warrant for their arrest fled from the site of the raid onto the Utah side of the border (1993, p. 30).

²²⁴ Warrants were issued for 26 men and 57 women on the Arizona side, 10 men and 29 women on the Utah side (Bradley, 1993).

theory that every maturing girl child should be forced into bondage of multiple wifehood with men of all ages for the sole purpose of producing more children to be reared to become more chattels of this totally lawless enterprise. (Pyle, 1953)

In addition to the adults who were arrested, at least 263 children²²⁵ under the age of eighteen were taken into state custody (Bradley, 1993). The response to these media stories was immediate public outcry from people throughout the nation. In one example of the harms caused by the raid, one of the mothers who was loaded onto the bus was nearly nine months pregnant and was “so miserable” that “she couldn’t even sit down” during the bumpy 17-hour drive down to Phoenix (Ventry & Sanders, 2020c).

Reportedly, upon arriving in Phoenix, the woman who the state had arranged to host her took her to an old tool shed in her backyard that had cockroaches and scorpions up and down the wall. When the pregnant young mother broke down in tears, her host allegedly said, “Well Mrs. Jessop, when you break the law, you have to be punished, don’t you?” (Ventry & Sanders, 2020c).

In another example of harm, the infant son of a resident was born prematurely in October 1953 because of one of his wives’ stress and anxiety after the raid (Adams, Wright, Diener, & Wright, 2013, p. 453). In another, an 84-year-old patriarch, Joseph S. Jessop died a month after the raid, after an acute attack of phlebitis, within days from his release from Kingman jail (Bradley, 1993). In addition to the public relations fiasco related to the raid itself, these experiences and the children who had been taken from their

²²⁵ Of those sent to Phoenix included 160 children and 40 adult women (Congressional Subcommittee Raid Report, 1955: p. 8)

families who were kept in foster care for nearly two years after the raid became “an expensive and unpopular embarrassment” for the state (Driggs, 2001, p. 70).

Either out of guilt or in an act of redemption, the Arizona State Troopers who had participated in the raid held a picnic in Mesa, Arizona, for the children of the FLDS community who had been removed in the raid (Bradley, 1993, p. 141). Law enforcement had their wives bake cakes and prepare salads and they paid for the pavilion rented to host the picnic themselves. According to Bradley (1993, p. 35), the police: “didn’t want the children to always remember them with fear and resentment and worked hard to melt their terror, playing with them, teasing and joking with them, tossing the little ones in the air” (p. 35). Marie Darger, an FLDS woman who was present during the picnic recalls observing a large, burly police officer at the picnic, “breaking down and weeping at the grievous irony that his ‘protection’ had inflicted such pain on them’ (1993, p. 35). This aspect of the raid would become a central pillar in the contemporary FLDS persecution myth projected by the SCDC and its victim advocates.

Five months after the raid, an Arizona Superior Court judge granted one-year suspended sentences to all the men who had been arrested in the raid as part of a comprehensive plea bargain. All charges would be dropped if everyone in the town agreed to discontinue their practice of polygamy. Judge Robert A. Tuller expressed doubt that the men could be reformed, but he was also concerned that their incarceration had not only *not* intimidated the polygamists, but had actually further substantiated the spiritual significance of polygamy for their group, stating: “I don’t honestly believe I can rehabilitate you gentlemen...but to imprison you would not deter others, but would make

you martyrs” (Bradley, 1993).²²⁶ Despite the judge’s efforts to avoid making these child predators out to be martyrs for their religion, however, as the following section will demonstrate, in the aftermath of the raid ascended to this very status, enabling the community to represent itself as being persecuted by the state.

Part II: The Wake of the 1953 Raid and Rise of Warren Jeffs

While state officials uncovered evidence that girls were being systematically trafficked by patriarchs in Short Creek, the 1953 raid was met with widespread criticism across the country. Public backlash was sparked because of how the intervention was reported in the media, which framed the raid as an egregious example of government overreach into the private domestic lives of hard-working Americans, who were targeted for their religious practice of plural marriage between consenting adults.²²⁷ State Senator Jim Smith condemned the raid to the Arizona Senate, “there has never been an injustice in the annals of American history equal to the deportation of the women and children of Short Creek since the disbursement of the Arcadians in the 18th century” (Bradley, 1993, p. 153). Short Creek school teacher Louis Barlow, a son of one of the original patriarchs of the community, John Y. Barlow, said of the raid (cited in Evans, 2011, p. 33): “They desecrated the day! The places where we held Sunday School and meetings were made

²²⁶ Within two years, the state had released all the FLDS legal wives first, reflecting what some in the FLDS, such as the grandson of former Short Creek mayor, Dan Barlow, have more recently referred to as “married privilege” (Hansen Park, 2017h) while the remaining plural wives were released over a period of 10 years for lack of legal ties to their husbands (Bradley, 1993).

²²⁷ As a Mormon historian who believes in the media representation that followed the raid, Bradley Evans (2011) contends that while it was allegedly instigated based on complaints of widespread child abuse, “these allegations...proved to be tenuous” following investigation. Instead, he argues, it seems as though the central purpose for conducting the raid was religiously motivated, having “more to do with attack plural marriage and discrediting the group on a larger public stage than in ferreting out child abuse” (p. 46)

prisons; the men were put in there and held by sheriffs all the way around-not allowed to talk to their families, treated just as if it was a movement of Adolph Hitler!”

As this section will demonstrate, given the historical relationship between Nazism and Mormonism,²²⁸ it is particularly ironic that the FLDS would analogize the raid with the terror of the Third Reich, especially considering that Warren Jeffs’ would glorify Nazism and his mode of governance guided by its principles. Barlow’s statement demonstrates that, since the end of WWII, the degree and ease with which the FLDS have drawn on references to Hitler and Nazi Germany reflects a more widespread insidious practice of white ignorance in the US. This form of racelessness relies on distortions of history through the minimization of the Holocaust for purposes of elevating a series of persecution myths about white Christian America perpetrated by the US government at both the local and federal levels.

Although polygamists consider the raid part of their community’s history and a needless attack rooted only in discriminatory beliefs about the FLDS, Governor Pyle’s attacks were not entirely without merit. In all the chaos of this raid, there is a tendency to forget that it culminated in empirical evidence of child abuse, molestation, and sex trafficking perpetrated against children *by* FLDS adults. In 1953, the average age of marriage for girls in Short Creek was 16, and child brides of 14 and 15-years-old were not uncommon either (Bradley, 1993). According to secondhand interview sources from

²²⁸ *Moroni and the Swastika: Mormons in Nazi Germany* describes the amicable relationships between Mormons and the Third Reich in Nazi Germany (Nelson, 2015). According to the author, Mormons during WWII hung portraits of Adolph Hitler in their temples, refused to help Jews who had converted to Mormonism out of Germany, served in the SS, and helped construct gas chambers to lead Jews to their death. Since WWII, LDS Church leaders in Utah have been criticized for what they call “baptisms for the dead” in which they have church members stand in as proxies for historically famous figures to bring them into the fold of Mormonism. Some of the most controversial figures they have performed these rituals on include Anne Frank and Adolph Hitler.

YouTube with a woman named Rena Mackert, legal scholars involved in court cases where she was a witness, and Mormon historians who have unique access to historical Mormon records, Mackert, who was one of the 253 FLDS children taken in the raid, had been subjected to sexual abuse perpetrated by her father since she was 3 years old (Bradley, 1993; Jones, 2012; Hanson, 2015g). The raid led to Mackert and her 16 sisters' removal from their pedophilic father before quickly being returned by apologetic Arizona officials, who portrayed Mackert's father as "a victim of an overreactive state" (Jones, 2012, p. 156). Years later, Kathleen and Donna Mackert established the Valerie Jeffs Mackert Gateway to Freedom in memory of their sister, who got heavily into drugs after leaving the church because of the sexual abuse she experienced at the hands of her father in the FLDS. At the age of 40, after also suffering from a history of grand mal seizures, her heart gave out (Hanson, 2015e; Hanson, 2015g).

During the 1955 Congressional Hearing concerning the 1953 raid, Judge Faulkner revealed some of the findings from the case, including the fact that, like the Mackert family, 90% of the town was living in a polygamous family arrangement. There were also several instances in which all the polygamous wives in one family were living in cramped conditions under one roof with upwards of 25 to 30 children (Congressional Subcommittee Raid Report, 1955, p. 10). A non-polygamist woman named Mrs. Nyborg testified that sometimes, the FLDS would shut down the school for 3 to 5 weeks and months at time for the children to go to Idaho and pick potatoes to contribute to the church (Congressional Subcommittee Raid Report, 1955, p. 34).

According to the Congressional Subcommittee Raid Report (1955), among all the married women in the community included "about a dozen girls, aged 14 to 17-years-old,

who were either pregnant or had children” (p. 17). Alfonso Nyborg, the Deputy Sheriff of Mohave County, who had been living in Short Creek since 1943 (Congressional Subcommittee Raid Report, 1955, p. 24), claimed having known of girls as young as 11 being married off in the community (Congressional Subcommittee Raid Report, 1955, p. 19). Despite these findings, on March 3rd of 1955, the Arizona Supreme Court agreed with the sentiments of the FLDS and the wider public, determining that even if they didn't support plural marriage, the children of the FLDS should be able to live with their parents (Bradley, 1993, p. 157).

The 1953 raid gave the FLDS public sentiment and instilled fear in state actors who might interfere in the Short Creek community, especially amidst the Cold War when Americans were particularly sensitive to government overreach. Up until that point, the Short Creek community had no formal police department in the community but fell under the jurisdiction of the Mohave County Sheriff's office, deputies of which occasionally patrolled the area. In line with the position expressed by Arizona officials, as well as countless other Americans living within and beyond the community following the raid, the state instructed Mohave County officials to take a hands-off approach, on the basis that the community should be allowed to be free to practice their religion in peace (Bistline, 2004, p. 91). For the most part, the state did exactly that for more than five decades.

Reported images of crying children and their polygamous mothers are part of the persecution myth that persists about the FLDS in Short Creek, as there are no photographs of this nature that I could find in public circulation. Contrary to this narrative often referenced to bolster the persecution myth, there is information based on

testimony from Sheriff Nyborg in 1955 suggesting that as the presence of law enforcement in Short Creek began to fade, he had witnessed FLDS “recruits” coming to live in Short Creek to take advantage of the situation. Two months after the children were returned, new families began to move into Short Creek from Salt Lake, Canada, Idaho, and Colorado²²⁹ (Congressional Subcommittee Raid Report, 1955, p. 10).

Amidst these changes, Leroy “Uncle Roy” Johnson, who had been arrested in both raids 1944 and 1953, rose to power as prophet of the FLDS and began taking steps to preserve arranged child marriages in Short Creek. The FLDS patriarchs formed the UEP land trust, which they envisioned as a refuge for those victimized by an authoritarian government wielded by gentiles. Citing “all things held in common,” they believed that the land trust would provide a means for polygamists to secure consistent and affordable housing and avoid having their assets seized by the government, should another raid occur (Bradley, 1993).

To this day, Johnson is widely considered as being a kind and fair prophet in the community, a sort of “man of the people” in comparison to the leaders who came after him, whose memory they hold dear. In 2006, newly apostatized Winston Blackmore, who led the FLDS in Bountiful, Canada, financed a statue to commemorate the raid in Short Creek and the freedom it brought to Mormon polygamists in the United States (Bradley, 1993; Hanson, 2015a; Hanson, 2015b; The Fifth Estate, 2017).²³⁰ There are other former FLDS members who remember the history of the Short Creek community differently.

²²⁹ Two families called “the Roundys” moved from Colorado to Short Creek after the 1953 raid (Congressional Subcommittee Raid Report, 1955, p. 68).

²³⁰ When Warren Jeffs rose to power, he chose James Oler as Bishop in Canada to follow which resulted in a split between those who followed James Oler under the FLDS Prophet Warren Jeffs and those who followed Winston Blackmore, including Blackmore’s large family (Bradley, 1993).

Carolyn and Flora Jessop recall their experiences during the Johnson era as one of intense patriarchal repression. In an interview conducted by Canadian lawyers, Carolyn Jessop explained that one common practice that men used to keep their wives in the community was by putting their cars in their wives' names without licensing or insuring the vehicle. That way, it would not be difficult for a woman to travel through the community without being hassled by the Colorado City Marshals but if they were to travel further out of town, the missing license and lack of insurance would make it almost impossible to not get pulled over by outside police (Hanson, 2015c). Speaking to a local news network in Phoenix, Arizona, Flora Jessop said that her father raped her as a child living in Short Creek in the 1970s. At fourteen-years-old, Flora went to the Colorado City Marshals seeking help, and they told her that her best option to exit her situation was to get married to leave her abusive home (ABC15 Arizona, 2017).

Another former FLDS member and Mormon historian Benjamin Bistline dates problems of institutional corruption and child abuse even further back in Short Creek history, not long after the 1953 raid, when the son of Short Creek patriarch John Y. Barlow and his fourth wife, Martha Jessop, Sam Barlow, began operating as a "peace officer" on behalf of a fictitious entity known as the "The Colorado City Law Enforcement Agency" (Bistline, 2004, pp. 91-92). Without any civil form of recognition of authority, "encouraged and supported by Leroy Johnson," the FLDS Church gave Sam Barlow a fake badge and left it up to his personal discretion to "run the undesirable boys out of town, forcing them to go to the neighboring communities and fend for themselves as best they could" (2004: pp. 91-92). With Sam Barlow as leader, the "Teenage Chastity Patrol" persisted and overlapped with "Uncle Roy's Boys" during the Johnson era to

“Uncle Warren’s Sons of Helaman” during Rulon Jeffs’ reign²³¹ and into the Warren Jeffs era. Through the method of “trumping up some criminal charge against the boy,” Barlow would select boys himself, some as young as thirteen, to “eliminate from society. He would then harass the offender (under his peace officer status) until finally he would leave” (Bistline, 2004, p. 92).²³²

Under Leroy Johnson’s regime (1986-2002), which controlled the local police in the wake of the 1953 raid, FLDS membership in Short Creek grew from approximately 400 to a staggering 8,000 to 10,000 people at its peak (Young, 2008). In the following decades, there were dramatic changes within their own political, economic, and cultural governance, which laid the groundwork for Warren Jeffs’ rise to power and future state interventions to curb it. The most significant of these changes occurred in 1985. Most notably, the Short Creek community had for decades been governed by a priesthood council of men, all of whom had been excommunicated from the LDS church, but as the council members died off, new members were not appointed, and the council was permanently dismantled (Park, 2020).²³³

²³¹ Historian and former member of the FLDS, Ben Bistline (2004) suggests that violence in the 1980s increased significantly upon Barlow’s recruitment of some of the following young men in the community: Jerry Jessop, Stanley Jessop, Nephi Barlow, J.L. Jessop, and Joe Timpson.

²³² Illustrating the degree to which many of the FLDS are connected to the “outside” world, in addition to serving as Short Creek’s first law enforcement officer, Sam Barlow later became the Mohave County deputy Sheriff from 1966-1985 (Bistline, 2004). Between his time serving as a Colorado City Marshal and as deputy Sheriff, Bistline (2004) claims that in the 1980s and 1990s, Sam Barlow had 8 men from the FLDS incarcerated for extended periods of time for false sex crimes charges and now: “These men are non-persons, they never existed” (p. 121).

²³³ As a result, there was a split based on political differences. Those who wanted to maintain a Priesthood Council of twelve men to govern and decide who to appoint wives to moved approximately a mile away from Short Creek in what is now known today as the Centennial Park Group, overseen by the Prophet William Timpson Jessop. The FLDS stayed in Short Creek to live and be governed by “The One-Man Rule,” so that only the prophet could appoint wives to members of the group. The FLDS are commonly referred to as “the First Ward” and Centennial Park is “the Second Ward,” based on their split (Survivor’s Podcast, 2018e).

After Johnson passed away in 1986, the prophet's former accountant, Rulon Timpson Jeffs, was ordained as prophet of the FLDS, leading to numerous changes in the church. Unlike Johnson, who had resided in Short Creek, Jeffs began governing Short Creek, like all the FLDS outposts,²³⁴ from Salt Lake City.²³⁵ Following the same trend as his predecessor, however, Rulon Jeffs married at least 65 women and had at least 65 children from these wives, including Warren Jeffs (Dretzen & McNally, 2021; Goodwyn, Berkes, & Walters, 2005). Warren Jeffs spent the early years of his life in Salt Lake Valley in a community called Little Cottonwood Canyon, where he got his first chance to start influencing his youngest members through education (Colvin, 2019; Jessop & Palmer, 2007; Jessop & Palmer, 2009; Musser, 2013; Wall, 2008).

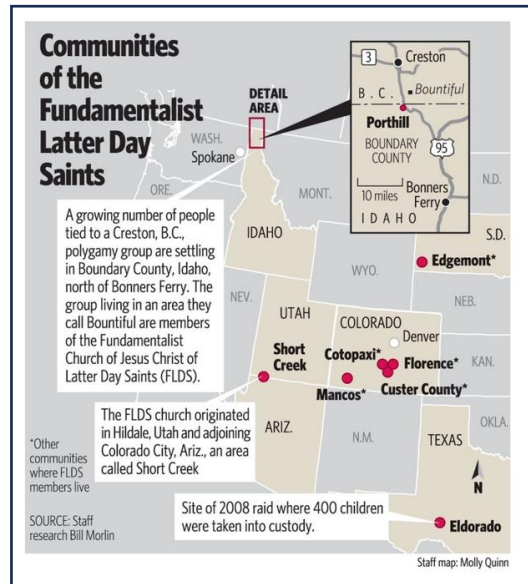


Figure 5. FLDS Outposts in the United States and Canada (Morlin 2009).

²³⁴ See Figure 5., bottom of p. 252.

²³⁵ In 1955, members of the FLDS who testified before Congress claimed that there were between 2,500 to 5,000 followers living among the Salt Lake group alone (Congressional Subcommittee Raid Report, 1955, p. 11).

Born in 1955 to Rulon's fifth wife, Marilyn Steed,²³⁶ Warren's mother had always sought to raise her son in a manner that would elevate his political status within the family because she believed it to be a miracle that he had survived after being born prematurely (Jeffs, 2009). Whereas Marilyn Steed saw her son as a miracle, during his childhood, he was subject to accusations from multiple family members who claim that he had sexually abused them, some of whom took their own lives,²³⁷ long before he became known in the media as a sexual predator in the early 2000s (Jeffs, 2009).

Although rumors persist among FLDS apostates that he had almost been kicked out of the community for his actions, in 1976, when Warren was 21 years old, his father appointed him as principal of Alta Academy²³⁸ in Little Cottonwood Canyon outside of Salt Lake City (Jeffs, 2009). Around this time, Jeffs was married to his first wife, a high-ranking member of the LDS church, before he divorced her to live polygamy, after she refused (Bradley, 1993). During his 22 years in the position, during which he acquired at least seven wives, Jeffs was responsible for both educating and disciplining the children of all the FLDS elite. He used his status to molest numerous students, many of whom included his nephews and own children between the ages of 5-7-years-old, often in his office or a bathroom in the basement of Alta Academy (Hansen Park, 2017b; Hansen Park, 2017c; Jeffs, 2009; Jeffs, 2015).

²³⁶ According to Elissa Wall (2008), whose mother is a Steed, the Steed family is among those in the FLDS that is considered "royalty."

²³⁷ Warren Jeffs first public accuser was his nephew, Brent Jeffs, the son of one of Jeffs' brothers. After coming out about his abuse, two of Brent's other brothers also came forward about their abuse before eventually committing suicide.

²³⁸ Alta Academy was a school for the FLDS elite children in the Salt Lake area, where students would take classes on the main floor and upstairs there was a birthing clinic for pregnant mothers, staffed by an FLDS midwife.

Warren had great authority as instructor to the future adults of the elite FLDS. As an instructor, Warren taught an anti-scientific worldview to both boys and girls; a gendered curriculum consisting of Priesthood History classes and “wife training” to help young FLDS girls how to prepare to be good plural wives, which glorified the cruel arithmetic of Mormon polygamy (Jessop & Palmer 2007; Musser 2013). While some former FLDS members have reported that FLDS students are often taught to believe that the Holocaust never happened (The Primer, 2006, p. 18), Rulon Jeffs’ 19th wife, Rebecca Musser, who was a student of Warren, said that at Alta Academy, he often referenced Nazi Germany²³⁹ as a metaphor for the 1953 raid in their Priesthood history class, warning students that “governments regularly lied, terrorized, and exterminated people like us” (Musser, 2013, p. 53).²⁴⁰ As this section will demonstrate, drawing this false equivalency became a powerful tool for the FLDS, as they sought to discount the fact that the anti-trafficking interventions in their towns were directed at the community’s practice of underage marriage.

Warren Jeffs’ early influence on the FLDS escalated when his father had a stroke in 1998. As counselor to the church leader and son of the prophet, Warren seized on his position to take Rulon’s place and started speaking to the church as his father’s direct

²³⁹ According to Rulon Jeffs’ 19th wife, Rebecca Musser, when she was growing up a popular text read among the elite FLDS was *The Hiding Place* (1971) by Corrie Ten Boom. Musser explains the plot of the book reinforced what Warren Jeffs was teaching in history class at Alta Academy, as it was about Corrie’s experience living in Holland under Nazi Germany occupation, whose family was caught hiding Jewish people in their home and sent to federal prison.

²⁴⁰ Ironically, at the same time he raised criticisms of the authoritarian policies of the Third Reich, Jeffs explicitly taught homophobic and racist theology to his students. Equating racial miscegenation with sinfulness, he spread the belief that the Black people were descendants of Cain who had survived the great flood on Noah’s ark to serve as representatives of Satan on earth: [Cain] was cursed with a Black skin and he is the father of the Negro people. ... He is used by the devil, as a mortal man, to do great evils. ... If you, young people, were to marry a Negro, you could not be a priesthood person, even if you repented. You could not stay in this work” (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2023).

mouthpiece.²⁴¹ In his father's name, Warren began arranging numerous underage marriages to Rulon and other men in the community, which some speculate was so that he could acquire his father's when he died and manipulate other patriarchs (Musser, 2013; Wall, 2008). As his father became increasingly debilitated, Warren's influence in the church continued to grow. Perhaps, most significantly, after it was announced that the 2000 Winter Olympics would be held in Salt Lake City, Rulon and Warren told FLDS followers that this was a sign of the imminent apocalypse, prompting a mass migration of FLDS to Short Creek in the years leading up to the event.

Around the time the Alta Academy was closed, the Jeffs' prediction of the forthcoming end of times prompted many of the FLDS in Salt Lake area liquidated their corporate and private assets, took out large loans in their own names on behalf of the church, uprooted their families, and began a mass exodus to Short Creek.²⁴² By the year 2000, the Jeffs had moved to Short Creek and Warren began to separate families and expel patriarchs from their families, while the marriage rate was skyrocketed under his leadership. According to FLDS apostate and Rulon Jeffs' 19th wife, Rebecca Musser, 60% of the FLDS population was already under the age of 16 even before Warren Jeffs began performing upwards of 20 weddings per week while his father was still prophet (Musser, 2013, p. 124).

²⁴¹ In a 2020 podcast interview, Warren Jeffs' ex-bodyguard, Willie Jessop, said that to understand what happened in the FLDS Church from this point forward, "go get the movie Weekend at Bernie's if you want to look at what Warren did to his father before he died" (Ventry & Sanders, 2020a).

²⁴² Part of this mass exodus included separating many FLDS men from their families and sending them on "repentance missions," while reassigning their wives and children to other more "worthy" men in the group. Elissa Wall was within one of the FLDS families impacted by this separation. Elissa was only 13 years old when she and her mother, Sharon Steed, were taken from Lloyd Wall in Salt Lake and reassigned to live with Fred Jessop, the bishop in Short Creek (Wall, 2008).

With the help of FLDS lawyers, Warren took control of the UEP trust from his father²⁴³ and began to oversee hundreds of millions of dollars in land, real estate, and businesses. During this time, he treated the UEP trust as his personal bank account, selling and liquidating land, housing, and business assets owned by the church to help him build up properties outside of Short Creek for his most elite followers. Jeffs also used the communal trust to buy expensive vehicles, travel across the country, launder money to the city's shared water utility, and purchase new materials for his YFZ compound being built in Texas. In turn, many faithful members of the FLDS went deeply into debt, losing their businesses, their homes, their cars, their families, and their faith (Musser, 2013).

As more and more patriarchs were expelled from the community, their wives and daughters were reassigned to other FLDS men (DeLynn, 2022; Hansen Park, 2017b; Jeffs, 2017; Musser, 2013). Whereas these community members had, up to this point, been able to trace their family lineage back for generations, Jeffs' forced them to destroy any records of their ancestry and take on the last name of their new fathers and husbands (Wall, 2008). Without these connections or protection of a stable social safety net, it was not long before the age of marriable FLDS women started dropping significantly (Musser, 2013).

To expand the pool of marriable women, the trafficking of FLDS girls from Short Creek to outposts in Bountiful, Canada and later El Dorado, Texas began to increase

²⁴³ For over half a century, the UEP controlled all the land in Colorado City and Hildale, including the deeds to people's homes (Bistline, 2004; Bradley, 1993; Elford-Argent, 2022). Historically, the FLDS paid into the UEP through donating their time and labor to Saturday work projects and church-owned family businesses. In 1998 Warren Jeffs reformed the private UEP Trust into a charitable trust to be overseen by Utah AG with the help of FLDS lawyers (Jenkins, 2014; Mike Watkiss, 2011; Morgan, 2014).

(Braham, 2014; Burton, 2019; DeLynn, 2022); reflecting the “cruel arithmetic” that legal scholar Craig Jones (2012) argues is required to maintain Mormon polygamy in closed off communities. Even if the 12- and 13-year-old girls being married off to old men were to refuse, it is unclear where they would have turned to for help. Many of their biological fathers had been kicked out of the group and to call the police in Short Creek about this issue would have proved futile, given that all the Colorado City Marshals²⁴⁴ were acting on behalf of the enforcement arm of the FLDS Church under the complete authority of the Jeffs family.²⁴⁵

After Rulon Jeffs passed away in 2002, Warren Jeffs quickly declared himself as the new prophet to the dismay of many people living in the community. In particular, the Barlow boys, who envisioned their family bloodline as positioned next in line to lead the community (Bistline, 2004). Within the span of weeks, Warren Jeffs had told all the elite FLDS men, “hands off my father’s wives,” and married almost all of Rulon’s widows²⁴⁶ in secret ceremonies, including his own mother (Musser, 2013). FLDS apostate Leona Bateman, who lives in Short Creek today, explained that initially Warren Jeffs’ leadership was a welcome and hopeful change for many of the women and children in Short Creek (Geier, 2019). Yet, the problem of domestic violence became nearly unbearable for many families in the community, particularly once they began

²⁴⁴ In 2016, the Arizona Peace Officers Standards and Training (AZ POST) Board decertified 6 Colorado City Marshals for failure to uphold the laws of the land. Law enforcement officials included Daniel N. Musser, Hyrum S. Roundy, Samuel E. Johnson, Jeremiah H. Darger, Jacob L. Barlow Jr., and Daniel R. Barlow (Kelly & Nichols, 2022).

²⁴⁵ Based on their own records, the Colorado City Marshals had to decertify dozens of police for behaviors ranging from child sexual abuse to lying under oath to “polygamous bias” interfering with an officer’s ability to enforce the law (see Kelly & Nichols, 2022 above).

²⁴⁶ One ran away and one went to one of his brothers; not sure how many because Rulon had 65 total (known) in his lifetime, but some could have died (Musser, 2013).

consolidating the group into larger families on the Arizona-Utah border in extremely tight quarters (Wall, 2008).

Under these conditions, Jeffs encouraged women and children to come to him and report if their Priesthood head or another male had laid a hand on them. Upon receiving a report of abuse, at first, Warren Jeffs would separate men temporarily to provide a temporary “cooling off” period between them and the rest of their family. As time went on, however, men who were supposed to be sent away temporarily were gone for longer and longer periods before they stopped being reunited with their families altogether (Geier, 2019; Wall, 2008). While at first, he began ejecting some of the weakest men from the community (Hansen Park, 2017h), Jeffs further consolidated his power, by swaying political influence through re-arranging marriages (Jeffs, 2017) and entire family structures (Coastline Church, 2020; Roberts & Soncrant, 2020) and hijacking resources (DOJ Injunctive Order, 2017; Shurtleff & Goddard, 2006). As the number of people in town began to dwindle, FLDS members became increasingly skeptical and disillusioned by their prophet’s intentions and even disillusioned as Leona Bateman (Geier, 2019) explained in a podcast interview: “When this first started happening and he started kicking people out the women thought their husband would go for a month and he’d be back... but when they started never coming back people just started getting discouraged and realized that it’s fraud.”²⁴⁷

²⁴⁷ In 2015, Leona Bateman’s son, Randee Bateman, committed suicide at age 30, a month after she and the rest of the family had moved back to Short Creek. When Randee was 15, Leona Bateman and her husband kicked him out of their home and the community at the direction of the FLDS Church and he became part of the intergenerational group of young men kicked out of the community known as the “Lost Boys.” For the next 15 years, as one of these Lost Boys, being homeless, shunned, and without a lifeline, Randee turned to alcohol and drugs until Leona and her husband left Short Creek in 2012, which permitted Randee to see them for the first time in over a decade (Johnson, 2018).

Despite the rapid and dramatic changes that had occurred in the two years following the death of his father, the extent of Warren Jeffs' ambition and depravity had yet to be revealed. There was a turning point for the FLDS on Saturday January 10th, 2004, at the Leroy S. Johnson meetinghouse. That morning, Shirlee Draper,²⁴⁸ recalled being in the company of 3,000 other people during their regularly scheduled Saturday work project meeting, when Warren Jeffs expelled 21 of the most prominent patriarchs from the community for being "master deceivers," no longer worthy of looking over their families (Ventry & Sanders, 2020a).

Although Warren Jeffs had been on the run from the FBI for nearly a year, no one challenged Warren Jeffs as he ejected powerful patriarchs from the church, which is why Draper was convinced that the people in Short Creek had "drank the Kool-Aid," referencing the mass suicide of Jim Jones and his followers of the California-based People's Temple group in 1978 (Creekers Foundation, 2018a). In front of many of their wives and children, he even dismissed some of his own brothers,²⁴⁹ as well as longtime residents Isaac Wyler, Ross Chatwin, and several of the Barlow brothers, including Dan Barlow, the town's longtime mayor (Bistline, 2004; Bradley, 1993; Mike Watkiss, 2011a). Upon observing the quick removal of the heads of these massive families, Shirlee Draper recalls thinking that this moment: "was a signal that everyone was disposable" (Ventry & Sanders, 2020a).

²⁴⁸ Shirlee left the next month with her four small children (Creeker's Foundation, 2018; Solomon, 2021). While her husband and sister wife (who is also her younger, biological sister) were out shopping in another town one day, Shirlee seized on her opportunity to leave with the help of one of her brothers, who arrived with a U-Haul trailer to pack. Shirlee was later met in St. George by her parents and her sister-in-law, Donia, who helped her unpack before returning to Short Creek in the middle of the night (Ventry & Sanders, 2020a).

²⁴⁹ David Jeffs and Hyrum Jeffs were among two of the four brothers Warren expelled (Hanson, 2015d; Ventry & Sanders, 2020a).

Unlike Jeffs' initial excommunications after becoming prophet, the January 2004 event transformed the political, economic, and cultural landscape of the town. In an instant, the remaining members of the FLDS were quick to turn on the new apostates (Perkins, 2004; Ventry & Sanders, 2020d),²⁵⁰ as all their church-controlled bank accounts were shut down and they were denied the ability to make last minute purchases before leaving town. Because the men were forced to leave, their wives and children became a currency for Jeffs to reassign to other men who were loyal to him.²⁵¹ According to FLDS apostate Dan Barlow, a grandson of the expelled mayor, the tension in the community was palpable:

When men first started getting kicked out the men that were losing their families- a lot of them were lesser than in the social groups so they weren't high priorities, they weren't men who were well respected, so it wasn't a shock when they left- it wasn't like a big gap. But fast forward to when I was 14 and 15-years-old-men near and dear to us as family-men well respected in the community were being kicked out and losing their families and things got really serious. There was almost a derogatory air about the community. Everything was so quiet. (Hansen Park, 2017h)

²⁵⁰ For example, FLDS workers at the feed store suddenly refused to sell Isaac Wyler hay for his horses. According to Wyler, they said to him, "It'll be a cold day in hell before we ever load you with hay again!" (Ventry & Sanders 2020d). Additionally, they were verbally harassed and had their property vandalized by FLDS members who slashed the tires of their trucks and snuck dead animals into their vehicles.

²⁵¹ Days following the mass expulsion, new FLDS apostate, Ross Chatwin, held a press conference in front of his UEP Trust-owned home with one of his wives, Lori Chatwin, and dozens of their children at his side who ultimately chose to remain together as a family unit. During the press conference, Chatwin brandished a copy of *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* and denounced Warren Jeffs' authoritarian style of leadership, claiming that he did not want "a Hitler-like dictator" running the Short Creek community (Perkins, 2004).

Amidst growing skepticism of his authority among the apostates and remaining patriarchs and women of the community, Jeffs set out to establish a more exclusive community where he would be insulated from the dissension of his followers and criminalization. He proceeded to strip the blessings of the priesthood from Short Creek, leaving the residents even more powerless to his will. In addition to attacking the well-being of people outside of his family, he told all his wives who had borne children that they were unworthy of living in the new Zion, which was devastating to them, and tasked his other childless wives as caretakers of his children (Jeffs, 2015; Roberts & Soncrant, 2020). In one night, all these children were removed from Short Creek, who were under the age of eight-years-old and driven to the newly established “R-17,” which was code for one of many FLDS “lands of refuge” approximately 17 hours from Short Creek (Jeffs, 2015).

Before transporting his children, Jeffs had already ordered the construction of a residential compound in El Dorado, Texas, where he gradually called his most loyal adult members to follow him (Hansen Park, 2015b; Hansen Park, 2015c; Hansen Park, 2017g; Hansen Park, 2018). Exacerbating the poverty of the people living in Short Creek, Jeffs ordered weekly shipments of his followers’ resources from Short Creek, as well as other men’s young sons, who were sent to build the YFZ compound (Dretzen & McNally, 2021; Elford-Argent, 2022). In addition to living quarters and other structures, a temple extremely similar to the original that had been constructed in Nauvoo under the leadership of Joseph Smith was established. Although Jeffs characterized this compound as being the most desirable location on earth for the women and children who were

transported there, FLDS apostates like Jena Jones described life on the YFZ as well as other “elite” compounds in Mancos, Colorado and Pringle, South Dakota, as being highly structured and dehumanizing for Jeffs’ wives:

He did this so that he could say, ‘16, 24, R17’ and that means wife 16 goes in room 24 in R17 which was the compound code for YFZ in Texas... So, you have R21 is the one in Colorado and he had different numbers as code so that he could communicate with everybody. I tell that story and people get really upset because the women were just given numbers and referred to as numbers. But I’ve had people on the tour from the community with me that’ve said, ‘they didn’t just number the wives. They numbered all of us.’ So, there was a whole caste system. (Coastline Church, 2020)

After his nephew filed a lawsuit against Jeffs for sexually assaulting him when he was a student at Alta Academy, the FLDS prophet went on the run using the resources of the church to visit various secret compounds he had established throughout the western United States (Jeffs, 2009). Around this time, Jeffs began instructing teenage boys and young men in the missionary program for boys in Short Creek to serve on a church security team (Bistline, 2004; DOJ Injunctive Order, 2017), while hundreds of others were excommunicated.²⁵²

²⁵² For example, FLDS apostate Penny Peterson left Short Creek as a girl in the 1970s to escape being placed in an arranged marriage and has since been an outspoken advocate for children who may be trapped in these conditions (Mike Watkiss, 2008). In a television interview, she explained that one method of expelling boys who pose a sexual threat to other men in the community out of town is through the Colorado City Marshals, who may “chase them out of town with a warrant they can’t afford to pay” (Mike Watkiss, 2008). According to Angel Barnett, around 500 boys were kicked out of the FLDS in the following years

This group worked in conjunction with the Colorado City Marshals, who possess unique authoritative powers to police both sides of the Arizona-Utah border, overseeing approximately 8,000 to 10,000 residents in Colorado City, Hildale, Centennial Park, and Kanab (Survivor’s Podcast, 2018e). Once the missionary boys began operating as church security on behalf of the marshals, the lines between federal policing and church security became increasingly blurred until eventually, these two groups became known to town locals colloquially as the “God Squad.” Based on an excerpt issued from the 2017 Injunctive Order, the evolution of the God Squad occurred in the following manner:

In 2004, the FLDS Church organized a formal security force for purposes of providing protection to FLDS Church leaders and to keep the leadership informed as to events taking place in the community. A primary purpose of the FLDS Church security force was to afford leaders an opportunity and time to escape intervention from outside law enforcement. By 2007, the FLDS Church security had expanded to several hundred members, some of whom were Colorado City Marshals (CCMO) and organized into teams assigned to shifts and captains. City-owned cameras located on city property were connected to a control room at the FLDS Church ‘Meetinghouse.’ Church officials, with direct assistance from CCMO officers, were able to monitor attendance at meetings and monitor comings and goings within the community. Both CCMO officers and Church officials surveilled non-FLDS Church residents, UEP Trust representatives, and county law enforcement” (Injunctive Decree, 2018, pp. 9-10).

because Jeffs knew girls in the community would be attracted to boys their own age, which threatened his ability to trade them as currency for loyalty to his followers (Shreveport Community Church, 2022).

Benjamin Bistline's (2004) historical timeline complicates the SCDC narrative, which describes the community as idyllic and uncorrupted before Warren Jeffs rose to power in Short Creek. As this section has demonstrated, many of the actions taken by this prophet were hardly unique to his approach to governing Short Creek. Like Warren, his previous two predecessors took underage wives, kicked people out of their homes, off the land, and voted in favor of the "One-Man-Rule" regarding the law of placement marriage²⁵³ which would eventually help Warren Jeffs take over the people (Bistline, 2004, p. 100). He also solidified his power by establishing new, secret communities in isolated areas by controlling the God Squad to insulate himself and his loyal followers from criminalization, which has been a continuous trend since Leroy Johnson became prophet after the 1953 raid and formed the "teenage chastity patrol" (Bistline, 2004). Even though these behaviors have characterized the leadership of the FLDS in Short Creek since at least the 1953 raid, however, the dominant narrative projected by the apostates who have assumed control of the town maintains that these features were unique to Warren Jeffs' regime.²⁵⁴

Conclusion

Just as the LDS have distanced themselves from the practice of polygamy and the crimes associated with the FLDS to gain legitimacy in the mainstream political,

²⁵³ Under the one-man rule, only the prophet of the church can appoint people to be married (Jeffs, 2009).

²⁵⁴ This dominant narrative contradicts perspectives of FLDS apostates such as Rebecca Musser (2013), who states in her memoir: "60% of the FLDS population was under the age of 16 when Warren Jeffs began performing upwards of 20 weddings per week" (Musser, 2013, p. 124). She explains that it was not long before the age of marriable FLDS women started dropping significantly and the trafficking of young girls from Bountiful to Short Creek began to increase (Musser, 2013).

economic, and cultural landscape of the United States, the people who have returned to Short Creek after leaving or being sent away by the church have taken steps to distance themselves from the FLDS Church as it came to be understood under Warren Jeffs. Attributing the problems in this town to a uniquely oppressive leader and discriminatory criminal justice system, criticisms of Warren Jeffs and the US government come from insiders and outsiders alike, while overlooking the reality of the cruel arithmetic that arises from the structure of intergenerational Mormon polygamy itself. In doing so, the adults who live and own property in Short Creek today have been able to create space between themselves and the injustices associated with the FLDS Church.

Through sharing their childhood and early adult experiences before Warren Jeffs became prophet, which come from a perspective of privileged nostalgia that does not reflect the voices of many of the people who were victimized by past regimes and the social structures they maintained, these apostates have risen to positions of authority over the town's history. This is because from this unique positionality as both insiders and outsiders, these apostates appear as both victims who are inculpable for the crimes of their forerunners, but also as survivors,²⁵⁵ equipped with the knowledge to serve the community today. In the same way white ignorance displaces the history of white supremacy to the benefit racial capitalism's contemporaries; by substituting the Short Creek community's history of facilitating the exploitation of children with a persecution myth, one that appeals to and resonates with white upper and middle-class Christian

²⁵⁵ In a sex trafficking glossary of terms published by TRUST, the difference between a victim and survivor is largely dependent upon where they are in their process to recovery from harms associated with trafficking: "Victim indicates that a crime has occurred, and that assistance is needed. Survivor has therapeutic value and generally refers to someone further in the recovery process" (Training and Resources United to Stop Trafficking, nd, p. 1).

Americans through progressive language, those engaged in anti-trafficking efforts, including some apostates themselves, are able to frame the trafficking problem in a way that serves their own interests.

In conjunction with the SCDC, who have helped shape and control the narrative about the history of Short Creek, apostates have compared their experiences being oppressed by Warren Jeffs with the experiences of other religious and ethnic groups who have been oppressed by authoritarian governments. Ranging from African Americans during the civil rights movement, to those living under the Stalin regime, to victims of the Third Reich, apostates have drawn on the experiences of people who have been oppressed by authoritarian regimes to a far greater extent than themselves to exaggerate their innocence through the institutions that comprise the NPIC.²⁵⁶

Name:	Short Creek Raid	Yearning For Zion (YFZ) Ranch Raid
Date:	July 26th, 1953	April 3rd, 2008
Location:	Short Creek, AZ	El Dorado, TX
State Actors Involved:	Arizona Governor Howard Pyle US National Guard from St. George AZ Highway Patrol Mohave County Sheriff Frank Porter; Short Creek Deputy Sheriff Alfonso Nyborg Social Workers Child Protective Services Attorneys Judges Liquor control agents	The Texas Rangers, Schleicher, Texas County Sheriff David Doran, Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott, Texas Governor Rick Perry, The Texas Governor's Division for Emergency Management, Department of Public Safety and Emergency Management, Department of Family and Protective Services, Department of Aging and Disability Services, Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services, Health and Human Services Commission, Texas Forestry Services, Texas Child and Family Services, the San Angelo Independent School

²⁵⁶ See Figure 6 above.

		District, and military personnel from Goodfellow Air Force Base
Non-State Actors Involved:	Journalists and photographers from <i>The Arizona Republic</i> , <i>The Arizona Daily Star</i> , <i>The Associated Press</i> , and <i>Life Magazine</i> ; The Latter-Day Saints Church Council of Twelve; Arizona Mormon Bishops and Relief Society Presidents in the cities of Phoenix and Mesa.	The Salvation Army, FLDS apostates Rebecca Wall, Elissa Wall, and Flora Jessop, <i>The El Dorado Times</i> , local domestic violence shelters, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs), 33-year-old African American woman named Rozita Swinton.
FLDS Arrested:	36 men; 8 women.	0.
Children Taken into Custody:	263 children.	465 children, 26 of which were “disputed minors,” and 2 who were born while in Texas state custody.

Figure 6. Arizona Human Trafficking Council Coalitions, Past and Present

The next chapter examines how apostates have compared their experiences from the FLDS during the Warren Jeffs regime to the experiences of Jewish refugees during the Third Reich under Adolph Hitler through the lens of the NPIC. Although these ideas

appear to be, on the surface, intended to better illustrate the problems there, by comparing the lives of child trafficking victims at the YFZ and in Short Creek in the early 2000s to the concentration camp deaths of six million Jews murdered in the world's first industrial genocide, nonprofit leaders, board trustees, and politicians have been able to exploit the public's collective ignorance of these histories. This anti-trafficking coalition's projection of this false narrative protects the community from ongoing crimes of trafficking by adult men and women through the arranged marriage and child rape of underage plural wives in Short Creek, while enabling the SCDC to garner power and profit in service of the NPIC.

CHAPTER 6

THE SHORT CREEK DREAM CENTER

Introduction

The previous chapter described how the white slavery movement of the 19th and 20th centuries compared the plight of women and girls in Mormon polygamy to imagined ideas of African Americans held in chattel slavery. Through the lens of white ignorance, it revealed that while they drew on the language of abolition to project a progressive image, their approach effectively downplayed the coercive and traumatic experiences of enslaved peoples, to exaggerate those of Mormon polygamists and make the cause of the anti-white slavery movement appear more urgent and righteous. In a similar vein, this chapter translates this pedagogical proposition to the context of Short Creek today, where the local anti-trafficking coalition has projected a false equivalency between the trafficking experiences of the FLDS under Warren Jeffs to the victims of the Holocaust.

The nonprofit industrial complex (NPIC) framework (INCITE!, 2017) suggests that some anti-trafficking groups may be more motivated to raise money and conduct research to advance self-interested political agendas, than learn how to identify the complexity of trafficking victims' lived experiences and long-term needs. As previous chapters have demonstrated thus far, the concept of trafficking is not only malleable to changing discourse around sex, race, gender, and migration, but it is also constantly expanding to encompass more behaviors. Therefore, there is a need to interrogate the discourses and practices of anti-trafficking coalitions through the lens of white ignorance (Mills, 2007), to reveal how ahistorical narratives are deployed to rationalize harmful interventions through raceless and colorblind language.

Arizona's anti-trafficking movement claims to be one of the most effective in the country (Governor's Office for Youth, Faith, and Family, 2019). However, the evidence displayed in this chapter suggests that the Arizona Governor's Human Trafficking Council (AZHTC) and allied actors are less concerned about the problem of trafficking in Arizona, as much as they are concerned about controlling how the public understands the nature and scope of the problem; specifically, who are trafficking victims, who look like traffickers, and the punishing blueprint that follows these definitions, because their capacity to garner support is dependent upon the nature of this representation.

This chapter argues that the surprisingly limited amount of information the AZHTC has offered to Arizona residents documenting the existence of human trafficking on the state's Northern border (Arizona Governor's Human Trafficking Council Meeting Minutes, 2019) harms all Arizonans because the positionality of the people who control the narrative of trafficking there are incentivized to mischaracterize it. As previously mentioned, the SCDC is allowed to operate at the discretion of a handful of people who grew up in the Short Creek community in the Fundamentalist Latter Day Saints (FLDS) Church; some of whom gained control over the United Effort Plan (UEP) trust after Warren Jeffs was incarcerated and are incentivized to portray the trafficking problem and how to solve it in a manner that serves their own interests years after they had apostatized from the church.

A significant number of the people in this small group of members from the community are middle to upper class white women (Creekers Foundation, 2018; Geier, 2019; Solomon, 2021; The Long Story of Short Creek, 2021; The Long Story of Short Creek, 2021a) who have figured out how to convey the unique experiences of human

trafficking among the FLDS in Arizona²⁵⁷ to outsiders, who have little to no knowledge of the historically closed off community of Short Creek, nor the nature and scope of the trafficking problem as it relates to a specific historical narrative about the community there (Brian D. Steele, 2018i; Radius Church, 2021; Servolution, 2018). Through the experiences of oppressed groups, the public *is* familiar with, such as African Americans during the US Civil Rights movement and Jews during the Holocaust, there is a narrative about human trafficking being generated about the FLDS in Short Creek. Because this narrative is being conveyed by the people of the SCDC, however, who work on behalf of the Arizona anti-trafficking coalition, the AZHTC, its coherence needs to be deeply unsettled.

The concept of “white normativity” allows us to understand how white ignorance is cultivated by the NPIC via the SCDC, as it is linked to a specific understanding of history that depicts white people as being innocent and virtuous, and their position of dominance as natural and deserved (Mills, 2007). According to critical race scholar Robin D’Angelo, white normativity rests on the “definition of whites as the norm or standard for humans, and people of color as a deviation from that norm” (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 25). In the era of colorblindness, this form of racism has not replaced the old “Jim Crow racism” that was mobilized against by the civil rights movement of the 19th century, but it has “subtly transformed its character” in a manner that reproduces a similar political, economic, and cultural structure that erases the contemporary

²⁵⁷ These include people like UEP Trust President and Cherish Families nonprofit leader, Shirlee Draper, Creeker’s Foundation President Leona Bateman, Voices for Dignity nonprofit board members Norma Richter and Esther Bistline, Hildale Mayor Donia Jessop, and nonprofit leader and face of the SCDC, Briell Decker, who was trafficked into marriage with Warren Jeffs when she was a teenager shortly before he went on the run in the early 2000s (Burton 2019; Fear 2021; Fuel Your Legacy Show 2020).

implications of historical injustices (Mills, 2007, p. 28). In other words, “if previously whites were color demarcated as biologically and/or culturally superior, now through a strategic colorblindness they are assimilated as putative equals to the status and situation of nonwhites on terms that negate the need for measures to repair the inequalities of the past” (Mills, 2007, p. 28).

Given the centrality of white normativity in American culture, few outsiders have intimate knowledge of the history of the FLDS in Short Creek and their understanding of the Holocaust and the civil rights movement is limited. This limited historical knowledge about all three groups allows people from the FLDS to convey their experiences under the authority of Warren Jeffs to the experiences of Jewish genocide victims under Adolph Hitler (Musser, 2013; Perkins, 2004; Wall, 2015) or to the experiences of Black civil rights activists (Jessop & Brown, 2009; Mike Watkiss, 2008). Some of the most privileged people who come from the FLDS have cultivated a story about Short Creek’s past that strategically circumvents questions regarding their personal amount of power and authority during this period, as well as their level of culpability for the decimation of hundreds of massive polygamous families and the widespread sexual abuse of children throughout the group that followed.

Central to the production of white ignorance is the cognitive process of how meanings of race are made and conveyed in historical memory. Mills claims that memory is managed at the interstices of collective identity and self-representation, as “there will be an intimate relationship between white identity, white memory, and white amnesia, especially about nonwhite victims” (2007, p. 29). The way that memory is managed impacts how individuals can know and disseminate widespread patterns of ignorance,

what is covered by the media, and what is memorialized in statues, national holidays, and historical textbooks. In the context of Short Creek, the annual Fourth of July celebration, paid for each year by the SCDC (Hope Heroes, 2022), commemorates their independence based on an event that happened much later in the month on July 26th, 1953 (Hansen Park, 2017b; Standing Together, 2020a). Whereas most Americans celebrate their forefathers gaining colonial independence from England, the people of Short Creek commemorate their independence from the US government, when almost everyone removed during the '53 raid returned to the community and they were insulated from the outside for decades to follow due to the public backlash (Bradley, 1993).

Another process through which meanings of race are conveyed is through testimony. It is commonly believed that much of what we know about society is based on listening to people recount their experiences. However, when a social group is labeled as lacking credibility or being untrustworthy, such as sex workers or incarcerated people, they are often treated with suspicion if they are solicited for their perspectives at all. Without accounting for the perspectives of socially accepted sources of credibility and those cast as epistemically suspect, this can result in “a closed circuit of epistemic authority that reproduces white delusions” (Mills, 2007, p. 34). Given that only the experiences of people who identify as victims of trafficking are treated as legitimate and valuable by the anti-trafficking movement, these white delusions shut out testimonies about police violence, sex worker’s rights, strategies for decarceration, and others.

The fact that whites, as a social group, generally see the interests of people of color in opposition to their own, this perspective is directly connected to which ideas are favored and used, as well as amnesia about the past, and hostility towards the testimony

of people of color. This dynamic is reflected in the stories being told by people who have formed an anti-trafficking coalition around the SCDC, including members of the AZHTC, service providers with the SCDC and other local nonprofits, in addition to the people who grew up in the FLDS community. In turn, this chapter considers how the concepts and narratives are championed and deployed by these white people as a social group, and their shared amnesias, misrememberings, distortions, and gaps in knowledge about African Americans, Jews, Mormons, and bourgeois white women in US social movement history.

In the wake of Warren Jeffs' arrest, media, people from the FLDS, and other figures have made references to Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, and Adolph Hitler, as well as references to the underground railroad, modern day slavery, and abolition, to explain the recent history of Short Creek (Cox, 2015; Hopes Heroes, 2022; Musser, 2013; Mike Watkiss, 2008). Together, these references are "jointly contributing to the blindness of the white eye," by reproducing collective white ignorance through racialized perceptions, concepts, historical memories, and testimonies, and through conveying social group interests (Mills, 2007, p. 35). In turn, this chapter seeks to understand how it serves the people from Short Creek politically, economically, and culturally, to use these racial references to develop a story explaining the history of their town by playing on the white ignorance of the American public to illustrate the Warren Jeffs' regime.

To determine how the experiences of African Americans during chattel slavery and the trafficking of Jews during the Holocaust are being compared to the experiences of people from the FLDS in Short Creek to create a story about human trafficking there, the

framework of white ignorance helps take the misinformation and historical distortions informing this narrative to navigate the history of human trafficking among the FLDS, as it has been repeated by the SCDC in private, evangelical Christian settings to explain what happened there. The framework of white ignorance and the wider body of ignorance studies (Alcoff, 2007; Hoagland, 2007; Sharapov, Hoff, & Gerasimov, 2019; Tuana & Sullivan, 2007) help to generate a coherent narrative about the FLDS in Short Creek according to a longstanding government persecution myth about Mormons based on a misunderstanding of the historical evolution of relationships between state and non-state actors, including law enforcement and the LDS Church which, together, reflect the relationships who make the anti-trafficking NPIC function smoothly.

The persecution myth being wielded by the SCDC on behalf of a few powerful people from Short Creek is laced with cultural appropriation and haphazard piecing together of information based on misrecognitions of the experiences of oppressed groups who are well-known to Americans. Drawing on the cultural weight of Black people's experiences during US chattel slavery and the civil rights movement, the experiences of Jews during the Holocaust, and the migration of international war refugees to convey their own, the SCDC tells a story about the community on the Arizona-Utah border, but not one of human trafficking. Instead, the SCDC has learned to convey the political dynamics and social history of the FLDS to other marginalized groups of whom most people in the US are familiar with in terms of how these groups have experienced subjection based on their religion or ethnicity.

The SCDC's stories about Short Creek help displace the significance of the town's nearly century long history of being the center of government investigations and

raids based on the practice of adult men taking child brides to and from the town of Short Creek (Bradley, 1997). This is despite the fact that if the crimes associated with this practice took place in any other Arizona community, they would indisputably amount to the federal human trafficking charges, subjecting a vast network of people to potential prosecution. Instead, with the help of a select group of people from the FLDS, including local city council members, mayors, law enforcement, nonprofit leaders, foundation presidents and land trustees, the SCDC has been able to create a story about human trafficking in Short Creek in a way that contradicts how the PDC frames stories about human trafficking in Phoenix. Because the AZHTC statewide coalition has accepted both narratives based on how they offer support for both the SCDC and the PDC, this speaks to the way the anti-trafficking NPIC operates in Arizona.

The service providers at the SCDC as well as others controlling the narrative of what's happening with the FLDS in Short Creek have used Martin Luther King Jr. (Cox, 2015; Jessop & Brown, 2009) and Adolph Hitler (Coastline Church, 2020; Perkins, 2004) as symbols to communicate political, economic, and cultural meanings of discrimination and fascism as well as diversity, equality, religious freedom, patriotism, and democracy in relation to their community (Short Creek, AZ, field observations, October 1-3rd, 2021). In doing so, they can portray the changes they have enacted as indicators of progress, without criticizing the people living there whose religious practices continue to be conducive to child trafficking in Short Creek, to rationalize the ongoing expansion of the anti-trafficking NPIC through the Dream Center and on behalf of Dream City Church (DCC). The insistence among the people of Short Creek that they should be able to define and govern their community for themselves because they are “not broken” (KDXU 94.9

News Radio 890, 2020) has been broadly and uncritically accepted by the SCDC and the AZHTC. For example, in a podcast interview sponsored by DCC, the now city council representative of Hildale, Utah, Terrill Musser asserted:

If we don't stand up and control the narrative, we're going to lose it to the outside...Warren Jeffs was in power for 6 years...he doesn't get to define us...we the people get to take a stand and say, 'This is our narrative. This is our story. This is our town. What do *we* want?'...that's the spirit of us coming back together and rebuilding our town with the help of people like the Short Creek Dream Center. (Hope Heroes, 2022a)

Because Pastor Brian Steele revealed that the UEP Trustees saw the fact that the people who were coming in and providing services had no knowledge of the community's history as a benefit to the people already living there (Brian D. Steele, 2018i), the complexity and insularity of the history of human trafficking in Short Creek requires a wider range of perspectives to examine this issue. Based on a range of different people's perspectives of FLDS history, the first section of this chapter re-examines the 1953 raid based on testimonial accounts from service providers of the SCDC documenting this history as well as other nonprofit leaders in the community, government officials, Mormon historians, and many people who identify as "apostates" of the FLDS but of whom have little affiliation with the town of Short Creek today so that these views can be examined, collectively, in relation to the narrative being told by

some of the most influential apostates who come from these same groups, many of whom are white, bourgeois women.

To reformulate the dominant narrative being projected about Short Creek's history of religious persecution by the government, this chapter aims to reorient the story by examining how human trafficking has helped this community persist, drawing on data from online interviews (Draper, 2019; Geier, 2019; Hansen Park, 2017; Hansen Park, 2017a; Hansen Park, 2017d; Hansen Park, 2017e Hope Heroes, 2022),²⁵⁸ memoirs (Jeffs, 2017; Jessop & Palmer, 2007; Jessop & Brown, 2009; Musser, 2013), documentaries (Abrahamson, 2018; Berg, 2015; Dretzen & McNally, 2021; Elford-Argent, 2022; Measom & Merten, 2010; Pienecker, 2023; Sacred Groves, 2016), and local news stories with active members of the FLDS (AZ Family Arizona News, 2017, 2022; The Fifth Estate, 2017; Mike Watkiss, 2008, Mike Watkiss, 2008a, Mike Watkiss, 2011, Mike Watkiss, 2011a), former members of the FLDS who are considered "apostates" of the church (ABC15 Arizona, 2017; Eaton, 2023; Johnson, 2018; Matson, 2015), and evangelical Christian members of the SCDC, of whom were invited into this community by apostates and have adopted their narratives (Brian D. Steele, 2018h, 2018i, 2021; Dream City Church, 2019; Radius Church, 2021; Standing Together, 2020; Totally Trailer 2016, 2016a).

The second part of this chapter examines how the religious persecution myth described in the previous section about the 1953 raid was deployed during the 2008

²⁵⁸ While many of the people from the FLDS whose interviews I listened to did not make it into the dissertation itself, I have included a full list of those whose interviews had an impact on my ability to understand the complexity of the people within this historical community in such an isolated geographic region in the references.

Yearning for Zion (YFZ) ranch raid on the FLDS in El Dorado, Texas to enable the FLDS, as a social group, to evade scrutiny for their involvement in widespread child trafficking authorities discovered upon investigating the FLDS on the YFZ Ranch 55 years later. Despite government reports (Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (2008) and documentation from congressional investigative hearings (Congressional Hearing for the Committee on the Judiciary United States Senate, 2008), it was the myth of religious persecution against the FLDS that enabled the SCDC to define the nature and scope of the trafficking problem in Short Creek and, in defining the problem, inform the ensuing interventions in ways that support the interests of some of the most powerful people from that community.

By unsettling assumptions about the persecution of the FLDS in Short Creek, which have been reiterated by the SCDC on their behalf, it becomes clear that rather than project their own critical history of this closed-off group, the SCDC reinforces these historical myths to exploit and amplify widespread the American public's white ignorance of US history based on racialized symbolism, imagery, and discourse about civil rights, Nazi Germany, and anti-government populism. This process opens streams of capital for themselves, and others involved in these anti-trafficking coalitions, by framing the issues and priorities of organizations in a manner that is attractive to white Christian donors to reproduce and expand the anti-trafficking NPIC. Since many academic scholars are familiar with the ideological relationships between Black chattel slavery and human trafficking in US history (Chateauvert, 2013; Maynard, 2015) while, at the same time, being unfamiliar with relationships between Jews and human trafficking in general in US history, they are as susceptible to the reproduction of this form of white ignorance as

white Christian donors, law enforcement, and nonprofits. In summary, this chapter substantiates the NPIC and white ignorance frameworks by offering evidence that the anti-trafficking coalition in Short Creek, centered around the SCDC's colorblind narratives, is less concerned with the issue of human trafficking than with the accumulation of wealth and social capital.

Part I: The 2008 Raid of the Yearning for Zion Ranch and Public Response

The raids on Short Creek and the YFZ ranch received similar, immense public scrutiny despite a 55-year gap and more than 1,000 miles between them.²⁵⁹ The dominant narrative among the FLDS, media, and wider public is that these anti-trafficking interventions were an egregious act of government interference into the private lives of hard working, devoutly religious families. Despite evidence of serious crimes that emerged during the 1953 raid, the dominant narrative projected by people from Short Creek, including service providers affiliated with the SCDC, is that the raid was an overreactive state intervention into the lives of American Christians at the height of the Cold War, traumatizing adults and children through arrest, family separation, and displacement from their community. Since then, this persecution myth has been widely accepted by the American public by focusing on the harms caused by government raids rather than the crimes that prompted the intervention.

²⁵⁹ For example, critiquing the decision of the US government raid the YFZ ranch in Texas based on child sexual assault, liberal-turned-conservative-turned-far-right talk show host Tucker Carlson was proclaimed, "I'm not defending underage marriage at all. I just don't think it's the same thing exactly as pulling a child from a bus stop and sexually assaulting that child. The rapist, in this case, has made a lifelong commitment to live and take care of the person so it is a little different" (Chiu, 2019).

Central to the reproduction of this persecution myth are firsthand and secondhand stories of people who were present during the raid, drawing on the epistemological authority of feminist subjectivity within this context. People from the FLDS have shaped the dominant narrative surrounding the town by producing and participating in television clips (Fox13 News Utah, 2022; Oprah Winfrey Network, 2015), documentaries (Abrahamson, 2018; Elford-Argent, 2022; Pienecker, 2023; Sacred Groves, 2016), radio (Draper, 2019; Hansen Park, 2015; Hansen Park, 2015b; KDXU 94.9 News Radio 890, 2020) and journalistic articles (Duara, 2016; Young, 2008) that have been widely circulated and made available for public consumption. SCDC Pastor, Glyn Jones, one of the original directors of the nonprofit,²⁶⁰ reiterated this history as it was told to him in an online interview:

These are first hand stories I've heard from people that actually lived through it... once they started arresting the men, the leader at the time, a guy named Leroy Johnson, who was the prophet, he started sending men across the crick which is basically the de facto border, the state line, to get back on the North side on the Utah side²⁶¹ and not be over here so you could potentially get arrested. (Standing Together, 2020a)

²⁶⁰ Glyn Jones and his wife, Jena Jones, began intermittently serving the people of Short Creek in 2015 on a mission trip with Grace Reigns Ministry in Lake Havasu, AZ and later decided to sell their California home and move into a luxury RV with their daughter, Hayley, to serve the people of Short Creek full time (Totally Trailer, 2016; Totally Trailer 2016a).

²⁶¹ Only residents on the Arizona side of the border in Short Creek were arrested that day.

Because the events of the 1953 raid have evolved into a sort of folk hero story within FLDS culture, fueled by a government persecution myth about the unwarranted overreach of the Arizona government into private family life, these combined factors have created a shield for the trafficking of women and children in Short Creek today²⁶² and has contextualized the raid in 2008 and how the public understands the FLDS community in its wake. In addition to the FLDS and the SCDC facilitating a persecution myth about Short Creek, this myth has also been echoed and further cultivated by LDS scholars, historians, and sociologists, exemplified in *Saints Under Siege* (Wright & Richardson, 2011). The thirteen authors who contributed to the edited volume, *Saints Under Siege*, lay out a series of arguments about how both the 1953 and 2008 raids are demonstrative of vast an unnecessary government overreach which generated a “moral panic” (Brown & Gonzales, 2011; Wright & Fagan, 2011) about a religious minority group stigmatized for the primary purposes of “crime control theater” (Lalasz & Gonzales, 2011).²⁶³ This persecution myth is deeply dependent on the failure to examine other significant connections between these raids-including what happened in the aftermath of the 1953 raid and the 2008 raid, including who was arrested, on what charges, who was prosecuted, how long their sentences were, what happened to the children of these people, and who were their caretakers.

²⁶² Critical trafficking scholars have argued that making distinctions between sex and labor trafficking may only reinforce the notion that sex work is not a form of labor and that labor trafficking is not as significant as sex trafficking. While I agree with these criticisms of the distinctions, it is important to recognize that the media has covered the sexual abuse and exploitation of young girls from Short Creek extensively, to the detriment of all children in Short Creek who have also historically been subject to institutionalized child labor trafficking.

²⁶³ Lalasz and Gonzales (2011) describe “crime control theater” as “very public responses to reported crimes that demonstrate an illusion of crime control but are inefficient and often ineffective in actually controlling the targeted crime” (p. 13).

FLDS apostate Carolyn Jessop, who was the first woman in FLDS history to successfully get legal custody of all her children after leaving the church, has said that “polygamists are invisible members of society” and that “people need to look past the religion. They need to look at facts” (SunlightOxygen, 2009).²⁶⁴ Based on data gathered from governmental reports, including DNA evidence collected from the 2008 raid (Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, 2008) and a congressional hearing exploring the aftermath of the raid (Congressional Hearing for the Committee on the Judiciary United States Senate, 2008), many of the arguments about religious persecution begin to fall apart.

Understanding how the persecution myth informs contemporary anti-trafficking interventions in Short Creek requires engaging the history of the raid on the FLDS in El Dorado, Texas in 2008 and its aftermath. Whereas the FLDS have, at times, equated their experiences to African Americans during chattel slavery and the civil rights movement to advance their interests, often, these discourses also compared their experiences to the Holocaust with references to concentration camps, Nazi Germany, and the Gestapo in relation to the police intervention at the YFZ ranch (Creeker’s Foundation, 2018; Musser, 2013; Wall, 2015). The impetus for the police raid on the YFZ ranch was prompted by a phone tip to a local domestic violence shelter in Texas from a 16-year-old girl, who said her name was Sarah Barlow (Wright & Richardson, 2011). Barlow claimed to be a child bride living at the YFZ with her 8-month-old baby and a 50-year-old man who she

²⁶⁴ Carolyn Jessop has explained that it was common practice when she was being raised in the community not to license or register vehicles so that people driving through Short Creek will most likely be left alone by the local marshals but there was no way to escape the town because outside law enforcement would pull them over (Hanson, 2015c).

fathered the child with named Dale Barlow, and that she was being kept there against her will. State and federal law enforcement deployed tactical units to raid the compound. Over the course of several days, neither Child Protective Services nor law enforcement officials were able to find anyone by the name of Sarah Barlow living at the ranch.

Recognizing that they were in over their heads during this investigation, largely due to their unfamiliarity with FLDS culture, officials brought in two high profile former FLDS members to help.²⁶⁵ Rebecca Musser, the former 19th wife of Rulon Jeffs²⁶⁶ recounts her experience observing “Gestapo-type guards” surrounding the buildings when she first arrived at YFZ (Musser, 2013, p. 131). While officials were unable to find 16-year-old Sarah Barlow, they did find Dale Barlow, who was back in Short Creek at the time, as well as the evidence that, with the help of Rebecca Musser, ultimately landed Warren Jeffs with a life sentence in prison.²⁶⁷

Days into the 2008 raid, police used a battering ram to enter the massive Mormon temple that had been constructed to replicate the original Mormon temple in Nauvoo, Illinois from the 1800s. In the temple annex, authorities found a massive vault that they had to jackhammer for hours to break in, where they found 400 boxes of meticulously detailed church records, family records, and priesthood records, including written and photographed evidence of FLDS marriages, births, and bloodline records. Because these

²⁶⁵ Sisters Rebecca Musser (formerly Wall) and Elissa Wall were instrumental figures in terms of decoding FLDS Priesthood records recovered from the temple (Musser 2013) as well as giving Texas officials, including CPS, an overview of FLDS cultural norms that may impede the investigation (Zitting-Wyson & Zitting-Wyson, 2022).

²⁶⁶ After the death of her husband, Rulon Jeffs, in September 2002, Rebecca Musser fled the community of Short Creek with the help of one of Rulon’s grandsons, Ben Musser. The couple had two children together after they left Short Creek and before later divorcing (Musser, 2013).

²⁶⁷ Eventually, police traced the call to a 33-year-old African American woman named Rozita Swinton from Colorado who had a history of making false reports to authorities (Wall, 2008; Musser, 2013).

records were traditionally compiled by the prophet's wives, Rebecca Musser was familiar with these documents and able to help authorities decipher the information and trace connections between entire networks of families (Holt, 2020).

The evidence for Warren Jeffs' conviction was an audio tape that captured the sexual assault, in which the voices of some of his other wives can be heard in the room, for which he was found guilty and sentenced to life in prison in 2011. The tape had been acquired from the temple annex vault containing the FLDS Church's records that had been transported there from Short Creek. In addition to the audio recordings, authorities also recovered records of Jeffs' and other FLDS Priesthood men performing hundreds of marriages to children, as well as photographs of him kissing his underage brides (Young, 2008). Despite the overwhelming evidence against Warren Jeffs, however, many people from the FLDS believe he was unjustly targeted by the state and framed for his religious beliefs.²⁶⁸

CPS workers conducted hundreds of interviews with women and children on the ranch, investigating for signs of abuse or neglect within the home for two weeks before removals began. They found over 400 children living at the ranch, whose custody was rotated among their caretakers, mostly teenage girls, were regularly exposed to environments that could subject them to sexual abuse by the adult men on the property. Evidence of this possibility was discovered when realizing that many of the girls had become pregnant and had children with these grown men since living at the ranch

²⁶⁸ For example, Short Creek resident and native, Norma Richter, has suggested that the audio tape of Jeffs raping his 12-year-old bride was fabricated by the state or another source. Specifically, Norma's theory is that people "spliced" and cut Warren's voice to make it sound like he was raping children to put him in prison (Ventry & Sanders, 2020d).

(Hansen Park, 2017; Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, 2008; Zitting-Wyson & Zitting-Wyson, 2022).

According to the Texas report, CPS investigators determined that there were 140 families living on the YFZ ranch at the time of the raid. Of those families, evidence of abuse and neglect were found in 91 of the 140 families living there (Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, 2008, p. 15). The report revealed that at the time of the raid, there was evidence of at least 262 FLDS children from the Short Creek community at the YFZ ranch, who were living in households where they were either “subjected to neglect because parents failed to remove their children from a situation in which the child would be exposed to sexual abuse committed against another child within their families or households” (2008, p. 3). At least 12 girls from these families between the ages of 12 to 15-years-old had suffered from sexual abuse and neglect with the knowledge and consent of their parents after agreeing to place them in an arranged marriage with another adult male in or outside of the community;²⁶⁹ of those 12 girls, seven had given birth to one or more children since being married (El Dorado Investigation, 2008, p. 14).

Based on this evidence, CPS and law enforcement told FLDS women at the YFZ that they had to remove these children but had the option, as mothers, to leave their husbands and go with their children. However, caseworkers found that many of the girls were defensive of the regime. They claimed not to know their date of birth, would use different names than previously reported, or wouldn’t provide their full names and lied about being over the age of 17 to avoid being forcibly removed. The girls would also try

²⁶⁹ According to the 2008 Texas report, five of the girls were 15 years old when they were married, two were 14 years old, three were 13 years old, and two girls were 12 years old when they were married at the YFZ Ranch (Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, 2008).

to confuse investigators by claiming children that were not their own, deny that they had children, and then later report that they did, in fact, have children.²⁷⁰ While many mothers jumped on the opportunity to leave the compound, others refused to leave with their children being removed by CPS; instead, opting to remain on the compound with their husbands (Zitting-Wyson & Zitting-Wyson, 2022).

A Texas CPS worker named “Shannon,” who was 24 years old at the time of the raid and one of the first people to enter the YFZ to investigate alleged crimes of child abuse, admitted in an interview that some of the conditions state authorities put the mothers and children in were less than ideal. Young women and children were housed in an extremely cramped building with limited bathroom facilities. To make matters worse, CPS did not know that the FLDS did not vaccinate their children and Shannon compared the raid in an interview years later to “colonization and Native Americans...we gave them blankets and they all got chicken pox” (Zitting-Wyson & Zitting-Wyson, 2022).²⁷¹

In response to the raid, a wife of YFZ bishop Merrill Jessop,²⁷² Kathleen Jessop, cried to the media that the FLDS were “being treated like the Jews were when they were escorted to the German Nazi camps!” (See Musser, 2013, p. 269). Given that the Holocaust was prompted by unfounded conspiracy theories and given that the YFZ raid was prompted by accusations that the FLDS were sexually abusing children which turned

²⁷⁰ Shannon’s first interview at YFZ was with a 19-year-old mother of two small children. However, upon realizing that the mother had told Shannon that her children were 3 and 4-years-old at the time, which would have made her 15-years-old when she had her first baby, she insisted she was 21 (Zitting-Wyson & Zitting-Wyson, 2022).

²⁷¹ To help audiences get a better sense for the raid, Shannon also explained in the same interview that the actions of authorities basically amounted to: “Go(ing) into a trailer park and tak(ing) all the kids.”

²⁷² Fred Merrill Jessop was known as “Uncle Fred” and the bishop of Short Creek before he was appointed by Warren Jeffs to become the bishop of the YFZ Ranch in Texas. Prior to Rulon Jeffs’ death, there were rumors that either Uncle Fred or Winston Blackmore, the bishop of Canada, might be next in line as prophet.

out to be true, Jessop’s claim that she and the FLDS were being “treated like the Jews” holds little weight (Musser, 2013, p. 269). Nonetheless, as FLDS apostate Sam Zitting has explained, the fact that the popular media portrayals of the 2008 raid on television and in documentaries often depict SWAT Team units, snipers, and other authorities with massive tanks entering the compound, has softened the realities of the crimes that have, in reality, often catalyzed this type of response in the eyes of the public, as had occurred in 1953 (Zitting-Wyson & Zitting-Wyson, 2022).

However, the pregnant adolescents and teens, DNA evidence that helped determine relationships between mothers and children, children and fathers, and signs of abuse and neglect from physical examinations were unable to prevent state officials from returning FLDS children to FLDS men. After failing to provide sufficient evidence of abuse to have them removed, a Texas court returned the women and children who were suspected of being minors back to their families (Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, 2008). Although the entire FLDS Church had been involved at some level, only 11 men were arrested during the raid and charged with criminal activities including sexual assaulting minors ranging in age from 12 to 16-years-old. Notably, Dan Barlow Junior, the son of the Mayor of Short Creek who had been kicked out of the FLDS in 2004, was charged with sexual abuse and molestation of their own child over the course of 10 years, resulting in 13 days in county jail and seven years’ probation. Several men were convicted and received long prison sentences following the raid (Pienecker, 2023).²⁷³

²⁷³ In addition to Warren Jeffs’ sentence to life plus 20 years in prison, which was the longest doled out, others received between seven and 75 years of incarceration (Vine, 2018).

Following Warren Jeffs' conviction in 2011, many FLDS moved away from Short Creek to places like Cedar City, Hurricane, Fredonia, and St. George in Utah (Colvin, 2018). In Texas, FLDS members were permitted to remain living on the property until it was seized by the state of Texas in 2012 (Unfiltered Stories, 2022). Others from the FLDS have since moved to compounds in states like Wyoming and Colorado as well as countries like Canada and Mexico (Bennion, 2004; Bistline, 2004; Braham, 2014; DeMuth, 2017; Hanson, 2015b; Jones, 2012; Shurtleff & Goddard, 2006). Although these numbers are changing constantly, it is estimated that today there are roughly 8,000 people still living in Short Creek, who fall into three categories: First, there are a handful of gentiles that have moved into town which consist of people like those affiliated with Dream City Church (DCC) (Brian D. Steele, 2018h; Brian D. Steele, 2018i). Second, there are between 1,500 and 1,800 FLDS loyalists, who remain faithful to the Prophet Warren Jeffs. Third, there is what most of the community now fits within, the apostate group, who have either been kicked out of the FLDS or left on their own accord but remain in or around Short Creek (Abundant Grace Church, 2018; Coastline Church, 2020).

There are numerous barriers that prevent FLDS women and men from being able to enter or leave Short Creek. The community's social structure determines who people marry, where they work, how much money they earn, and whether they receive an education. In the polygamy hierarchy within the FLDS, barriers to leaving and staying are also based on inheritance, as the status and power of an FLDS member's parents determines what social position they inherit. Other barriers include having little to no formal work experience or education, as most boys and girls are pulled out of school

between the 3rd and 8th grade in anticipation of work or marriage or lacking a birth certificate or driver's license. Women and girls are particularly burdened, especially those with many children, as it is expected within the FLDS to have a baby each year to grow the "celestial kingdom" (Jessop & Palmer, 2007).

Reflecting the religious doctrine, around 80% of the total population in Short Creek today are children living in precarity (Abundant Grace Church, 2018). At least 70% of households are 17 years of age and younger (Dream City Church, 2019). The mothers and children who are still FLDS loyalists live under the authority of a male caretaker assigned by Warren Jeffs, who mostly live on the Colorado City, Arizona side of Short Creek (Abundant Grace Church, 2018; Hansen Park, 2017a; Radius Church, 2021). Despite the state's interventions to address trafficking there through the establishment of the SCDC, evidence continues to emerge that the conditions Jeffs left behind are fueling the problem (Bleier, 2023; Levenson, 2019; Utah12 News, 2022).

Because of the schisms created by the FLDS Church under Warren Jeffs, both through ejecting men and producing conditions that prompted entire families to leave the town, the people living there may be even less genetically diverse than before. While this issue has been recognized in the community since at least the 1990s, the FLDS, who "claim to be the chosen people, the chosen few," as historian Benjamin Bistline has said, continue to "marry closely to preserve the royal bloodline" (Hollenhorst, 2006). Because the people perceived most attractive within this culture are related and a core premise of the religion is to maximize reproduction, it could be said that the FLDS are motivated by inbreeding, which has produced many medical issues within the community, including

widespread fumarase syndrome (Hollenhorst, 2006; University of Nevada College of Medicine, 2015).

This problem is largely due to the adult men and women living there, given the community has long been reproduced through arranged child marriages, the number of which increased significantly while Warren Jeffs was in power.²⁷⁴ Since the primary concern among these groups is centered on their own spiritual ascension, rather than the health, longevity, and well-being of their children, it is often expected that many children will die during child birth childbirth or shortly after, and the well-being of their mothers is often uncertain (Jeffs, 2009; Jeffs, 2016). The FLDS have largely relied on midwives from the community to facilitate the birthing process for women and record these births as well as deaths (The Fifth Estate, 2017). To avoid criminal prosecution, many of the children born into the FLDS do not have their father's name listed on their birth certificate, they have a fake name listed in place of their father on their birth certificate, or they are undocumented.²⁷⁵

Because, until recently, the town of Short Creek has not participated in the US Census, there have been concerns expressed regarding inconsistent documentation of births and deaths within the Short Creek community (Colvin, 2018). In addition to the

²⁷⁴ When a clinical physician named Dr. Theodore Tarby was treating children from Short Creek under contract with the state at the height of Jeffs' power, only 13 cases of fumarase syndrome in the entire world were known to medical professionals at the time, but he diagnosed more than 20 children with this genetic disorder (University of Nevada College of Medicine, 2015).

²⁷⁵ During their childhoods, the Mackert sisters were required to use their father's middle name as their last name in school to avoid detection from authorities. Rena Mackert recalled in an interview with Canadian lawyers investigating polygamy among the FLDS in Bountiful (Hanson, 2015g): "It made us feel like we were bastard children. We took a lot of ridicule.... We were supposed to be father's children, but he wouldn't acknowledge us, and we were responsible -just as I was as a child-protecting my father from the cop in town-from him being discovered that he'd had more children. It was our responsibility to keep our mouths shut at school. If we slipped and told the truth, father could go to prison. We would go to orphanages. It would be our fault. Which as an adult I realize is backwards because father was responsible for his illegal behavior. Not his children.... there were 31 of us."

Issac W. Carling town cemetery,²⁷⁶ a surprising number of children are buried in a separate location, either individually or in mass graves, demonstrating, perhaps, the strongest evidence for concerns about populations records based on the fact that many of those buried are unmarked in a separate, small plot from the cemetery known as “Babyland,” (NorthStarAcademy1, 2020)²⁷⁷ located on the corner of Jessop and Canyon Street (field observations, October 2nd, 2021).²⁷⁸ Dates of birth and death are noticeably absent on some of the headstones of the graves, as I stumbled upon one with fresh dirt but only a list of names.²⁷⁹

Despite the fact that there are reasons to suggest that some of the crimes committed within the FLDS appear not unique to the Warren Jeffs era,²⁸⁰ according to Short Creek local Terrill Musser, who initially left the community in 2002 as Warren Jeffs rose to power, when he moved back to Short Creek twelve years later, two years

²⁷⁶ In the Issac Carling cemetery, I found the Prophet Rulon Jeffs’ grave (December 6th, 1909-September 8th, 2002), the grave of the Prophet Leroy Johnson (1888-1986), and the grave of Shirlee Draper’s mother, Kathleen Bradshaw Jessop, which included the nickname “Gramzi” on the headstone that I recognized from listening to podcast interviews with Donia Jessop and Shirlee Draper. In front of her gravestone was a small, white bench, with the words “Keep Sweet” etched into the stone in cursive (Direct observations, Issac Carling cemetery, October 2nd, 2021).

²⁷⁷ In the 2.5 days I spent observing Short Creek in October 2021, the only place where I can confirm to have been followed by people from the community was during my time walking through the cemeteries. A young woman appeared in her vehicle and proceeded to observe me from a distance, as well as to drive her vehicle past myself and the person accompanying me for protection.

²⁷⁸ According to one FLDS apostate named Joanna Fischer, who was interviewed on Survivors podcast in 2018, she estimates that there were at least 182 babies in Babyland in 2015 (Survivors Podcast, 2018).

²⁷⁹ On the top of a single headstone it says, “Children,” with names on a list below: Merrill Joseph, Alice Ladonna, Elaine, Sterling John, Nathan, Stanley Robert, Gloria Elizabeth, Stephen Parley, William Steed, and David Lawrence (Field observations, October 2nd, 2021). I also found the headstone of “Leona Barlow, 1955-1955,” two headstones etched with the names: “Baby Kapcsos” on each, one of whom died in 1991 and the other in the early 2000s. An old, weathered stuffed white bear lay on the ground next to the headstones. I found numerous other headstones of children who died extremely young, such as 6-day old Charity Steed (June 3rd, 1995, to June 9th, 1995), “Jessop Girl, Stillborn April 7th, 1980,” “Jessop Boy, Stillborn, January 27th, 1980), “Babygirl Jeffs, December 8th, 1997,” Loretta Jessop (August 17th, 1992 - May 13th, 2016) and Alasia Jeffs (June 17th, 2004-February 5th, 2018) (Field observations, October 2nd, 2021).

²⁸⁰ This is based on a surprising number of children in Babyland whose deaths occurred far prior to when Warren Jeffs moved to Short Creek in 2000 (Abundant Grace Church, 2018; Field observations, October 2nd, 2021; NorthStarAcademy1, 2020).

after Warren Jeffs had been sentenced to life in prison: “It was like the wild, wild west out there. You didn’t dare call an ambulance or police for anything” (Ventry & Sanders, 2020). Warren Jeffs had forbidden the FLDS to fraternize with gentiles and apostates, referencing the scripture, “leave apostates alone severely” first professed by the Prophet Brigham Young (Reiss, 2020). Although Musser’s family had devotedly followed this edict and hadn’t spoken to Terrill since he left the church, he had learned that a special fiduciary named Bruce Wisan had been appointed temporarily to oversee the trust after the state of Utah took control of it from Warren Jeffs in 2005. One of the most important legal reforms Wisan made to the trust was to change it so that the UEP could no longer decide who lived in the community based on religion. Although the church no longer ran the UEP, the utility company, ambulance drivers, and entire police force were still all FLDS and loyal to Warren Jeffs at the time.

Paving the way for the establishment of the SCDC in 2017,²⁸¹ apostates set out to reclaim control over Short Creek’s city councils, law enforcement, medical clinics, and otherwise, from both Warren Jeffs’ regime and the outside world. However, it is important to understand that their efforts have been less directed at crushing the power of the culture of polygamy in the community, as much as they have been focused on placing the political, economic, and cultural system back into the hands of people whose lineage

²⁸¹ The UEP Trust was in a financially precarious position since Warren Jeffs’ imprisonment, as the trust was facing several lawsuits from members of the church. After months of intense back-and-forth negotiations, Steele, Steele’s lawyer, and UEP Trust lawyer Jeff Barlow struck a deal. The UEP Trust agreed that the Dream Center would occupy the Jeffs’ mansion for 2 years rent free, so long as they promised to pay all the back taxes and agreed not to bring anyone from outside the community in for the first two years. Steele said it was, “a low-risk venture with a lot to gain.” Following the deal, the PDC set up a separate LLC entity to take over the Jeffs’ mansion. Since the PDC is a 501(c)3 they were able to become a member of that LLC, making it tax exempt. Steele explains: “The goal was to pay off the old tax debt which was significant-plus a couple other hundred thousand in other types of fees...but by becoming a nonprofit it arrested the further accrual of any taxes” (Brian D. Steele 2018h, 2018i).

reflects the town's founding patriarchs. Among those people, who have had land rights in the area for more than a century,²⁸² include the Mussers, from Salt Lake, as well as the descendants of the original founding patriarchs of Short Creek, John Y. Barlow, and Joseph S. Jessop (Bradley, 1993).²⁸³

In 2014, an apostate named Terril Musser returned to Short Creek in 2014 after successfully filing paperwork to purchase his father's old home in the community.²⁸⁴ Upon his initial return, the FLDS-controlled Colorado City Marshals sought to discourage him and other apostates from moving back by slashing their tires, leaving dead animals on their front porches, among other forms of harassment.²⁸⁵ The corruption was so institutionalized into local practice, that if Musser or other apostates needed law enforcement support, they would contact the sheriff in Mohave County, Arizona or Washington County, Utah before contacting local police. In response to the Colorado City Marshal's ongoing practice of arresting and evicting residents from their homes on the basis that they were apostates of the FLDS,²⁸⁶ Terril Musser led the first anti-police protest in the history of the community in October of 2015. Approximately 100 people

²⁸² In a podcast interview, Terril Musser, whose ancestors arrived in Short Creek in 1923, stated: "When you grow up here you just long for these red mountains...my kids are home. It's so surreal to me because I was told I'd never get to come home" (Ventry & Sanders, 2020i).

²⁸³ According to Terril Musser, the UEP Trust prioritizes giving deeds to the descendants of men who built the homes or the wives of men who built the homes (Hope Heroes, 2022)

²⁸⁴ In one podcast, Musser said that he had secured the deed to his father's former home from the UEP Trust (Ventry & Sanders 2020g) whereas in another YouTube interview two years later with the PDC, he said that he and his wife had received the deed to her grandfather's home (Hope Heroes, 2022).

²⁸⁵ Musser also states that when he and other apostates would go to city council meetings to voice their concerns about their treatment in the community the council would frequently and spontaneously break into "executive sessions" that were not privy to the public (Ventry & Sanders, 2020g).

²⁸⁶ The Colorado City Marshals were evicting apostates even though many of them had legal occupancy agreements and even deeds to the homes which had been granted to them by the Utah-controlled UEP Trust at the time. Between 2005 to 2014, Bruce Wisan oversaw the UEP following Warren Jeffs' mismanagement of its assets. In 2014, however, he was removed from his position after being found guilty of soliciting a sex worker (Morgan, 2014).

from within, but mostly beyond the community,²⁸⁷ congregated across the street from the police department to draw attention to the Colorado City Marshal's religious corruption as the enforcement arm of the FLDS Church based on their loyalty to the Jeffs' regime. Musser said that only himself, a man from the community named Harvey Dockstader, and eight to ten other protestors were locals who had shown up to call for "equality" and "fair treatment...to be treated the same" as the FLDS living there, because others in the town either disagreed or were "too afraid to show up" (Hansen Park 2017i).

Drawing on the historical FLDS persecution myth to substantiate their right to sovereignty, Musser used this myth to compare his sense of persecution as an apostate who had moved back to Short Creek, which was still under FLDS control, to the plight of African Americans in the US during the civil rights movement. Alongside other people attending this protest,²⁸⁸ holding a sign that was printed with the words of Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King, Musser was suggesting that his oppression was as severe and his cause similarly righteous:²⁸⁹ "We must learn to live together as brothers & sisters or perish together as FOOLS -Martin Luther King Jr" (Cox, 2015). This exemplifies how people from the FLDS have drawn false comparisons between themselves and groups

²⁸⁷ Many of those present had been recruited by Year of Polygamy podcaster, Lindsey Hansen Park, who was a member of the LDS Church. According to Park, Terrill Musser had asked her to help organize the protest: "I wanted to make sure that it wasn't a rally about outsiders rallying against this" (Hansen Park, 2017i).

²⁸⁸ Other protest signs read, "I have decided to stick with LOVE. Hate is too great a burden to bear" and a sign held by a boy around the age of 4, read, simply, "Martin Luther King Jr" (Cox, 2015).

²⁸⁹ While he was never a member of the FLDS, polygamy beat reporter, Mike Watkiss, has also compared people living in the community to famous African American figures of the 20th century. In 2001, an FLDS apostate and underage bride named Ruth Stubbs ran away from Short Creek with her children to escape her husband, a Colorado City Marshal Rodney Holm. After successfully assisting in his prosecution for bigamy and unlawful sex acts with a minor in 2003, for which he served 12 months in a Utah jail, Watkiss broadly compared her bravery to that of Civil Rights Activist Rosa Parks: "Like Rosa Parks before her, Ruth refused to give up her seat at humanity's table (with) her courage to run with her children." (Mike Watkiss, 2008).

who have been oppressed by the state in the wake of Warren Jeffs' arrest, which as this chapter demonstrates, is a common strategy that has been used by the people from FLDS apostates to garner support for their cause from people with little knowledge of this group's history.

After a two year investigation of the twin towns that began in 2015, the US Department of Justice determined the lengths to which the FLDS members who worked within the Colorado City Marshals office had communicated with and financially supported Warren Jeffs while he was a federal fugitive and turned a blind eye to criminal activities by FLDS Church members, including underage marriages (DOJ Injunctive Order, 2017, pp. 19-20; KUTV2 News Salt Lake City, 2013). Based on the information that was uncovered, the FLDS Church's control of the land in Short Creek and specifically Colorado City, Arizona was identified to be the most significant threat to the rule of law in the community, since the ruling regime both allowed and ordered the Colorado City Marshals to forcibly remove anyone from their homes and eject them from the community despite documentation determining their legal right to the property.²⁹⁰

In addition to drawing attention to corruption in the Colorado City Marshal's office, the 2015 protest became the flashpoint that led to the rise of the new regime in control of Short Creek, as protestors followed up in the months and years that followed, expressing concerns about gentile government officials interfering in their way of life which were echoed by board members of the UEP Trust as well as the future mayor of Hildale, Donia Jessop. Expressing these concerns led to changes that eventually resulted

²⁹⁰ This prompted a court ordered injunctive order in 2017, which stated: "In short, control of Colorado City property is at the heart of the problems which have arisen with respect to housing and policing in Colorado City" (DOJ, 2017).

in the SCDC being able to enter the town under the careful discretion of people who came from the FLDS. By 2015-2016, when the people from the Dream Center entered the scene, a handful of people from the FLDS appeared to have agreed upon a shared story about the town based on the historic claim that the people of Short Creek have long been persecuted by the “gentile” government for their religious beliefs, which was reflected in Musser’s words when he told the journalists covering the event that: “Nobody’s really ever asked the people what they’ve ever wanted out here. Everybody’s just always assumed, and the judges told us what you guys are gonna do but what do we want?” (Ventry & Sanders, 2020h).

Critical of how the state had maintained control of the UEP Trust after taking it initially in response to Warren Jeffs’ mismanagement of property consecrated to the church, Musser proposed that FLDS apostate Shirlee Draper, who had left the community in February 2004, a month after Warren Jeffs’ suddenly excommunicated 21 of the town’s most powerful patriarchs, take control over the local institutions, on the basis that she had “really helped the people” of Short Creek in the past (Ventry & Sanders, 2020h).²⁹¹ Musser’s wish for substantial political change in the community became a reality soon after the protest, when Draper was appointed by a judge to become President of the UEP land trust and gained discretion over who can reside in the homes it controls. On the basis that she was eager to put space between herself and the rigorous politics of

²⁹¹ Soon after, Draper spoke to other apostates in Hildale who had been moving back to town after securing homes from the UEP Trust, to whom she raised concerns that the local government was still being controlled by the FLDS (Draper, 2019). At this event, Musser’s position was mirrored when Draper asked a group of residents, who were also apostates: “did you guys know that you’re the majority in Hildale? Did you know that you don’t have to put up with this town council who doesn’t represent you in any way?” (Ventry & Sanders, 2020h).

Short Creek, Draper claimed she was reluctant to take the position, but ultimately did because she felt like she could address some of the problems plaguing the town:

I honestly felt like I had been SENTENCED to be on that board...to go back to the community...and getting back into all of the politics and everything that I had so carefully picked off of me, you know...I tried to cleanse myself and make a new life and here I was about to be right back in the middle...so I went to my first board meeting and I told the board, 'I'm not going to be on this board...I don't like what's going on here and they said, 'well good neither do we - help us fix it.' And so, I thought, ok maybe I'll stick around just long enough to fix it. (Ventry & Sanders 2020f)

Draper claimed she was inspired to extend her influence, and that of other apostates, by organizing the Short Creek Community Alliance (SCCA) in 2016 (Ventry & Sanders, 2020h). Echoing Musser's position in a podcast interview, she explained that "all these people from outside wanted to come in and fix this situation. It couldn't be done from the outside. It had to be done from the inside ... and so a group of us got together" (Ventry & Sanders, 2020h).²⁹² As president of the UEP, it was at her discretion that the SCDC could begin to legally establish itself in Short Creek, and her authority would later play a key role in how the organization developed.

²⁹² In an interview on behalf of the SCDC, Terrill Musser explains: "We the People..." from the town of "Apple Valley to Fredonia...started networking and communicating again" as part of the SCCA (Hope Heroes, 2022a).

The people in Short Creek had been in a financially precarious position since Warren Jeffs and other FLDS elite members had bankrupted the town, which was a significant source of leverage for the DCC. According to Pastor Brian Steele, when he pitched a proof of concept plan to establish the SCDC in Warren Jeffs' old house, the UEP trustees allegedly "did not think the Dream Center would be good for the community" and he "had to articulate and confront a lot of rumors that had come about" concerning the DCC taking "ownership of the property" (Brian D. Steele, 2018h; Brian D. Steele, 2018i). Despite their apprehension, it is possible that the severity of their financial problems may have convinced Draper and the rest of the UEP trustees to allow the SCDC to establish itself and provide services to the people living there.

Because the UEP trust was subject to many of the lawsuits being brought forth against former UEP Trust president Warren Jeffs by apostates of the FLDS and owed tens of thousands in back taxes, the trust board agreed to make a deal with the DCC to cover the expenses. In the end, each party's lawyers came to an amicable agreement; the SCDC would move in on the condition that the DCC would not have to pay rent for two years and all the legal fees and back taxes would be reimbursed if the FLDS forced them out of the town (Brian D. Steele, 2018i). By permitting DCC to move into town, operating as the Short Creek Dream Center, the UEP land trust was not only able to prevent further accrual of taxes on the property, but they were also able to pay all the back taxes that Warren Jeffs had failed to pay. By first registering the SCDC property as a Limited Liability Corporation (LLC), Dream City Foundation was then able to file the paperwork to become registered as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Pastor Steele considered the deal "a low-

risk venture with a lot to gain,” contending that the project had the potential to make significant positive changes in the town:

The goal was to pay off the old tax debt which was significant-plus a couple other hundred thousand in other fees...by becoming a nonprofit it arrested the further accrual of any taxes. We were going to do whatever the need was...if truly ‘find a need and fill it, find a hurt and heal it’ was our heart, who are we to dictate and to determine what are the needs of this community who is living it every day? So that’s how we got that property. That’s how we get all our properties. (Brian D. Steele, 2018i)

Although the SCDC portrays the means by which this building was acquired as though it had been gifted to the organization by Warren Jeffs’ 65th wife, Briell Decker, the story is much more complicated.²⁹³ After gaining control of it through the UEP trust, Decker had attempted to establish a shelter there,²⁹⁴ but it failed after a year because she was unable to cover the taxes and utility costs. Because Warren Jeffs had failed to pay taxes, by the time the house was in Briell’s possession, she owed \$50,000.00 in property

²⁹³ In 2012, Decker successfully escaped Short Creek years after being forced into an arranged marriage as a teenager to Warren Jeffs, who was in his 50s at the time. Within 2 years, she had a new social security number, changed her name to Briell Decker, and applied for Warren Jeffs’ 44-bedroom mansion from the UEP Trust. Theoretically, Warren Jeffs had approximately 80 wives who could have also applied for his home, however, Briell explained during an interview that of those sought out by authorities to speak to: “There’s only three that talked. I went in and applied for the Warren Jeffs house because being his wife I had rights” (Kelly, 2018).

²⁹⁴ Briell envisioned turning the 44-bedroom home into a shelter for women and children exiting the FLDS. This was something she wished was available to her when she left Colorado City. In 2014, Briell was conditionally awarded the rights to her ex-husband’s mansion as part of a pain and suffering settlement. Briell explained that the UEP Trust, “gave me an opportunity because I really had a dream to make a difference for those people.” (McVey & Ray, 2020)

taxes. At first, Briell attempted to keep the property by launching a GoFundMe fundraising initiative online but had only raised \$140.00 by the time the UEP Trust informed her she was being evicted, as Briell (McVey & Ray, 2020) explained:

I had like 3 months to find a buyer. The Short Creek Dream Center people who were in Phoenix, Arizona found me through me doing media and free tours of the building because it was a high-profile house... about 3 days before I was about to be evicted the landowners and me sat down with the Short Creek Dream Center people...and we made a plan. I work there now.

After it was repossessed by the UEP, rights to the home were transferred to the Dream Center. Although the county assessed value of the property was \$1,312,300.00, the UEP Trust made a lease to own agreement with the Dream Center and sold them Warren Jeffs' entire compound for \$400,000.00 (Brian D. Steele, 2018h, 2018i). In 2018, the Short Creek Dream Center opened its doors to serve the community. Since then, Briell Decker has become the face of the SCDC and frequently shares her story to substantiate the efficacy of the services it provides.

As SCDC director Konstance Meredith explained in a podcast interview, many people living in the community, both those loyal to Warren Jeffs and apostates alike, were upset when the SCDC moved into the Prophet's former home in Hildale on October 7th, 2017 (Murphy, 2021). The people living in Short Creek were not only concerned that outsiders would try to proselytize in a town already in religious turmoil, but also that they would attempt to gain control of the land and ultimately destroy their way of life. The

residents of Short Creek were also aware that Dream Centers are well known for their human trafficking programs in places such as Los Angeles, California, and Phoenix and Glendale, Arizona, all of which serve women and girls exiting sex work. Because Dream Centers also often try to employ clients who graduate from these programs,²⁹⁵ female residents were particularly concerned that putting a Dream Center in Short Creek would draw “a bunch of prostitutes up here to steal our men” (Brian D. Steele, 2018h).

While Shirlee Draper does not consider Mormon polygamy to be tantamount to trafficking, the SCDC has been promoted by evangelical Christians as a resource for trafficking victims in the community because this framing is both attractive to donors and grants certain opportunities to apostates concerned with dismantling the influence of Warren Jeffs’ regime (Abundant Grace Church, 2018; Jones, 2019d; Jones, 2019e; Joyce Meyers Ministry, 2022). Framing the needs of the community in Short Creek in response to “trafficking,” has enabled the SCDC to open a 44-bedroom emergency crisis house for women and children fleeing abusive households, a 15-bedroom house for visiting missionaries and residential aids transitioning from crisis housing to on campus living, and secure several church buses donated by televangelist Joyce Meyer to transport clients to and from doctor’s appointments, classes, and job training (Joyce Meyer Ministries, 2022; Joyce Meyer’s Talk It Out, 2021).

²⁹⁵ On his YouTube channel dedicated to offering tips for new Dream Center directors, Brian Steele recommends: “Partnering with trafficking organizations to hire survivors” because “Some of our survivors have records. Here’s the sad reality... traffickers use *their* social security numbers, *their* names, and *their* birthdates to do ludicrous crimes...rent cars and lease apartments and then girls walk out...because their names were attached to this...with criminal records...18, 19 years old with felonies which eliminates their choices for housing greatly, also with horrendous background checks...so consider with your trauma - informed approach...hir(ing) survivors and having a program that... hire(s) survivors.” (Brian D. Steele, 2021d).

Additionally, the SCDC has also established food banks on both sides of the border, which allowed the nonprofit to bypass laws that would have restricted their interventions to either Utah or Arizona, which Angel Barnett described at the Night of Dreams Gala in 2019 in Phoenix:

That food bank is in Arizona and that's strategic. The Dream Center is in Utah so there's a whole group of people that we don't understand... can't service them, help them, unless that food bank is in Arizona. So, it is critical AND, Warren Jeffs house which is no longer his house is still visually his house to many people who live there in that town so it gives people in some people's minds a barrier for them. But this new food bank...could then be kind of a Dream Center in itself. Uh, a different door. A safer door for those who might still be FLDS and searching and looking so that makes us feel rounded. (A. Barnett, field observations, 2019)

Since the relatively recently appointed apostate controlled UEP trust has subdivided the properties in Hildale upon order of the Department of Justice (2017) while retaining control over some of the properties in Colorado City, where most of the FLDS live today, apostates hold power, however precarious it may be, over the FLDS Church in Short Creek. The existence of the food bank allows the SCDC to be able to participate in anti-trafficking raids across the border on FLDS families, which are carried out by the Colorado City Marshals (Jones, 2019g; Jones, 2020; Jones, 2020c), which is now composed of both people from the Short Creek community and people from the outside

and often with the assistance of SCDC clients.²⁹⁶ Further, it also serves as a mechanism to draw people away from the FLDS Church, who, like the apostate group, are mostly children and single mothers, justify their funding and the expansion of their labor pool.

The primary example of how the labor of people who are identified as trafficking victims is exploited is through their participation in the Brass Project (The Brass Project), which is portrayed as a rehabilitative work program for purposes of job training (Radius Church, 2021). This program entails cleaning brass bullet casings, which were fired by various law enforcement agencies within and beyond Arizona, in a small storage unit on the side of the concrete basketball court. Once processed, the brass is sold for profit to a company called Dillon Precision, which is certified to sell it to the US military to be reloaded. According to Angel Barnett, this program is ideal for the community it serves, not only because participants are in many cases uneducated and disabled, but also because it benefits the SCDC and law enforcement:

It's a very safe-it's a very simple, methodical, assembly line hand-to-task which is critical because we have a lot of polygamy down syndrome there. Out of 7 of the different infirmities every person there has somewhat of 5 of those-cleft lips and ADHD and the different things that come from medical infirmities so we want to make sure that we are delivering the opportunity-a task that they can succeed, build

²⁹⁶ Pastor Angel Barnett told an evangelical Christian audience at Radius Church: "The Dream Center... goes on different stings and people reach out to us because they know that we're there now...we have a marshal there that can cross both borders (and) we will have some of the women in the FLDS in the middle of the night with an unmarked truck, and about 20/300 guys from the Phoenix Dream Center barely saved out of prison going through *our* recovery program up there as our security guards in their next level of healing... and they'll help us rescue these amazing girls and we take them into the Dream Center" (Radius Church, 2021).

confidence, and then we want to bring them opportunities-culinary training and agriculture. We never want to tell them what to do. But to just get their hands on and inspire-I can do this, I can do more and start to dream about what they'd really like to do and we're only there to facilitate that excitement. But the great thing about the shell cases is that we partner ourselves with local law enforcement. They're on the front lines rescuing people, taking the risk, and we're on the backside recovering them and hopefully putting them back on their feet. So, to partner with them-the police officers there are loving this idea knowing that their shell casings are putting people to work. (Radius Church, 2021)

Although these services might sound as though they exist to benefit clients, this program is unpaid,²⁹⁷ a fact which is not publicized by Dream Center representatives (field observations, October 2nd, 2021). While it is easy to understand why this program is exploitative, it is difficult to understand how it prevents human trafficking or is in any way rehabilitative. The SCDC once brought in a behavioral health specialist, the same that works at the PDC, but the therapeutic programs offered are less than sufficient for meeting the needs of people who have incurred severe trauma, such as the Adopt-a-Room program and "art therapy," which has, at times, been described as nothing more than a poorly thought out arts and crafts project, based on testimony, for example, from Pastor Angel Barnett:

²⁹⁷ In the video, "How Do You Start Paying Your Staff" (2018j), on Brian D. Steele's unlisted YouTube Channel, which offers tips for new Dream Center directors, he explains that at Dream Centers in Arizona, they: "tend to hire the most faithful person...someone who has stuck around and volunteered for a while *may* be more likely to get an official paying job there over an outside hire."

We brought in a behavioral health specialist into the picture, and she talked to the women, and they expressed their feelings, and they took sledgehammers and axes and they went to town (on property in the Warren Jeffs' house) and they wrote things on the floor that probably aren't very Godly but it's part of the process! (Shreveport Community Church, 2022)

The inadequacy of the rehabilitative capacities of the SCDC was dramatically reflected in the events leading up to the suicide of one of Warren Jeffs' sons, Roy Jeffs, who had been molested by his father at a young age. Rather than receive meaningful treatment performed by mental health experts, he had been welcomed into the SCDC's "Adopt-a-Room" program, where people identified as trafficking victims were asked to redesign the interior of a room in Warren Jeffs' former home, renovated as a trafficking shelter. A year after Roy Jeffs had been seen crying while tearing up carpet in the room that once belonged to his mother, Gloria Barlow, who had gone missing alongside 82 other wives from the community, he took his own life in June 2019. While the SCDC receives funding to provide therapeutic services to survivors of human trafficking, Jena Jones attributes his death to the not receiving appropriate resources in response to his trauma:

Unfortunately... a year later one of his friends showed up on our doorstep and she had told me that he had... committed suicide. He was never able to really get the help from mass amounts of years of trauma and abuse...I mean you can just

imagine-just from the three days I had with him-just the struggle and the pain that he endured. (Coastline Church, 2020)

Although the legal consequences for committing trafficking crimes in the US are steep, those for falsely claiming to provide services to victims and to inform law enforcement efforts to stop trafficking are almost non-existent. This anti-trafficking coalition's failure to achieve either of these ends is due to the fact that its efforts are driven by the NPIC. As the following section will demonstrate, the SCDC's interventions are oriented by a persecution myth that holds power over the American imagination through ignorance of underexamined, historically oppressed peoples, which allows a small group of people from the FLDS to secure control of Short Creek's institutions in the wake of Warren Jeffs' reign.

Part II: The Persecution Myth and the Short Creek Dream Center

The FLDS in Short Creek have been marrying off underage girls to male patriarchs since the community took root in the early 20th century. However, the dominant narrative has in recent years focused almost exclusively on the reign of Warren Jeffs, which according to one of the original directors of the SCDC, Glyn Jones is a "has been like this dark history cloud hanging over the town" (Colvin, 2018). As a result, the Dream Center is seeing on a regular basis a landslide of people that are leaving that religion (Abundant Grace, 2018).

To explain the details of the trafficking problem among the FLDS, SCDC representatives mostly rely on the perspectives of elite people from the Short Creek community, many of whom are apostates and women, to characterize the problem in a

way that serves their interests. Several apostates of whom work with the SCDC are still deeply integrated into Mormon polygamous families and the wider FLDS community. People like Jena Jones have framed the longstanding history of this problem as a new phenomenon, unique within developed nations like the US:

It's like border wars out there ... it feels like you've stepped into a Third World country... For anybody who is familiar with war torn countries and refugees that is what we're dealing with here. We have a community that has been ravaged and destroyed from a religious war. And because of that the outcome now is a community of religious refugees.²⁹⁸ (100 Women Who Care in Southern Utah, 2019)

Through “highly selective, idealized accounts” (Johnson, 1998, p. 118) proliferated by the SCDC, powerful local apostates can depict themselves as both victims and survivor-members of the community by creating clear cut distinctions between the FLDS of the past, before Warren Jeffs, and the FLDS of the present. This is a form of “strategic ignorance” (Allison Bailey, cited in Sullivan and Tuana, 2007; Johnson, 1998) that allows apostates to avoid criminal culpability for the trafficking of children orchestrated by Warren Jeffs and perpetrated by his other followers in the past, but also shore up the authority of certain apostates over the land and community in the wake of his reign, to regain political, economic, and cultural influence over the town. Drawing on

²⁹⁸ Luke Meredith, a director of the SCDC after the Joneses left, explained in a podcast interview: “When the church was broken up, a lot of the elite left with a lot of the resources” from Short Creek (Murphy, 2021).

the cultural value of feminist subjectivity in the contemporary US, which theoretically privileges and makes room for everyone's individual experiences, they argue that they never shared Warren Jeffs' values, nor did the rest of the community, such as when Shirlee Draper stated that it "wasn't my experience" or "that didn't happen in MY family" when she was living in the community (Hansen Park, 2020).

Functioning through the white ignorance of the American public, this strategic ignorance allows for more flexibility in terms of how people use their different positions of power and vulnerability to circumvent knowledge about a particular subject. It is a strategy among people like FLDS apostates to "avoid or delay harm" to protect members of their family still in the church, while also preserving one's sense of self, which also requires them to speak, at times, from an adversarial posture towards the FLDS (Bailey, 2007, cited in Sullivan & Tuana, 2007, p. 77). So while the SCDC has discursively stepped up anti-trafficking efforts in the town, since so many apostates still have family in the group that they have a vested interest in maintaining the UEP Trust, and dictate the trafficking narrative guiding anti-trafficking interventions on the property it controls, it is unlikely that by only listening to the perspectives of this exclusive group that it will be possible to dismantle the structures that facilitate sexual abuse and trafficking by the FLDS Church within and beyond Short Creek.

Through watching documentaries, television segments, and reading memoirs and local newspaper articles about the Short Creek Community, it becomes apparent that a small group of people born in the same era²⁹⁹ are speaking to the collective experiences

²⁹⁹ People such as Shirlee Draper, UEP Trust attorney Jeff Barlow, Lawrence Barlow, Healaman Barlow, Willie Jessop, Donia Jessop, Arnold Richter, and Terrill Musser were all teenagers who grew up in the 1980s during the Leroy Johnson era (1980s). Whereas they speak to the positive experiences they had in

of every living generation in the community. Many of the people in Short Creek who do not die out at the expense of an elite few in this caste system are economically disadvantaged and uneducated children, many of whom suffer from genetic deficiencies from intergenerational inbreeding in this geographically isolated and historically closed society (Jones, 2012).³⁰⁰

Illustrating how, contrary to many of the purported claims among service providers and advocates who have tried to claim anti-trafficking organizing as a small, “grassroots” movement effort (L. Smith, field observations, November 14th, 2019), the people who typically work on trafficking issues are part of a well-oiled, institutional apparatus (Weitzer, 2007) consisting of members of the elite. Political scientist Jo Freeman offers a useful definition for “elites” within the context of anti-trafficking coalitions at the local, regional, and nationwide level: “a small group of people who have power over a larger group of which they are part, usually without direct responsibility to that larger group, and often without their knowledge or consent” (cited in Táíwò, 2022, p. 22). As Philosopher Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò (2022) explains in their book, *Elite Capture: How the Powerful Took Over Identity Politics and Everything Else*: “There is no hard and

Short Creek, people like Flora Jessop, Carolyn Jessop, Donna Mackert, and Kathleen Mackert have less than flattering things to say about their childhoods growing up in Short Creek. While they have all been able to speak to their experiences in the FLDS, only the former group can speak to the experiences of people in Short Creek. For example, Kathleen Mackert said that she grew up in the FLDS “feeling illegitimate on top of everything else because I couldn’t use my father’s last name,” a practice supported by the midwife in town who would hide names on children’s birth certificates. According to Mackert, this “becomes a real legal issue trying to document (FLDS) existence when they have no imprint on society.” (Hanson, 2015e).

³⁰⁰ These difficult realities were expressed by SCDC director Angel Barnett to a small group of evangelical Christians interested in missionary work (Radius Church, 2021): “When Warren Jeffs went to prison there was a mass exodus of the high functioning part of the town...so who was left behind? 8,000 of the least productive people of their community. Because they don’t call it a family tree there, they call it a wreath. It goes around and around. Because of inbreeding there’s a lot of polygamy down syndrome and there’s a lot of learning disabilities because of their lifestyle.”

fast rule about what kind of person can be an elite,” which is something that is important for understanding this study of trafficking relationships. In some cases, “you’re an elite because of how people have decided (or been forced) to relate to some aspect of your social identity,” because of “your level of education, wealth or social prestige” and sometimes you are an elite simply “because you happen to be the only one of your group who’s in a particular room” (p. 22). I frequently encountered this last form of elite status during this study through field work, and observations of secondhand interviews through podcasts and YouTube videos. In turn, the dominant representation of the history and contemporary situation in Short Creek is based exclusively upon the perspectives of people who have the knowledge, social recognition, and capacity to access platforms to enact social change through language that is accessible to outsiders, such as through the SCDC.

Through consolidated nonprofit work and partnerships with law enforcement agencies, the data analyzed for this study reveals that privileged white groups in Arizona are propping up an inoculated space in Short Creek where the most powerful people who come from this community are rarely, if ever, subject to the same standards that anti-trafficking coalitions hold people outside this space accountable. As president of the UEP trust, president of the local medical clinic, Creek Valley Health Clinic, and Director of Operations at the nonprofit Cherish Families, among other roles,³⁰¹ Shirlee Draper³⁰²

³⁰¹ Draper sat next to Utah senator Deidre Henderson as an advocate of the decriminalization of polygamy, which was passed into law in February 2020 (Solomon, 2021).

³⁰² Shirlee Draper is a unique figure representing the town of Colorado City, Arizona based on her ties to the Jessop name as well as her multiple roles as President of the UEP Trust, president of the board of the local medical clinic, Short Creek Valley Health Clinic, and board member of the nonprofit, Cherish Families, which offers cultural competency training for nonprofits and law enforcement agencies about people from polygamous backgrounds.

holds great influence over the Short Creek community from her home in St. George, Utah. Perhaps holding more influence than most people, it was at her discretion that allowed the SCDC to be in the town. A descendant of one of the children removed during the 1953 raid, at 12-years-old, Shirlee's father had been dragged out from beneath a bed by Arizona law enforcement officials, and then kept separated from his father and mothers for years in a group home. Like many others in her position, this story left on her an impression of persecution by state authorities, which she continues to pass on today:

I heard about it every single day of my life...about how the outside world-the government and law enforcement hate us because of our religion and that they're not to be trusted and we don't ever report to law enforcement. So, when a Mohave County officer would drive into our town I would go into the house and close the door. I absolutely learned that in my deepest cells. (Ventry & Sanders, 2020b)

Although Draper self-identifies as a survivor of Warren Jeffs (Creeker's Foundation, 2018), this positions her as not in any way being responsible for her role in his crimes. Coming from the powerful Jessop family in the community, has since helped to enable her to be educated and ascend the social ladder within the FLDS. She has described her childhood living amidst similar crimes against children as "idyllic" under the leadership of Leroy Johnson (Ventry & Sanders 2020b), while, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, this was certainly not the case for others.³⁰³ Today, after having been

³⁰³ Based on my review of interviews with former FLDS members like Elissa Wall (DeLynn, 2022), Calvin Wayman (Sola, 2023), and Paula Barrett (Hanson, 2015), all from different generations, many of their

the first wife in a plural marriage,³⁰⁴ she often speaks on behalf of the people from Mormon polygamous backgrounds and in favor of tolerance of the ongoing practice, particularly among people from the FLDS.

Despite coming from a position of privilege within the FLDS community, as someone whose father was captured in the 1953 raid, Draper occupies a unique position that allows her to draw on the persecution myth to advance her interests. She claims to have been “terrified of the government” (in St. George, Utah) when she left the church in 2004 and “encountered a great deal of stigma and prejudice” (Creekers Foundation, 2018a). Since her clothing and hairstyle made her “visually identifiable as a deviant,” gentiles would put packs of condoms³⁰⁵ in her shopping cart to insinuate that the FLDS have too many children (Hansen Park, 2020; KJZZ Phoenix, 2017). She also claims that this type of treatment was so prevalent that after separating from her husband, she purposely kept his name because it is less historically identifiable than Jessop as a polygamist name.

According to Draper, her experience with bigotry is longstanding and expected within her family,³⁰⁶ as her mother, Kathleen Jessop, who was known affectionately as

experiences in the FLDS were extremely positive before they reached the age of 8 which, in FLDS culture, is considered “the age of accountability” when they have to begin thinking about their futures living the law of polygamy. Paula Barrett was particularly disappointed in her polygamous marriage because although she was excited about getting married, she had always imagined that she would be the first wife in her marriage. Instead, she became the second wife to an extremely abusive man.

³⁰⁴ Shirlee was the first wife to her husband and later, her younger sister entered their marriage (Solomon, 2021).

³⁰⁵ For example, in Draper’s interview with KJZZ News (2017) she said that after she left the FLDS: “I would be in Walmart looking around thinking, ‘I wonder if one of these people would be my friend — I wonder how I could fit in here.’ And I would turn around and find my cart full of condoms, which is the message that you ‘plygs’ have too many kids and you’ve got to learn how to control yourselves,” said Draper.

³⁰⁶ Shirlee is most likely the daughter of Joseph Lyman Jessop, one of the oldest patriarchs of the community. However, this is only speculation because most children of polygamists will not openly name

“Gramzi” within the community, also faced discrimination by gentiles when she left the church. According to Draper’s testimony, her mother was unable to obtain a driver’s license in Utah because her prairie dress and hairstyle made her “look like a felon:”

She was not in a polygamous marriage, but the clerk knew who she was by looking at her and was justified in discriminating against her...when we codify this type of treatment for an entire population these are the kinds of consequences. People remain under the control of a really vicious person like Warren Jeffs because they’re not safe in the rest of Utah. So, when we talk about unintended consequences from way back-from my dad being taken away from his parents when he was a kid in the 1953 raid, fearful that was going to happen to me. There are a million stories like this. (Hansen Park, 2020)

As members of the FLDS have been dispossessed and displaced by apostates who have returned to apply for UEP land and property, as trust president, Draper is the position of privilege and responsibility to represent those experiences as well as her own to rebuild the ruins left behind by the reign of Warren Jeffs. While she claims there are countless other people who can speak to these experiences, it is undeniable that her version of the story has been one of the most represented in public discourse, and she has discouraged others from speaking out. While it is unclear if this is out of genuine concern or strategy, as she shares her story across various platforms, Draper has cautioned FLDS and apostate listeners about sharing their experiences with the public to avoid being

who their father is to protect him and their family from risk of arrest. Kathleen Jessop was married to Joseph Lyman Jessop.

stigmatized, which functions to the effect of keeping other perspectives outside the scope of public discourse:

People who don't tell stories are a lot better off than the people who do...Cherish Families has crime victim funding from the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) and under that grant...it's a felony for us to expose any of our victims' identities or stories...we could lose our funding. We could go to jail for it...we have a sacred covenant with our clients that we will never use them. We will never use their stories. We will never ask them to go public...and we did that before we had federal funding. (Hansen Park, 2020)

While Draper identifies as a former member of the FLDS, a critic, and survivor of adversity under the Warren Jeffs' regime, she takes issue with the suggestion that polygamy itself is what is causing harm to the people of Short Creek, which would imply that her culture and the people who reproduce it are responsible for their own suffering: "Those of us who came from polygamy... this is in our DNA. And if that is so inherently broken the message is that we are inherently broken...when *I* left, I didn't even *ask* anybody for help because *I* wasn't about to be *used*...most of our clients don't think that they're victims of polygamy...most of our clients get that they come from a *culture*" (Hansen Park, 2020).

From a position contradicting Kaye Quek's (2016) contention that Mormon polygamy is tantamount to trafficking and discounting the treatment of "Lost Boys" sent

out of the community on their own,³⁰⁷ Draper emphasizes that “there are a lot of really positive things for women about polygamy that people don’t talk about,”³⁰⁸ such as the bonds between women and their ability to care for each other’s children (Hansen Park, 2020).³⁰⁹ Rather than criticizing the human consequences of the practice itself, she argues that the injustices associated with it resulted from “a Warren Jeffs issue” and has asked the public to stop bringing him up anymore in the context of Short Creek because it is offensive, adding that her community should not have to “remake ourselves over in someone else’s image...in order to be worthy of services” from government grants and other forms of support (Hansen Park, 2020).

The apostates from Short Creek have succeeded in instilling a government persecution myth against them into the mainstream American public conscience and with considerable support from the government itself, which is composed of people who rely

³⁰⁷ Shirlee says that the FLDS children who were pulled out of school under Warren Jeffs in 2000, for instance, at age 6, were never educated. Draper contends that these women need remedial and technical education that will make them employable. As for the FLDS boys pulled out of school at 6-years-old, these young men are now known as “lost boys.” Draper says that the Lost Boys narrative in the media is that they were all kicked out of the church. However, she says a lot of these young men left on their own because they “couldn’t handle the restrictions”-for instance, dating, flirting with girls, or playing basketball because of Warren Jeffs’ authoritarian leadership. Shirlee says this term was invented by the Utah Attorney General’s office because, “They noticed that there was a large number of boys, usually teenagers and young adults, who, for whatever reason were no longer part of the community and they were kind of just twisting in the wind. A lot of them turned to self-medication, drug addiction because of the psychological harm that’s happened to them being separated from their family and having attachment issues.... there’s a lot of that kind of stuff that happens when people go out and they have no other moral grounding other than what they’re rejecting.” (Ventry & Sanders, 2020).

³⁰⁸ When Shirlee gave birth to her youngest child, her daughter, Angel, had a severe brain injury which caused them both to spend three years in the hospital. While in the hospital, her sister-wife cared for the other children.

³⁰⁹ Shirlee was the first wife in her polygamous marriage to her husband and had one sister-wife, who was also her biological sister. Not caring much for her husband, Shirlee said her sister-wife is what made plural marriage “work” for her and couldn’t imagine what she would have done if she was hospitalized with her daughter for that period without a sister-wife caring for her other children at home. At the time, she had three young sons and her oldest son had autism and a severe developmental delay. The daughter she was in the hospital with had cerebral palsy caused by a brain injury and she was born blind, deaf, and unable to move.

on their narratives to inform policies concerning the community. To advocate for apostates and the FLDS, Draper has mastered the ability to vacillate between both roles of the insider and outsider, FLDS culture and gentile culture, once stating that when she wakes up, she often asks herself: “Who am I going to be today...which culture am I a part of?” (Ventry & Sanders 2020b). To gain political, economic, and cultural influence over Short Creek, from an insider/outsider position, Draper deploys the strategy of “code switching,”³¹⁰ as she explained in a podcast interview (Hansen Park, 2020).

In her own words, Draper’s ability to speak from an insider/outsider perspective is key when conducting cultural competency training for law enforcement and other professionals about the FLDS and other Mormon fundamentalist groups on behalf of the nonprofit, Cherish Families. Additionally, in response to the narratives projected by Draper and others, which characterizes the state as discriminating against the FLDS based on their religious and ethnic identity, the Department of Justice provided funding to Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard and Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff to create a handbook to help law enforcement better understand the diverse culture of Mormon polygamist enclaves in the Western region. *The Primer: Helping Victims of Domestic Violence and Child Abuse in Polygamous Communities* (2006: p. 6) was published in June 2006, consisting of a glossary of terms, a breakdown of different Mormon fundamentalist groups in the US, Canada, and Mexico, an extensive explanation of common Mormon fundamentalist beliefs and practices, and reflects the tangible

³¹⁰ The practice of “code switching” refers to the conscious or unconscious adjustment of one’s language, syntax, grammar, behavior, and appearance from representing a member of an underrepresented group to fit into the dominant culture.

impacts of the 1953 Short Creek Raid on Arizona's collective memory in the historical background section:

The Arizona National Guard conducted the final raid in Hildale, Utah and Short Creek, Arizona (now Colorado City) in a crusade to stamp out polygamy. Images of crying children being wrested from the arms of polygamous mothers created a public relations disaster. These events also created deep scars among fundamentalists and helped to facilitate a fear of government agencies and a distrust of 'outsiders.' Since then, polygamy laws have not been frequently enforced. (Shurtleff & Goddard, 2006, p. 6)

In a similar way to how Draper shifts from a modernized, outsider position to a culturally sensitive expert on the situation in her rural hometown, the SCDC has capitalized on her unique positionality, as well as that of other privileged apostates who project a similar narrative, to exploit the ahistorical understanding of the town held by the public that is enabled through the white ignorance of evangelical Christians. For example, Glyn Jones has described Short Creek of the past as a slice of "Americana," stating that "many of my friends in this community talk about how great it was to grow up here as a child" (Abundant Grace, 2018); while, at the same time, referring to the community under Warren Jeffs to an "African village," where Jeffs was essentially a "witch doctor" who "controlled everything about what they did, how they did it and why they did it" (Abundant Grace, 2018). Therefore, using this comparison to explain that much like the Christian mission trips many people in the congregation took there to help teach people to

build their homes, tend to their cows, and proselytize, they are having to do something very similar in Short Creek today.

The process of code switching from victims to deeply embedded survivor-members of the community, which enables the false nostalgia, has been particularly apparent through comparisons of the FLDS under Warren Jeffs to historical authoritarian leaders who are exceptionally and particularly stigmatized within American culture. In 2021, for example, Angel Barnett told a church group in Oklahoma concerning her missionary work, that Jeffs was a “socialist dictator” in a cultural context where the principles of free market capitalism and democracy are prominent features of white Christian identity (Radius Church, 2021). While apostates do compare Jeffs to other dictators to create space between “normal life” in the FLDS community and the horrors of his short reign, he is most commonly compared to Adolph Hitler. This is not only because Hitler has become a trope of oppression in the United States, the people of which take credit for destroying (as previously discussed), but also because the FLDS had learned to view themselves as Jews.

According to their theology, the FLDS not only view themselves as God’s chosen people for reasons discussed in the previous chapter, but also as victims of an authoritarian state that seeks to destroy their ethnic group. The FLDS make this connection by imagining the plural wives and children of Mormon polygamists hiding from the federal government as akin to the Jews hiding from the Third Reich. At Alta Academy, the elite FLDS school where Warren Jeffs was principal, many students in the FLDS learned to connect this history to the 1953 government raid on Short Creek (Musser, 2013, p. 25) In 2016, for example, FLDS apostate Lamont Barlow, who studied

there while Warren Jeffs was an instructor, told the *Los Angeles Times* that the prophet studied dictators and implemented their techniques to govern the church; “Hitler, Stalin...if you see how the Soviets or the Nazis did it, they used the kids too. They use family against family” (Duara, 2016).

Shirlee Draper and others, who did not attend Alta Academy, have also echoed this point of Jeffs’ former students. She expressed that numerous girls like Elissa Wall were being pushed into an underage marriage while she “observed all these activities with a critical eye of a student of history and had such too many parallels with the rise of Hitler for me to be comfortable with these activities” (Creekers Foundation, 2018a). While it is likely popularly understood that former and disillusioned members of the FLDS Church refer to its leaders as “Nazis,” (Jessop & Brown, 2009) and “the Gestapo” (Wall, 2015), what is less understood is how the concept of the God Squad helps obscure the fact that it was the Colorado City Marshal's formal law enforcement agency that helped train the young men that Shirlee Draper has called “Warren’s Hitler Youth” to spy on their own families to gather evidence on them that could help expel them from Short Creek (Creekers Foundation, 2018a). Missionary boys would go into homes and question families about whether they truly believed in “Uncle Warren,” while also taking inventory on the belongings in people’s homes and searching for contraband (Ventry & Sanders 2020c). Referring to the event when Jeffs excommunicated 21 of the most prominent men from the community in January 2004, FLDS apostate³¹¹ and

³¹¹ Dan Fischer has been an apostate of the FLDS for numerous decades and, in the early 2000s, established a nonprofit called Smiles for Diversity to help finance the education of “lost boys” expelled from the FLDS Church under Warren Jeffs. Today, the nonprofit has changed its name to the Diversity Foundation.

philanthropist Dan Fischer made similar comments in a congressional hearing, where he stated that:

Hitler and Stalin killed their self-thinkers and intellectuals. Jeffs prevents or expels them ...Not unlike the environment in Nazi Germany, Jeffs encourages young people to tell on the wrongs of their parents, siblings, and friends... Probably one of the greatest atrocities Warren Jeffs has brought upon the FLDS has been the decimation of families. Since around 1998, about 250 married men of all ages and some with multiple wives, children, and grandchildren have been expelled. Their wives will not object... This destroys a family, a heritage, a lineage, and the basic glue that holds a society together. (Congressional Hearing for the Committee on the Judiciary United States Senate, 2008, pp. 27-29)

Far more often than drawing on the experiences of African Americans during the civil rights movement, as Musser had done at the 2015 protest against the Colorado City Marshals,³¹² the racial dimension of the dominant narrative projected by FLDS apostates and the SCDC draws upon ideas about Hitler and Nazi Germany to deflect from the responsibility of other people's involvement in child trafficking and child marriage in the community. Just as former members of the Nazi party and their collaborators attributed their transgressions to being under the control of a uniquely charismatic and short-lived dictator after the war to avoid accountability, under whose leadership they were just following orders for fear of reprisal; the dominant narrative surrounding trafficking in the

³¹² As had Flora Jessop, describing herself as the "Martin Luther King Jr." of the anti-polygamy movement in her autobiography (Jessop & Brown, 2009).

community of Short Creek is contingent on the idea that *before* Warren Jeffs arrived the town was uniquely desirable for most of the people who occupied it and that only he and a handful of people were responsible for his crimes while the rest were merely coerced.

It is through this selective history about Hitler's rise to power that enables them to portray Short Creek as a community which persevered through an authoritarian government,³¹³ as a religious and ethnic group that has historically been oppressed by outsiders as many Germans felt they had following the outcome of WWI. While, at the same time, positioning themselves as innocent victims-turned-survivors who uniquely possess the knowledge to revitalize the nostalgia of their town before Jeffs' rise to power in the late 1990s. Based on Glyn Jones' version of FLDS history, for example, whose understanding is based on the stories of these privileged apostates, the town was a "utopia" pre-Warren Jeffs era:

Just really an amazing example of Americana.... There was a very high sense of community here. Everyone pitched in, everybody did their fair share and sometimes more so. So, if your neighbor needed electrical work on their house and you were an electrician you would go over and do that work and vice versa...You see this tremendous camaraderie and many of my friends in this community talk about how great it was to grow up here as a child. (Standing Together, 2020)

³¹³ This is similar to how, during the corona virus pandemic, Marjorie Taylor Green, distended that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi mandated lawmakers to wear masks on the house floor. Comparing her experience to that of the Jews under the Third Reich, complained to the Christian Broadcast Network of the democratic politician: "This woman is mentally ill. You know, we can look back at a time in history where people were told to wear a gold star, and they were definitely treated like second-class citizens, so much so that they were put in trains and taken to gas chambers in Nazi Germany. And this is exactly the type of abuse that Nancy Pelosi is talking about." (Levin, 2021).

Based on this narrative produced by a few privileged apostates, the SCDC has discursively sought to re-establish the false-nostalgic community lost in apostate childhood through its interventions, which has been denied to many of the children in Short Creek today because Warren Jeffs' regime transformed the church. As discussed in the previous section, however, many of the problems that the community faces today, such as economic deprivation, underage marriages, lost boys, genetic deficiencies, and single women burdened with numerous children, many of whom may not be their own, had long existed in the community for many residents. For this reason, from the perspective of privileged apostates and the SCDC, it can be said that most of this community are conceived as collateral damage among a select group of patriarchs, used for unpaid labor, and in the interest of bettering the political, economic, and cultural conditions of Mormon polygamists in Short Creek.

By hyper-focusing on Warren Jeffs, who is elevated to the level of an all-powerful mastermind capable of establishing hegemonic control of everyone in the FLDS, the roles of other members of the church, free agents, who had varying degrees of power and responsibility, are downplayed. For example, while Shirlee Draper has referred to Warren Jeffs and his loyal followers as akin to Adolph Hitler and the Hitler Youth, she was employing Elissa Wall as a babysitter while knowing that she was being pressured into a marriage at 14. Further, she was able to pack up and leave Short Creek with her four children freely, without being constrained, while those she equates her experiences to were either immobilized with violence or forcibly transported to death camps (Creekers Foundation, 2018a). Donia Jessop has also taken issue with the portrayal of apostates who leave the FLDS as having to "escape," given that it was more difficult for adults to

avoid being excommunicated than it was to remain in the church (Ventry & Sanders 2020e).

While Warren Jeffs has often been compared to Hitler, this is a false equivalency that breeds antisemitism. Most obviously, both “industrialized” the deportation and exploitation of people living in their legal dominions, and at the same time organized eugenicist breeding programs to expand desirable populations, but the fact that Hitler ordered the mass murder of tens of millions of people cannot be ignored. Further, while Short Creek and the YFZ have been compared to concentration camps, made possible through the separation and reorganization of families, this process was facilitated not by strangers in service of the state, but by the families of the women and children being trafficked between Arizona, Utah, and Texas.

As previously discussed, white slavery discourses have since then taken on a colorblind and raceless character, but it has traveled through history uninterrupted and now protect FLDS religious practices, some of which are tantamount to trafficking. Despite being characterized as anomalous, Warren Jeffs’ crimes associated with polygamy, including child sexual assault and human trafficking, would not have been possible to the scale and extent that he carried them out without the support of a well-orchestrated institutional apparatus already in place. Stories about the rise and fall of Warren Jeffs and the FLDS Church demonstrates the limitations of colorblind ideology and Jewish racelessness for the future of American democracy, particularly as it is understood in the context of human trafficking.

The privileged FLDS apostates of Short Creek have succeeded in instilling a myth about persecution against them into the mainstream American public conscience, whether

the perpetrator be Warren Jeffs or the government. Almost every person who has been part of the FLDS has experienced trauma, but there is no coherent political movement to connect these collective traumas to explain the damage caused by Warren Jeffs' regime or how to address them. Instead, through the filter of the SCDC and some apostates with similar interests, colorblind symbols and imagery are expressed through the NPIC in the form of incomplete narratives about the Holocaust in the United States to explain what happened there to donors at fundraisers and the wider public. In doing so, the SCDC has continued the legacy of the 20th century white slavery movement, when upper class white women equated their oppression to the experiences of enslaved Black women to elicit a strong reaction, as was discussed in chapter four.

In the face of skepticism about this outside organization's intentions, SCDC director Konstance Meredith, who was formerly a client at the PDC herself,³¹⁴ once stated that the organization is "definitely not for exploiting what happened here" (Mission Support, 2022). She has also attempted to evidence its altruism by explaining how they have sought to correct the injustices experienced by the community in the past: "Our goal is to be able to get people to come alongside of us, keep moving forward, and not staying in the past" (Murphy, 2021).³¹⁵ Because the historical narrative they outline is inaccurate, however, or at the very least distorted and partial, it is important to be critical of the

³¹⁴ Konstance Meredith and her husband, Luke Meredith, replaced Glyn and Jena Jones as the co-directors of the SCDC during the pandemic after Jena Jones contracted a severe case of "long-haulers" coronavirus while living in the community, most of whom do not believe in vaccinations. Luke and Konstance met after being sent to the Dream Center's Church on the Street (COTS) court-ordered program. Before becoming co-director of the SCDC she was the PDC's chief program's operator and served on the mayor's task force as chairman of the victim's services committee (Murphy, 2021).

³¹⁵ Today, the directors of the SCDC are Luke and Konstance Meredith, a married couple who met while they were clients at the Phoenix Dream Center. They replaced Glyn and Jena Jones after Jena fell ill during the pandemic. According to the couple, when the FLDS Church began to dissolve, "a lot of the elite left with a lot of the resources," leaving families to fend for themselves (Murphy, 2021).

changes that have been made in relation to it. Without understanding how this discourse informs the anti-trafficking interventions in Short Creek, the harms they cause to the people they are meant to serve remain hidden and unabated.

A tangible sign of progress in the town is the installation of Mayor Donia Jessop in January 2018 (Arizona Governor's Human Trafficking Council, 2019; Ventry & Sanders, 2020f). In addition to being the first female to be elected in Short Creek, she has been characterized as the first non-FLDS member to govern the town (Draper, 2019; Ventry & Sanders, 2020i). However, this portrayal is misleading, reflecting a larger trend in the apostate regime that has emerged in the wake of Warren Jeffs' arrest. A descendant of one of the founding patriarchs of Short Creek, Joseph Smith Jessop, she was deeply embedded in the church during its most controversial movements in recent history, and only left after being excommunicated in 2012 alongside her husband, while just one of her children, her adolescent aged daughter, was chosen to stay in the group (Arizona Governor's Human Trafficking Council, 2019; Ventry & Sanders, 2020e; Ventry & Sanders, 2020h). After spending three years in St. George, Donia and her family returned in 2015 and eventually secured a home in Hildale (KDXU 94.9 News Radio 890) through the discretion of the UEP Trust, headed by trust president, Shirlee Draper (Solomon, 2021).

With Draper's encouragement and assistance as UEP trust president and founding member of the SCCA, Donia Jessop ran for Hildale mayor against an FLDS candidate (Solomon, 2021). At the time, the SCCA consisted of Donia Jessop, Shirlee Draper, one

of the Barlow boys,³¹⁶ Terrill Musser, as well as Elissa Wall, whose testimony was central to the conviction and incarceration of Warren Jeffs six years previously. There were four positions opening in the local government of Hildale, including one for mayor and three for city council. According to Draper, the SCCA believed that if they “split the vote” that it would be impossible to win, so they took steps to identify the most suitable candidates for the job (Ventry & Sanders 2020f).

Even though many of her family and friends were returning to Short Creek, Draper was not eligible to run for office because she lived 45 minutes away in St. George, so instead she pushed her sister-in-law to try and take the seat from FLDS Mayor Phillip Barlow and the rest of the FLDS-dominated establishment: “Everybody’s like- who’s willing to run against the current administration and turn this government around? I was so filled with fire I was just like, “I KNOW I’m the one to do that. And I knew that my love of this place and the people is what’s driving me because I knew that no matter who they were, what they believed I would stand up for them” (Ventry & Sanders, 2020f).

Although she could not run, as the new president of the UEP Trust, Draper was able to organize a mock election with the SCCA to select four candidates who could get the most endorsements and establish a voting bloc to overthrow the current regime. This primary election took place at the Water Canyon High School, behind Willie Jessop’s America’s Most Wanted Hotel, and ended up being a fruitful strategy. When the votes

³¹⁶ Lawrence Barlow, a former member of the FLDS expelled under Warren Jeffs. Prior to his expulsion, Lawrence Barlow had served as a “volunteer EMT” in the Short Creek community and was connected with local and outside law enforcement due to his long-standing role on the “Safety Net Committee” (Hansen Park, 2017f).

were tallied by Elissa Wall, Donia Jessop emerged as a mayoral candidate. According to Draper, this was a landmark moment in the history of the town, which to its residents signified that the male-dominated political and cultural community was shifting: “It was a big, big deal that the majority chose a *female* candidate to be the *mayoral* candidate because there were some hard liners that were in that town that did not appreciate it. People who no longer follow Warren Jeffs but are extremely patriarchal. They do not feel like they should have a ‘petticoat government,’ and I am quoting them directly” (Ventry & Sanders, 2020i). Soon after the primary, Elissa Wall began walking door-to-door in Short Creek, raising awareness about the upcoming election. In the end, she got at least 75 people to register in the town of Hildale, which had approximately 450 registered voters. She worked alongside Terrill Musser, who wanted to send a message to residents that failing to participate in the election day was the equivalent of casting a vote for the FLDS.

According to Elissa Wall, there was concern that “all of the people that still claimed to live in Hildale were going to vote in the election in their desperate attempt to maintain control over the city” (Ventry & Sanders, 2020i). Since its members were aware that many people, who had either left or been removed from Short Creek by the UEP trust, would attempt to vote anyway, the SCCA took steps to ensure that every vote was legitimate. They ended up challenging 102 voter registrations from the local area, which was 20% of all the registered voters in Hildale, and the county accepted, setting the stage for Jessop’s victory. Barlow faced a stunning and historic loss to Donia Jessop that November 2017, 71 to 96.

In 2018, Donia Jessop was sworn in as the first female mayor in Short Creek's over century long history, along with three new members of the Hildale City Council—all of whom, like Jessop, were former members of the church. After winning the election in November of 2017, Mayor Donia Jessop has since been re-elected and become a living symbol of the progressive changes that have occurred since the fall of Warren Jeffs' empire. By speaking from a position of someone who comes from the community and has since returned to help revitalize the town, she has been able to adopt the authority of an insider and outsider perspective, painting both FLDS apostates and the FLDS in a favorable image. In an interview, Donia explained that her decision to run for public office was not merely one in defiance of the Warren Jeffs regime, but it was also extremely personal:

The people who are currently serving on the town council are our family members. So, it's not like we're going up against strangers. We're going up against our uncles, our brothers, people that are highly respected. People who I respect. One of the people was my Sunday School teacher and I had a lot of respect for him. I still do! I still call him Uncle Carlis. (Ventry & Sanders 2020h)

As a feminist icon signifying progress in the pioneer-esque town of Short Creek, Mayor Donia Jessop has, like the apostates who work with the SCDC, been particularly eager to remove her town's association with Warren Jeffs:

People continue to try and talk about Warren Jeffs and the damage he caused but the message that I want to send is (Short Creek) is all about people. I would love for people to just change the narrative-the entire narrative. (Short Creek) is Zion's backyard, it's a beautiful place to visit. It is the people who built that community, and it has been said far and wide that if you want a job done right get someone from (Short Creek) to do it. THAT is our history. Our history is our integrity, our industrious people, the way that we can come back from so much trauma and how we can stand up and lead. (Draper, 2019)

Through stories that characterize life as an FLDS woman in Mormon polygamy as desirable and functional, while simultaneously standing in staunch opposition to the current FLDS regime, she garnered support from within and beyond the community. Mayor Jessop has credited the generations of women that came before her for giving her the courage to create political change in Short Creek while maintaining her personal integrity as someone who embraces Mormon polygamy. For example, during a meeting with the AZHTC, when chair member Cindy McCain asked Mayor Jessop where she found her strength to overcome the struggles faced by her community, she replied that her mother had taught her many of the most important lessons she had learned in life, including "the importance of education, the need to stand for what you believe in, and to never rely on anyone but yourself" (Arizona Human Trafficking Council Meeting Minutes, 2019, p. 3). Like Draper and other apostates, her privileged positionality has contributed to the false nostalgia at the heart of the anti-trafficking narrative in Short Creek.

Although Donia Jessop has no known formal role in the SCDC, she is deeply entangled in the NPIC in various ways (Jones, 2018; Jones, 2019e). The SCDC could not officially support her as a political candidate since it is a nonprofit, but since her sister-in-law is president of the UEP trust, they are beholden to her family and community. In addition to having people who were alternatively sentenced to work at the SCDC after having been convicted of crimes do landscaping work at her home in Hildale free of cost, she works with them regularly to advance the mission of other apostates (Short Creek Dream Center Report, 2018, p. 6). In September of 2019, for example, she addressed the AZHTC meeting in Phoenix alongside Jena Jones concerning the trafficking problem in Short Creek and the SCDC's entrance into the community (Arizona Human Trafficking Council Meeting Minutes, 2019). Earlier that June, AZHTC representatives traveled to Short Creek to visit Jessop, tour the SCDC and, through her facilitation, meet the mayor of Colorado City, Joseph Allred, who is FLDS (Jones, 2019c; Jones, 2019d; Ventry & Sanders, 2020d).

Through the mayor's collaboration with the SCDC, the AZHTC subsequently provided funding to the Colorado City Marshals' office for training and updated equipment for the purpose of addressing the trafficking problem in their jurisdiction (Arizona Human Trafficking Council Meeting Minutes, 2019). These resources came in response to the DOJ injunctive order issued in 2017, which found the department was deeply corrupted by the FLDS, as the local police had been since the 1953 raid (DOJ Injunctive Order, 2017, pp. 19-20). Despite the findings that culminated from the investigation, the DOJ determined that the harms committed by the Colorado City Marshals were not egregious enough to warrant a reorganization of the department.

Instead of dismantling this corrupt department that was once part of Warren Jeffs' God Squad, the DOJ ordered that the twin towns provide better professional training, appoint a police mentor, and hire two more police officers. Additionally, a new police chief was appointed in August of 2019 named Robb Radley, who moved to Short Creek from the Washington County Police Department in St. George, which has jurisdictional authority over Hildale (St. George News, 2019). In an interview she conducted with a local radio station in 2020, Mayor Jessop suggested that Chief Radley is an ideal fit for her vision for the community, which can only be achieved without outsiders interfering their way of life:

The police department has been completely overhauled. We have new people in there. We have Chief Radley in there now...we have great police force out there-marshals, actually-and they work so well with both mayors. They work well with the community and the great thing about Chief Radley...is they want to be a part of the community. Everyone that's come in, I'm like, "don't come in and fix us. We're not broken. Come in and support us. Help us. Be our partners but don't come in with the idea that you need to fix us. Chief Radley is like, 'okay, how can I be a partner?'"(KDXU 94.9 News Radio 890, 2020)

Mayor Jessop suggests that the Colorado City Marshals had been "completely overhauled" since the fall of Warren Jeffs, both in the sense that many of Short Creek's law enforcement and first responders are either FLDS or apostates, who are deeply embedded in and invested in the preservation of this polygamist community, and also

because while they do operate under the leadership of Mayor Jessop and the FLDS-dominated government of Colorado City in Arizona:

They just barely last year turned over the entire marshal's department so there's no more FLDS on the law enforcement in the town anymore but there's still firemen and paramedics that are here...who are FLDS. The Arizona side of town-their elected official is still part of the FLDS, so their mayor is still FLDS... city hall is still run by the FLDS... I love our marshals here. A lot of them are from outside the community but the ones who are from here who have left the religion are for the most part supportive of what we do, and they've been a great resource for us. (KDXU 94.9 News Radio 890, 2020)

The progressive changes to the Colorado City Marshal's office that Mayor Jessop helped facilitate in conjunction with the AZHTC and SCDC are not symbolic of the transformation of Short Creek's criminal justice system into a mechanism to universally combat the worst aspects of Mormon polygamy within the community, including trafficking, than they are a symbolic instrument wielded by FLDS and apostates with the discretion to determine who the victims and perpetrators there. This chapter has made it clear that the notion that corruption of the "God Squad" was unique to Warren Jeffs' regime is a mythology because, since the beginnings of the LDS Church, even in

Nauvoo, under Joseph Smith, the group has always been at odds with official law enforcement and managed to establish their own police forces.³¹⁷

The anti-trafficking coalition between law enforcement, local and state government, and nonprofits that exists today in Short Creek remains invested in protecting Mormon polygamy as a political, economic, and cultural structure in Short Creek, as well the people these actors have personal connections with there. Not only does controlling the trafficking narrative allow them to insulate certain people from potential or further criminalization,³¹⁸ but it also allows them to target undesirables or people they may simply not care about and portray themselves as having progressed away from the unique injustices of Warren Jeffs' regime.

This anti-trafficking coalition's "hands off" approach to addressing trafficking among the FLDS and within Mormon polygamy, which is largely informed by apostates who grew up in Short Creek and in positions of relative privilege as it existed before the rise of Warren Jeffs, is conducive to reproducing the cruel arithmetic of this religious institution. By stating, unequivocally, that anti-trafficking coalition such as the AZHTC recognize sex work as a form of trafficking in Arizona, while taking an at the very least ambiguous position about recognizing polygamy as a form of trafficking in the state, the color of consent and agency within sexual relationships and social structures becomes clear. In Phoenix, where trafficking victims most often look like adult Black and Brown

³¹⁷ In Nauvoo, they had the Whistlers and Whittlers to intimidate people who came into town. In Short Creek, there were "Uncle Roy's Boys" under Leroy Johnson before there was "Uncle Warren's Sons of Helaman," which likely grew from the all-boys training at Alta Academy (Wall, 2008).

³¹⁸ For example, two prominent patriarchal figures from the Short Creek community who were arrested, prosecuted, and sentenced for crimes tantamount to child sex trafficking have been welcomed back into town and granted homes and land from the UEP Trust since completing their sentences (Carlisle, 2019).

sex workers, some of whom are LGBTQ, victims do not have the ability to express whether they made a choice to participate in this labor. In Short Creek, where trafficking victims most often look like white children and mother from Mormon polygamous families, victims are more commonly referred to as “survivors.” To suggest that a survivor was “forced” into a Mormon polygamous lifestyle is to deny them the agency and authority to speak to the complexity of their own experiences.

Polygamy beat reporter Mike Watkiss, who has been covering the political changes happening in Short Creek since the early 2000s, said that Warren Jeffs issued a revelation from prison on June 3rd, 2022, announcing that he and his son, Helaman Jeffs will soon commence arranging polygamous marriages among the FLDS after over a decade since he banned the practice (AZ Family Arizona News, 2022). In the revelation, Jeffs called for some of the men who he had kicked out of the church previously to gather their children and come back into the fold. People like FLDS member Norma Richter have expressed being “elated” about this news. In an interview with Mike Watkiss, Richter said, “It’s always good news to hear from (Warren Jeffs). That’s why we’re still here after this many years...why would my family have five, six generations in this if it wasn’t good?” (AZ Family Arizona News, 2022). A major reason why the FLDS and apostates see this revelation as good news is, according to Richter, because it will give some of them the opportunity to reunite with their families after being torn apart years ago. Another reason people are excited about the revelation is because they want the prophet to resume arranging plural marriages.

In the same interview with Richter, Short Creek residents Maxine and Daniel Jessop express anger and fear about the revelation (Fox13 News Utah, 2023). The

Jessops, who are apostates, said that their 17-year-old daughter who was also an apostate went to visit her two older sisters who were still in the FLDS. Maxine and Dan's 19-year-old twin daughters are still members of the church and at the time of the report, they hadn't returned their younger sister to their parents in over a month. Apostate Elizabeth Roundy has been in the media the past year trying to raise awareness about what is going on in Short Creek today and get help finding her daughter, Alintra, who ran from Elizabeth's home to their father, Nephi Jeffs, Warren Jeffs brother (Fox13 News Utah, 2023). Dwayne Barlow, another resident in Short Creek who used to work closely with Warren Jeffs' brother, Lyle Jeffs, put out a similar call this past year when his 10-year-old daughter went missing with her uncle, Heber Jeffs, who was 54 at the time (Fox13 News Utah, 2022). According to FLDS apostate Sam Zitting-Wyson, who hosts the podcast, *Growing Up in Polygamy*, many of these cases of children disappearing with their relatives are being framed as runaway cases when they are, in actuality, child trafficking cases.

It is unclear *who* and *how* people are being identified as trafficking victims in this community by the SCDC. However, because the people governing Short Creek, including the marshals and the city councils are operating at the discretion of the UEP Trust, which controls all the land and parks in the community, it is likely they are targeting some of the minority of people who remain loyal to Warren Jeffs or other rising prophets. Through the lens of the NPIC, this anti-trafficking coalition serves the interests of apostates, as well as reinforces the interests and credibility of the SCDC. One way this occurs is through the creation of rehabilitative "volunteer" positions for which the SCDC receives contracts from the state to facilitate, such as providing manpower to the Colorado City

Marshals office to carry out anti-trafficking raids and provide security to and social services to people identified as victims, as Pastor Angel Barnett once explained during a presentation to a church in Oklahoma:

We go on these different stings and people reach out to us because they know that we're there now... we have a marshal there that can cross both borders. So we will have some of the women in the FLDS in the middle of the night with an unmarked truck and we have about 300 guys from the Phoenix Dream Center who are barely saved out of prison going through our recovery program and we have about 20 of them up there as our security guards in their next level of healing...and they'll help us rescue these amazing girls and we take them into the Dream Center. (Radius Church, 2021)

What is most unclear about this form of anti-trafficking intervention in Short Creek is what it means to “rescue” people from trafficking in Short Creek. Unlike in the city of Phoenix, where stories about girls being unshackled from hotel rooms after being raped by a “pimp” are peddled wildly, the stories that come out of the SCDC paint a less exciting picture of trafficking that entails hunger, neglect, drug abuse, and suicide, among other conditions.³¹⁹ With regard to those who are taken to the SCDC trafficking shelter, it is unknown what happens to these people after they leave.

³¹⁹ A story about the SCDC that Glyn and Jena Jones have repeated at multiple awareness raising and fundraising event is one about getting a call from the Colorado City marshals about a group of 9 children who needed to be rescued from their suicidal mother and taken to the Dream Center. According to Jena, the oldest boy of the children asked on their drive to the SCDC, “Do we get to go to the Dream Center now?! Now my brothers and sisters finally get to eat” (Dream City Church- Phoenix, 2019). She told this story at multiple events. For example, speaking to Republican Women in Southern Utah she said: “We have a single mom, for instance, that’s staying with us right now. She has 10 kids and her youngest one is a 7 year

Conclusion

Tracing the race-based themes across different groups' histories within the US anti-trafficking movement in this dissertation has demonstrated how trafficking discourse can shapeshift across time and space to meet different political agendas, from progressive to the extreme right. Building on the previous discussion of the 1953 raid in Chapter 5, this chapter has described how members and apostates of the FLDS Church have characterized anti-trafficking interventions targeting their practice of polygamy, child brides, and other crimes as unwarranted persecution by the federal government. It explained how, on the one hand, the narrative of their victimhood relies on equating their experiences living in the community under the leadership of Warren Jeffs to those of African Americans during the civil rights movement, occupants of the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin, and the victims of the Third Reich amidst the Holocaust, which reduces the history of these groups' persecution to these events and minimizes their degree of consequence. On the other hand, it explained how the narrative of their redemption associates the anti-trafficking coalition responsible for addressing the problem with the movement to abolish slavery, as exemplified by the town's new slogan, which refers to Short Creek as "Arizona's North Star"³²⁰ (Town of Colorado City Homepage, 2020).

old little girl and she is still in a size 2 tee, 3 tee clothes...due to malnutrition...when we went to pick up this family to come and stay at the Dream Center some of the kids were in the car all huddled together and the oldest teenage boy looked at me and he said, 'so if we're staying at the Dream Center does that mean that we finally get to eat now? And all the kids came back and it was in the middle of the night and they were starving and you know, they just ate and ate and ate and it is amazing what has happened with just the nutrition...that you see them flourishing, you see the attitudes, you see the behavior, you see the whole family unit getting stronger and better and it came from something as simple as a meal."

³²⁰ During the 19th C., the north star was what runaway slaves would use as reference to the constellation that would help guide them in the direction towards freedom from Southern slave states (The Town of Colorado City, 2023).

In conjunction with the persecution myth that was generated by the 1953 raid, this two-sided narrative was repurposed following the YFZ raid in 2008, shifting the blame from the state to the Warren Jeffs' regime. This ahistorical discourse has been projected by a small group of people from the FLDS who have seized control of the town since Warren Jeffs' arrest, which discounts the experiences of others who have been victimized by crimes associated with Mormon polygamy, including human trafficking (Bennion & Joffe, 2016; Bradley, 1993; Carlisle, 2018; Decker, 2013; Jeffs, 2009; Jones, 2012; Park, 2020; Zitting-Wyson & Zitting-Wyson, 2022). Through code switching, which allows them to simultaneously occupy epistemological positions as insiders and outsiders, a small group of apostates can represent themselves as people who uniquely possess the knowledge required to heal the community and victims of the FLDS without responsibility for Warren Jeffs' crimes. Drawing on the power of the unique social location of specific community members, such as the first "non-FLDS" mayor of the town and the "feminist" UEP Trust President, whose privileged placements in the community have insulated them from many of the harms associated with Mormon polygamy, their work with the SCDC has reproduced the conditions in Short Creek that enable trafficking, on behalf of a state-wide anti-trafficking coalition.

As has been delineated throughout this dissertation, upper-class and white dominated campaigns against white slave trafficking have historically exaggerated the conditions imagined of white women within non-white political, economic, and cultural contexts in the United States. Since the mid-20th century, their capacity to proliferate these exaggerations across various situations has often hinged on the colorblindness and racelessness of Jewish people in the American imagination. The experiences of enslaved

Africans and Jews during the Holocaust have often been universalized across all oppressed groups, to the effect of reducing their history of persecution to these periods and minimizing the legacies of these atrocities. At the same time, the colorblindness of modern slavery and racelessness of Jewish people has also been harnessed by the anti-trafficking movement to label Black people and Jews as traffickers, which today circulates through seemingly incoherent, albeit historically consistent QAnon conspiracy theories about pimps like R. Kelly and pedophiles like Jeffrey Epstein.³²¹

The meaning of the term “trafficking” has become so distorted that an anti-trafficking organization like the SCDC is a powerful example of how you can have an anti-trafficking shelter in the center of an isolated polygamous town and yet fail to generate any sort of coherent, substantive discussion about the meaning of trafficking in this context and its impact on people from the community. The conflation of the victims of the Third Reich with people from the FLDS under Warren Jeffs reproduces the same political dynamic of the narrative of the white slavery movement discussed previously. This false equivalency renders a monolithic image of the community where FLDS of different eras appear equally and minimally culpable for the crimes perpetrated by the

³²¹ While it is true that both R. Kelly and Jeffrey Epstein were prosecuted and convicted for crimes pertaining to sex trafficking and, based on interviews with victims, court records, video footage, and flight logs it appears to be the case, these convictions of one Black man and one Jewish man have been much more prominent in the media than other well-known trafficking cases about white men like Florida Congressman Matt Gaetz or former Maricopa County assessor in Phoenix, Arizona, Paul Petersen, who worked under Governor Doug Ducey and pled guilty to smuggling pregnant women from the Marshall Islands, to Arizona and at least two other states, including Arkansas and Utah, among other charges, as part of an adoption scheme for LDS couples in June 2020. After discovering that Petersen was costing US taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars in taxpayer money by using state funded medical benefits to have Marshallese women give birth in the hospital based on falsified residency, he was sentenced to six years in prison in an Arkansas federal case in December 2020. His actions also violated a United States and Marshall Islands contract, which bans Marshallese people from traveling to the United States for adoptions unless they have a specific visa. Petersen was charging couples \$35,000 to adopt these Marshallese children before being sentenced as well as a member of the LDS Church, and a former employee of Governor Doug Ducey, who oversaw the AZHTC (United States & Customs Enforcement, 2021).

Warren Jeffs regime, if at all. By co-opting the narrative and associated images of the Holocaust, the NPIC exploits the white ignorance of the American population concerning the history of Short Creek and the history of Nazi Germany, to generate power and profit at the expense of FLDS victims of harms affiliated with trafficking, as well as African Americans, Jewish peoples, immigrants, and queer folks outside the community.

In the context of Short Creek, the FLDS have largely fallen outside the scrutiny of the anti-trafficking movement since the 1953 raid, with organizations like the SCDC even advocating for their right to practice polygamy in the aftermath of the 2008 raid, where it was revealed that hundreds of women and children were being trafficked. The racelessness of Jewish peoples and general ignorance of their history enables the FLDS to compare their experiences to Jewish peoples, while at the same time attracting resources from a political, economic, and cultural context where the American public is engrossed with antisemitic trafficking conspiracy theories. Recounting the experiences of people who lived through the Warren Jeffs era, some of whom now work with the SCDC, allows us to compare how the SCDC describes the nature and scope of the problem to outsiders, including mainstream Mormons, evangelical Christian church groups, and the AZHTC.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings

Having illustrated and proven that how anti-trafficking coalitions have caused harms and continue to cause harm through white ignorance and the NPIC, this dissertation study demonstrates how anti-trafficking shelters like the PDC, and the SCDC often generate bad data and misinformation about trafficking which helps them secure state and private funding to grow the “rescue industry” (Agustin, 2007) around anti-trafficking. Power, as it is conceptualized in the anti-trafficking movement, relies upon a gendered epistemology to explain trafficked persons’ exploited conditions, explicitly absent of race, where only certain people and stories are being figured in broader ideas about trafficking. The resulting epistemological ignorance has been conducive to the proliferation of the “victim centered,” rather than victim-informed approach, which has had uneven consequences for poor people, people of color, immigrants, and sex workers in urban areas, in comparison to their white Christian counterparts in rural towns like Short Creek.

In a context where the dominant ideas about sex trafficking are maintained and reproduced by white, professional women in the US, this dissertation sought to address some of the harmful mythologies and corresponding interventions that are required to help this industry grow through the nonprofit Industrial Complex (NPIC). The nonprofits within the anti-trafficking coalition examined in this study *monitored and controlled social justice movements* by maintaining the focus of anti-trafficking on the sexual exploitation of American youth for purposes of prostitution, to the detriment of sex

workers, migrants, homeless and runaway youth, and people from abusive polygamous backgrounds whose experiences rarely reflect this dominant image. Instead of *mass-based organizing capable of actually transforming society*, it *redirected activist energies into career-based modes of organizing* by providing jobs to a handful of their clients whose trafficking stories offer a form of currency for propping up and maintaining anti-trafficking nonprofits and private businesses. It *managed and controlled dissent to make the world safe for capitalism*, by suppressing the voices of sex workers and people from FLDS backgrounds whose stories about the Short Creek community reflect a history other apostates may not like to remember.

This coalition *encouraged social movements such as anti-trafficking to model themselves after capitalist structures that reinforce structural and institutional inequalities rather than challenge them*, through the increased partnerships between academic, carceral, corporate, and charitable institutions to address human trafficking through criminalization strategies that reproduce social structures along the lines of race, class, and gender. It *diverted public monies into private hands through foundations* by allowing anti-trafficking coalitions to secure federal grants for combating human trafficking, which came under control of nonprofit actors, who were under the influence of apostates in Short Creek. Finally, it *allowed corporations to mask their exploitative and colonial work practices through “philanthropic” work*, by adopting the language of abolition to rationalize racialized carceral strategies that disproportionately facilitate the exploitation of people of color and the poor through raids, arrest, and unpaid labor, diverting resources away from much needed public services.

The function of the anti-trafficking coalition examined in this study hinges on the white ignorance of the American public, in that it exploits the gaps between their own positionality in relation to other marginalized groups, as well as their knowledge of the problem of human trafficking in the past, which distorts how it appears it should be addressed in the present. The symbol of white womanhood has persisted, historically, as a call to violence for white men targeting marginalized groups, and particularly people of color, without political nuance. As a gendered symbol of violence in the service of white supremacy, the historically substantiated trope of white womanhood and purity that continues to hold power today, allows the anti-trafficking movement to proliferate itself according to gender based on racial and reproductive difference. Because many white Americans are concerned that their power is being contested by the gendered and racial demographic changes resulting from formal legal equality among citizens, technological advances, and immigration policies, the position of white bourgeois women within the anti-trafficking movement crucially provides a legitimizing voice to elevate threats of gendered violence against sex workers as a form of trafficking within the sexual economy. Since white men seek justification for “righteous violence,” the actions of white women in the anti-trafficking movement serve the function of minimizing violence against women and children, while softening their own violence within private marriage, whether polygamous or monogamous.

What is most useful about this case study of human trafficking in Short Creek, is that it makes clear that the subject of trafficking in Arizona is, at best, extremely complicated and, at worst, fraught with contradictions, in a manner that speaks to how power relations are organized around religious freedom, sexual labor, race, class, and

gender in the contemporary US. The fact that the framework of trafficking can be applied so broadly, from polygamists in Northern Arizona to sex workers in Central Arizona, indicates that the term trafficking itself needs to continue to be critically interrogated as an ideological framework altogether. Because the Short Creek Dream Center can indirectly³²² support the decriminalization of polygamy as a form of trafficking, at the same time the Phoenix Dream Center can openly advocate for criminalizing sex work as a form of trafficking, suggests that the trafficking framework serves the reproduction of the anti-trafficking NPIC. The reproduction of the NPIC depends upon support from white Christian donors who are supportive of law enforcement, due to wealth inequality resulting from centuries of colonialism and chattel slavery in the US and abroad.

The interventions vary between Short Creek and Phoenix because the Arizona Dream Center program model contextually develops and tailors stories about the complex subject of trafficking in a manner both palatable and attractive to people with the resources and discretion to support them. The NPIC frame can explain why anti-trafficking coalitions in Arizona, such as the SCDC, the AZHTC, and others connected to them, often portray traffickers and their victims through colorblind and raceless language concerning the topics of chattel slavery and the Holocaust. The people within anti-trafficking coalitions strategically deploy these ideas in a context where they are particularly significant to how people make sense of their past through which their social positionality came to be, how they understand the way society is organized, and the way

³²² This is because they provide power/authority the small group of privileged apostates who advocate for the decriminalization of polygamy, such as Shirlee Draper, while simultaneously supporting putting polygamous families in Short Creek back together (Colvin, 2018; Mission Support, 2022; Radius Church, 2021).

they desire it to be structured in the future. The differences in how anti-trafficking coalitions operate in Phoenix in comparison to Short Creek speak to how the relevance of US anti-trafficking coalitions often prioritizes the accumulation of wealth and power over providing services to people who have been harmed by behaviors that fit within the scope of this broadly conceived of issue of trafficking.

Through research and rehabilitation in diversionary interventions like Project ROSE, anti-trafficking coalitions in Phoenix attract social support and revenue by painting the trafficking problem in ways that disproportionately criminalize the poor and especially Black and Brown people, few, if any, of whom would identify as trafficking victims, particularly if their access to resources or were not contingent upon it. In Short Creek, however, since the continuation of anti-trafficking coalitional work is possible only at the discretion of the UEP Trust, all of whom come from FLDS backgrounds, the SCDC, on behalf of the AZHTC, shields people who live there from both victimization and criminalization through the discursive separation of trafficking from polygamy. The minimization and sometimes outright denial of evidence of activities which, anywhere else in the country would be considered crimes of trafficking, has enabled people from the FLDS to maintain control of the local government and UEP Trust land, while opening themselves up to nonprofit outsiders for purposes of helping them rebuild their community, reinforce their new narrative, further fueling the anti-trafficking NPIC.

Since the outside world is largely unfamiliar with the history and politics of Mormon polygamy in Short Creek, while also, in many cases, unwilling to accept FLDS members' testimonies who consider themselves loyal to Warren Jeffs, apostates hold "credibility and broad appeal in the eyes of the public because they can claim to have

been insiders at one time,” but were either unwilling or unable to remain in the community as Jeffs’ regime unfolded (Wright 2011: pp. 141-142). This dynamic worked to the advantage of the SCDC, which works closely with many individuals and entities who are FLDS apostates from the community, because it grants their organization legitimacy in the town and frames its interventions as being oriented by the needs and desires of people from the community.³²³

While the SCDC appears to be deeply invested in communicating a narrative about human trafficking in Short Creek according to the perspectives of people who live there now, this is far from the case at the PDC. In Phoenix, sex workers have been barred from speaking to their own experiences by anti-trafficking coalitions, as the professionals working within them find sex workers to be epistemically suspect, untrustworthy, and not representative of most people’s experiences. This assumption creates a particular problem for sex workers arrested for research studies and rehabilitative interventions like Project ROSE and others who may also become clients of the PDC, because it creates a “closed circuit of epistemic authority” regarding the harms of criminalization as a “victim-centered” approach to curbing the trafficking problem in Arizona (Mills, 2007, p. 34).

Critical trafficking scholar Melissa Ditmore has pointed out: “the removal of autonomy and agency is at the heart of trafficking in persons. Yet, by requiring people who have been trafficked to identify as powerless victims, current approaches to

³²³ For example, in a podcast interview, Jena Jones proclaimed that her work in the FLDS community had resulted in close professional and social relationships with polygamists, one of whom, “has 76 children...he’s a friend of ours” (Colvin, 2018). Likewise, while lecturing to a church audience, Angel Barnett said: “I sat down at a table with a gentleman and his *two wives*-and they shared the most intimate parts of their hurts because they are positioning themselves for a comeback and to do that you have to share your past.” She explained that after the man told her his story about getting kicked out of the FLDS because he refused to give up another one of his young daughters to Warren Jeffs, “I said, ‘I don’t know how but I’ve got to be an intimate part of this project’” (Radius Church, 2021).

trafficking replicate this dynamic” (Ditmore, 2009, p. 52). Sex workers participate in the sexual economy for a variety of reasons and immensely disparate social positionalities, yet, within the anti-trafficking movement, all of them have been swept up in a monolith that intentionally omits their diverse experiences from recognition. Due to the stigma and criminalization that comes along with sex work, sex workers are not included in decision-making spaces in anti-trafficking coalitions. In their absence, nonprofits and law enforcement within these coalitions have the authority to explain to the public what the dynamics of exploitation within sex work look like, as well as polygamy as a form of sexual labor, both of which amount to trafficking cases established through research, rescue, and rehabilitative efforts. Because sex workers are left out of these discussions today as they have been in the past, this project has considered what we can learn in terms of understanding what historical truths anti-trafficking coalitions have long been interested in perpetuating, as well as what social consequences they have been interested in defending across a range of vulnerable communities.

Sex workers’ decisions to sell their sexual labor is shaped by their social positionality as subjects of racial capitalism (Miller-Young, 2013, 2014; Shimizu, 2007), and as discussed previously, Jewish immigrant women in the early 20th century often chose this work on the basis that it was less exploitative than other available options (Michaels, 2017). Today, sex workers’ voices have been suppressed by the anti-trafficking NPIC in states such as Arizona and among coalitions and organizations such as the AZHTC and the PDC because they have refused to equate sex work with sex trafficking. Instead, sex worker’s rights organizations assert that sex is work, like any

other form of labor. Because all forms of work have the potential to be exploitative under racial capitalism, sex workers argue that their labor should not be criminalized.

Without decriminalization as intervention, anti-trafficking organizations like the one discussed within the context of Phoenix will continue to be able to prevent sex workers from articulating their own perspectives on the sheer basis that their work is not “representative” of most people’s experiences in this industry. The criminalization of sex work permits anti-trafficking organizations to continue labeling all sex workers, monolithically, as trafficking victims and their pimps as traffickers. In Phoenix, faith-based interventions offered through human trafficking programs like at the PDC have been criticized by sex workers (Best Practices Policy, 2014; Simon & Moskal-Dairman, 2013; Vasquez, 2014) for using law enforcement to prop up their criminalization strategies to support their program model, which they need to help arrest people deemed “trafficking victims” to generate clientele and labor for private companies.

In contrast, many of the interventions offered by the SCDC have been praised in Short Creek by some local residents and politicians (Dream City Church, 2019; Hope Heroes, 2022a) with the exception, for example, of some people from the FLDS Church who view the nonprofit as a form of outside interference, disruptive to the community and disrespectful in the sense that they moved into their incarcerated prophet’s home on land that was consecrated to the FLDS Church (Trust Me: Cults, Extreme Beliefs, and Manipulation 2020). While not vocally expressing support for the organization, the presence of the SCDC is only possible with the approval of UEP Trust president, Shirlee Draper who, among others from the community, appears to have witnessed or known of a

wide range of abuses by Warren Jeffs and other members of the FLDS Church.³²⁴ For people like Draper, addressing human trafficking there means understanding that polygamous wives have the ability to make choices to live within these family structures and that people do not need to be “rescued” from polygamous families. To have the ability to speak to the complexity of her own decisions to leave polygamy, in part, motivated Draper to advocate for the decriminalization of polygamy in February 2020, in partnership with Utah Senator Deidre Henderson (Solomon, 2021).

Draper’s advocating for the decriminalization of polygamy has been staunchly debated by people within and beyond the community of Short Creek, but among those who share her position, some have also rejected the legitimacy of oppositional perspectives based on their experiences. By identifying as a woman born and raised in polygamy before entering a polygamous marriage herself, and as a survivor of the Warren Jeffs regime, Draper is able to occupy an “insider/outsider” perspective that allows her to both dismiss and legitimize the voices of people who have experienced harms within Mormon polygamy, such as trafficking. She made this clear in an interview with Lindsey Hansen Park, an LDS member, podcaster, and FLDS ally, who helped Terrill Musser organize the 2015 police protest. Draper explained that people who are critical of her for allegedly “not listening to victims of polygamy,” because she supports its decriminalization and the right for people to live in polygamous families, need to: “define victim...my life is victim advocacy... it’s not the structure it’s the PEOPLE. Sexual abuse is perpetrated by human beings, not by principles” (Hansen Park, 2020).

³²⁴ Other women who, in any other circumstance, would likely be charged with aiding and abetting human trafficking (Creekers Foundation, 2018; Ventry & Sanders, 2020e).

Many people share Draper's perspective supporting the decriminalization of polygamy, such as feminist ethnographers like Janet Bennion (2004), who has argued for decriminalization on the basis that outlawing behaviors is more likely to create a criminal base and an underground where they are more subjected to abuses and cut off from access to resources. Another, perhaps, surprising proponent for decriminalization who backed a bill for decriminalization is Derek Kitchen, one of six democrats in the Utah State Senate and its sole openly gay member (Solomon, 2021). Shirlee Draper's cousin, Alina Darger, who is an open and politically outspoken polygamist, told a reporter, "A lot of our first allies were LGBTQ... I've come to an appreciation for their struggle, and I am a very firm champion of rights for every person" (Solomon, 2021). However, while people who have been involved in movements interpreted as progressive, such as those for marriage equality led by LGBTQ people, these same people have, at times, also aligned with politicians and other groups in support of the decriminalization of polygamy. Based on the findings of this dissertation, there is a need to consider how messages resonate with people based on how different groups align politically, along the lines of this issue and what these messages mean for the larger public's understanding of these topics.³²⁵

While there are undoubtedly women from Mormon polygamous backgrounds who have made an active decision to marry into plural families, this does not mean that people should discredit the different experiences of those who have felt limited in their

³²⁵ In February 2020 a large group of FLDS from Short Creek made their way to the Utah state capitol to rally in favor of the decriminalization of polygamous marriage with signs like, "Families, Not Felons," and "I Love All My Moms," reflecting campaigns for decriminalization and LGBTQ rights, broadly (Solomon, 2021).

abilities to exercise choice in these structures. In over a century's worth of arranged, intergenerational polygamous marriages within this small FLDS community, the population has reproduced a "cruel arithmetic," similar to what was predicted by legal scholar Craig Jones (2012). Given the need for disproportionate gender demographics, this family structure requires the trafficking of women and children in and out of the community to sustain itself and incites a trend in the marriage for girls of an increasingly downward age. The political, economic, and cultural structure of the FLDS, throughout the nation and across North America, incentivizes its members to tolerate marriages between adolescent and teenage girls to adult and elderly men to enable their celestial ascension. Those who subscribe to the religion are required to live polygamy to get into heaven,³²⁶ which drives men in the religion to do whatever it takes to attain at least three wives and compels women to tolerate their own exploitation and that of others.

A disproportionate number of children born in Short Creek have been historically vulnerable to genetic problems and many women and girls have been denied reproductive autonomy. They are also subject to a form of cultural socialization that hinders their success outside of the community due to limited access to transportation and communication, viable educational and employment options, and stable housing. Further, because they have been trained to perceive the outside world as hostile, an assumption that has been reinforced for generations, this has limited many of their social

³²⁶ Specifically, men are required to attain three wives to get into the Celestial Kingdom of Glory and possess their own planet (Abundant Grace Church, 2018).

relationships to people living in the community, further hindering their potential to flourish in the gentile world.³²⁷

Glyn Jones refers to the town of Short Creek as being part of an “intergenerational cult” where people stay in the community because they “prefer a familiar hell as opposed to an unfamiliar heaven” (Abundant Grace Church, 2018). This is especially true since the people who choose to return or stay in Short Creek might not necessarily advocate for the practice of polygamy, but they are drawn there for other reasons, as Jena Jones has suggested:

It’s home to them! It’s been a generational homestead there-their families have been there since the 1930s, it’s where their great grandparents grew up so that’s familiar for them and that’s where all their families are. Everyone is a really tight knit family and ...they were just torn apart... so as they all come out and start getting their own healing, they start reconnecting...that creates that family unit that they’ve longed for.... So yes, they do like staying there. (Abundant Grace Church, 2018)

While it is certainly the case that some people who grew up in Short Creek can find reasons to stay there, not only considering their religious beliefs, but also their prospects of intergenerational inheritance, as Glyn Jones has suggested, the barriers faced by people living in Short Creek must be considered in this analysis.

Because of how the politics of race, gender, religion, and the law operate in the contemporary US, the criminalization of sex work as a form of trafficking has denied

³²⁷As the FLDS have formed splinter groups, they have slowly begun to branch out from Short Creek to Centennial Park, Fredonia, Apple Valley, Hurricane, and St. George, Utah (Hansen Park, 2017a).

people who do not identify as victims a platform to speak to these experiences without risk of arrest and incarceration, while the discursive separation of polygamy from trafficking has made decriminalization possible, despite opposition from anti-polygamy critics. A position shared by anti-prostitution and anti-polygamy feminists (Bindel 2018; Dines 2006; Dworkin 1981; Edwards, 1997; Jessop & Brown, 2009; MacKinnon 2005, 2011; Newman, 1886), across the US, and in Arizona, is that both sex work and polygamy perpetuate violence against women and children by men in a patriarchal society. Where debates regarding these two topics diverge, however, is in consideration of individual female agency, social positionality, and the law. Based on what was discovered in this study, in relation to notions of sex work, marriage, and trafficking, feminist scholar Wendy Chapkis (1997, p. 50) argues that biased nature of anti-trafficking campaigns that have flatly rejected the idea that women and especially girls can make an active choice to sell their labor through sex work. At the same time, these campaigns have created more of a gray area regarding this same notion of sexual agency for girls within boundaries of marriage, which demonstrates how the legality of these phenomena are fraught with epistemic contradictions:

Despite clear evidence that state-sanctioned heterosexual marriage and family life is often violent, coercive, and abusive, there is no comparable argument that these institutions must be prohibited in all of their varied forms including those which participants claim to be consensual... Rarely is abolition suggested as the most appropriate tactic, nor are claims made that... those who choose marriage (or defend another's right to do so) are 'pseudo-feminists,' or that an adequate

understanding of these institutions can be attained by studying only those who have ‘escaped’ them. All these are claims made freely about prostitution, however. (Chapkis, 1997, p. 50)

Based on her experience running an anti-trafficking housing program for women and their children in Phoenix, Dominique Roe-Sepowitz explained that she learned it was the structure of the sex trade that made it so dangerous and prone to violence, largely because it “makes girls hate each other”:

Because on the streets there’s competition, they’re in the same stable, they have three girls and a pimp and there’s only one at the top and they’re always competing for that top position so they’re undercutting each other, they’re stealing from each other, they’re hurting each other...he doesn’t want them to collaborate. So, the structure of the trafficking is really damaging to women in our relationships with each other. (D. Roe-Sepowitz, field observations, November 23rd, 2019)

Despite purported differences between how trafficking and similarly related harms emerge within sex work versus polygamy, Carolyn Jessop’s description of the familial hierarchy in her marriage to Merrill Jessop, a wealthy FLDS businessman who would eventually become the bishop of the YFZ Ranch in Texas, sounds strangely similar:

Every member of a polygamous family knows which wives hold power. When a new wife enters a family, it is imperative for her to establish power with her

husband sexually. While there are exceptions, most men routinely change their favorite wives...a woman who possesses high sexual status with her husband has more power over his other wives. This means he will listen to her complaints more seriously and will discipline wives she might be angry with. Knowing her husband will enact retribution for her is an enormous weapon to wield.³²⁸ (Jessop & Palmer, 2007, pp. 117-118)

As these quotations demonstrate, even though all but one wife in a polygamous family can hold legal married status to the husband they all share, thus creating conditions that could easily exploit the physical, sexual, and reproductive labor of all of the sister wives whose marriages are not legal, the PDC sees power dynamics between men and polygamous wives, who are often below the age of consent, differently than similar dynamics between men and girls in the sex trade. This contradiction speaks to how the anti-trafficking NPIC in Arizona and the US is organized by Christian conceptions of gender relations and often through discourses equating anti-trafficking interventions to women and girl's freedom from modern slavery.

More critical interrogations of feminist subjectivity that reject the presumed purity of women's motivations and legitimacy of their perspectives as women can be useful for

³²⁸ In her memoir, *The Witness Wore Red*, Rebecca Wall describes how her sister wife, Naomi, likely climbed to the top of Rulon Jeffs' plural wife hierarchy when they were married. When Warren Jeffs was first caught by police in Las Vegas, he was traveling with his brother, Nephi, and his wife, Naomi. Naomi had been married to Rulon Jeffs before she was married to Warren Jeffs following the patriarch's death. While married to Rulon, Naomi often instructed other sister wives like Rebecca on how to please their husband. For example, Rebecca describes one particularly uncomfortable "lesson" with Naomi in which she gave detailed instructions as to what to do in the bedroom: "Her tone was instructional at first but became slower and more sensual. 'Now he really likes you to rub his chest. Fondle his nipples. Then make your way down to his tummy, and slowly move in. He likes you to stroke'" (Musser, 2013, p. 88).

understanding and generating truths about trafficking. Critical scholars may be able to move further “away from the assumption of man as predator and woman as victim” which “allows us to analyze sexual intimacy as a political relationship” (Grant, 1993, p. 121). Such a theoretical shift helps challenge ideas that sex work and polygamy are fundamentally violent and perpetuate harmful gender dynamics between men and women while also challenging the idea that white bourgeois women who work within nonprofits and law enforcement to combat trafficking are fundamentally non-violent.

Many opponents of polygamy and sex work, who do not have direct experience (Jones, 2012; Kelly, 2019; Kimbel, 2020; Newman, 1886), imagine both as consisting of a male patriarch who sexually exploits women and children for monetary gain. Problematizing these narratives are the existence of women who sell sex without pimps; as well as the favored wives and daughters whose familial wealth based on bloodline and the status of their fathers, may put them in competition with, if not ahead of, men, even among those with wealth and status in the community. The relatively elevated social status of women such as Shirlee Draper, her sister-in-law, Donia Jessop, and her cousin, Alina Darger, complicate the dominant understanding of oppression, privilege, and trafficking in the FLDS community (Solomon, 2021). In comparison to some of the Jessops, Dargers, and Barlows, who have survived and thrived since being born and raised in the FLDS in the context of this study, the most relevant and obvious victims of Short Creek include those who are vulnerable to harms associated with trafficking through the practice of arranged marriage between adult men and adolescent and teenage girls, despite the fact that they are legal minors who lack the agential capacity to freely choose to engage in such relationships according to federal law.

In Phoenix, the people who sell sex, many of whom are marginalized according to their race, class, sexual orientation, and/or citizenship status, have been imagined as uniformly violent and criminal. Meanwhile, the ways that anti-trafficking actors have made sex workers' lives even more precarious through the orchestration of interventions in the form of raids, arrests, and a prostitution diversion program such as Project ROSE, have gone underexamined. Whereas anti-trafficking coalitions in Arizona have rejected sex worker's abilities to articulate their own experiences outside the framework of trafficking, they have trusted FLDS apostates of the UEP Trust board to convey their experiences in and out of the church to inform their interventions into trafficking in Short Creek, so as to not make any impositions that could harm the political, economic, or cultural well-being and stability of this polygamous town.

By choosing to center the voices of powerful people in Short Creek to speak for the entire community, however, who are the least vulnerable to the cruel arithmetic of plural marriage; the SCDC's interventions are framed around the idea that polygamists today all have extremely different and unique experiences and yet are somehow in equally difficult positions in the aftermath of the Warren Jeffs regime with no clear solution. At the expense of the most marginalized members of the community, this framing justifies the ongoing existence of the practice for the greater good:

The post-family life is different in every single household. To say that everybody is the same would be wrong. If you have a couple of different wives what is your responsibility as the husband of the home? Do you disregard all of the other wives that you've had children with? Do you reside together? That's a really, really hard

choice for some people. We've talked to fathers and husbands who've told us that it is their responsibility even if they don't want to live that life anymore. It's still his responsibility to take care of those women...and children too. (Murphy, 2021)

The interventions being offered by the SCDC are informed by the belief that the ways trafficking emerges and causes harm within polygamous structures are somehow unique and distinct from the ways that trafficking emerges and causes harm within sex work. However, distinguishing these dynamics is, as this dissertation has demonstrated, fraught with contradiction. The original co-director of the SCDC, Glyn Jones, has stated that the human trafficking program at the SCDC "might not necessarily do what Dream Centers normally do," which is a point mirrored by Glyn's wife, Jena Jones, who was also an original co-director:

What's interesting about the Dream Centers is they're usually in real inner-city areas-dealing with inner city problems, you know? Gangs and drugs and prostitutes and people right out of prison and that's very different from what we see and what we deal with up in Colorado City...it's not prostitution, it's not gang members, it's not people right out of prison, it's not that at all.... because the motto of the Dream Centers are, 'find a need and fill it, find a hurt and heal it, 'we're trying to take their model of that and put it to use with what the actual needs are of the people up here. (Colvin, 2018)

As this quotation demonstrates, by adopting the narrative of trafficking based on the perspectives of privileged apostates, the SCDC produces "a closed circuit of

epistemic authority that reproduces white delusions” (Mills, 2007, p. 34) among actors involved in the Arizona anti-trafficking movement. Representatives and advocates for the SCDC have echoed commentary from apostates such as Shirlee Draper who suggests criminalization is not a solution to trafficking in polygamy and is unhelpful for changing individual hearts and minds because these people are somehow different. Whereas people like Draper argues that polygamy isn’t inherently harmful and that individual people like Warren Jeffs chose to commit harms tantamount to trafficking, there are many other FLDS women (Jeffs, 2017; Jessop & Brown, 2009; Jessop & Palmer, 2007; Musser, 2013; Wall, 2007) as well as women and men from other Mormon fundamentalist groups like Kristyn Decker who have indicated that Warren Jeffs was not an isolated evil trafficker but rather a symptom of a much larger problem (Decker, 2013; Jeffs, 2009; Hansen Park, 2015a; Hanson, 2015c).³²⁹

Jeffs has been accused of acting outside the “norms” of FLDS culture by taking multiple teenage and adolescent wives for himself. In national media and popular documentaries, the focus of Warren Jeffs’ crimes has remained largely concentrated on the rape of his young wives as well as his history of molesting his sisters, many of his children, and nephews. As prophet, he also used his power to afford other men in the community to do the same, particularly with the help of the Colorado City Marshals and

³²⁹ Canadian lawyers interviewed dozens of people who had experiences growing up in Short Creek and being sent to the Canadian Bishop, Winston Blackmore’s community which served as a “reform” school for rebellious FLDS children in the rural, isolated location of Bountiful, on the Idaho-Canadian border. I watched interviews, which were uploaded to YouTube, with two of the Mackert sisters, Kathleen and Donna Mackert, Mary Mackert, Warren Jeffs’ nephew, Brent Jeffs, a young man named Richard Ream, who had been sent to Canada because he had begun to have feelings for one of the ladies in Short Creek, the sister of Elissa and Rebecca Wall, Theresa Wall, who was married to one of the Blackmore men, relatively close to her age, Sarah Hammon, Paula Barrett, Carolyn Jessop, and Jorjina Broadbent. All these interviews were used as evidence in the Canadian court’s decision to maintain the criminalization of polygamy in 2013.

members of the God Squad, all of whom assisted him in his sexual practices until his arrest on June 8th, 2006.³³⁰

By focusing on Warren Jeffs as a uniquely evil and racialized figure in FLDS history, lesser-known people within FLDS controlled institutions, such as the UEP Trust and the Colorado City Marshals, which have been referred to by the community as “the Mormon Taliban” (Jessop & Brown, 2009) have not received adequate recognition for the harms they have caused. There were many systems in place that helped Warren Jeffs carry out his crimes with the assistance and approval of his followers³³¹ and as part of normative practice in FLDS culture (Hanson, 2015; Jessop & Palmer, 2007; Musser, 2013; Wall, 2007) This is illustrated by the fact that most Americans familiar with the FLDS Church because of the publicity Jeffs has received over the last 20 years or so for his sex crimes and yet the DNA evidence and church records found during the YFZ raid demonstrated that the child sex crimes were not unique to him.³³² In fact-they were

³³⁰ The highway trooper, Eddie Dutchover, reported that he pulled over a red Cadillac Escalade on the outskirts of Las Vegas because the vehicle’s temporary license plates were not visible. Dutchover claimed that his suspicions were further aroused upon seeing Warren Jeffs who possessed a nervous demeanor and sweaty appearance. Dutchover also said that his corroded artery was noticeably pulsating. Dutchover searched the escalade and found 4 laptop computers, 16 cell phones, 3 wigs, 12 pairs of sunglasses, and more than \$55,000 in cash. Following his search, he questioned and released Naomi Jeffs (Warren’s wife) and Isaac Jeffs (Warren’s brother) and took Warren Jeffs into custody as a Wanted Fugitive. Despite this case against Jeffs ultimately resulting in his successful conviction of ten years to life, the conviction was overturned shortly after on a technicality due to poor jury instruction (Perkins, 2007).

³³¹ Supporting evidence of this fact dates back to the testimony from residents of Short Creek during the 1955 Congressional Hearing regarding the raid two years previously, such as that of Sheriff Alfonso Nyborg and his wife, who identified a girl who had been arranged in a polygamous marriage with a 50-year-old man when she was under 11-years-old (Congressional Subcommittee Raid Report, 1955, p. 25).

³³²The article contains an excerpt from Teresa Jeffs’ diary entry from December 2006 in which she writes, “The Lord blessed me to go forward in marriage July 27th, 2006, the day after I turned 15-years-old.” She describes meeting with her father, Warren Jeffs, who said to her, “Teresa, the Lord would like you to get married tonight, now what do you think of that? Are you willing?” That same night Merrill Jessop performed the marriage ceremony of sealing of his 12-year-old daughter, Merrienne Jessop, to Warren Jeffs (Winslow, 2008).

rampant throughout the community there (Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, 2008; Zitting-Wyson & Zitting-Wyson, 2022).

The focus on Warren Jeffs distracts from the significance of the fact that there have been multiple periods of interference in the form of government raids into this community for perpetrating similar crimes, the most well-known raid having occurred in 1953, as previously discussed. Despite decades of intermittent interventions, arranged polygamous marriages between young FLDS girls and adult and elderly FLDS men persists as a strong feature of Short Creek, along with its many associated harms,³³³ while the persecution narrative about the town which has been projected by privileged apostates since well before Jeffs was arrested separates the problem of polygamy from trafficking as it is practiced in this context. By equating their experiences with polygamy to the experiences of those within polygamy who most had their wellbeing and livelihoods negatively impacted within this structure, as well as those historically oppressed groups like African Americans and the Jews, and likening Warren Jeffs to an evil mastermind whose reign of terror is the source of all of the problems in the community today; people like Willie Jessop, Shirlee Draper, and Naomi Jeffs, all FLDS apostates, have been able to distance themselves from their own contributions to the harms experienced by people living under the authority of Warren Jeffs' (Creekers Foundation, 2018; Creekers Foundation 2018b; Draper, 2019; Elford-Argent, 2022; Oprah Winfrey Network, 2015).

To reinforce the distance between the harms perpetrated by Warren Jeffs and the harms perpetrated by the FLDS Church as a whole, many apostates and others have built

³³³ Fumarase deficiency, low parental investment, economic inequality, educational deficits, teen pregnancy, statutory rape, incest, and other harms.

upon the historical persecution myth that was solidified into FLDS memory during the 1953 raid. The purpose is to obscure their connections from the powerful roles they once held in the community and, in turn, their perceived culpability in Warren Jeffs' crimes: Willie Jessop was Rulon and Warren Jeffs' ex-body guard, as well as a media spokesperson for the FLDS who once lived at the YFZ, now runs multiple tourism businesses out of Short Creek (Trip Advisor, 2023; ABC15 Arizona, 2021) and his son is employed as the head of security at the SCDC; Shirlee Draper's (formerly Jessop) great-grandfather was one of the original founders of the UEP Trust and today she is now president, but before leaving the church in February 2004 her daughter was babysat by 14-year-old Elissa Wall at the time she was forced to marry her 19 year old first cousin (Creekers Foundation, 2018; Wall, 2008); Donia Jessop, the current, two-term mayor of Hildale, was the President of the Mormon Relief Society in the FLDS long before she held public office (Ventry & Sanders, 2020e); Dwayne Barlow is the former aid and college friend to the Bishop Lyle Jeffs (Tory, 2016), who is also Warren Jeffs' brother and close confidant. Dwayne now lives in Short Creek today and has been photographed with one of his wives at Dream City Church in Phoenix during the Night of Dreams annual fundraiser.³³⁴ Naomi Jeffs,³³⁵ the former wife of Rulon Jeffs and his son, who had served as his personal scribe for four years and was present when Warren was arrested, has not faced charges and last year shared her story in a documentary film (Elford-

³³⁴ Dwayne fathered his youngest daughter, Tammi, with Warren Jeffs' niece, Rose Jeffs. Rose was Dwayne's second wife, and they had seven children together. Rose's father, Hyrum Jeffs, was a known enemy of Warren. This past year he was on the news because his ten-year-old daughter had been kidnapped by her uncle, Heber Jeffs, who was still in the FLDS (Fox 13 News Utah, 2022).

³³⁵ Naomi Jeffs is also the daughter of the former bishop of Short Creek, and then the YFZ Ranch, Merrill Jessop. This makes Merrienne Jeffs Naomi's sister, and Carolyn Jessop one of their many plural mothers (Elford-Argent, 2022; Jessop & Brown, 2009).

Argent, 2022) from the position of victimhood, naivety, and ignorance of her husband's crimes.³³⁶

Understanding the scale and degree of the harms caused by the structure of Mormon polygamy among the FLDS in Short Creek, including behaviors legally tantamount to trafficking, is being obscured by the anti-trafficking coalition tasked with addressing it. The examples of harms caused by people from the FLDS under Warren Jeffs and by anti-trafficking coalitions are widely publicized and carefully selected for their relevance to this project. As has been demonstrated by this dissertation through the combined lens of white ignorance and the NPIC, while the SCDC and the law enforcement, academics, politicians, and other nonprofit service providers receive funding from public and private sources to respond to the harms associated with trafficking described here, the ways that they utilize these resources for purposes of intervention only exacerbates the problem.

Those who are invested in insulating their community from criminalization according to their social positionality keeps them out of harm's reach from the worst aspects of Mormon polygamy. By mischaracterizing the scope, scale, and substance of trafficking as it occurs through polygamy through reliance on the discourses proliferated by a small group of white women from the FLDS, it can be said that this anti-trafficking coalition's epistemological ignorance facilitates the reproduction of a social structure that systematically traffics in women and girls for power and profit. While the aforementioned fact is extremely alarming on its own, even more concerning is that the

³³⁶ This is even though as an adult, she not only served as the prophet's scribe for several years at the height of his crime spree, but was in the room when her younger sister, Merriane Jeffs,' was ritually raped at 12-years-old by the Jeffs while she was living at the YFZ (Elford-Argent, 2022).

DCC operates all over the world and the coalition is considered one of the best in the country.

To problematize the framework of trafficking as well as meanings of “abolition” and “modern slavery” within the US anti-trafficking movement, this study interrogated popular assumptions promoted by anti-trafficking coalitions through the interrelated frames of white ignorance and the NPIC and grounding these ideas in research and literature about trafficking in the FLDS Church and other Mormon fundamentalist groups to make sense of this complex subject. Coalitions in Arizona such as the AZHTC articulate their support for “abolitionist” interventions in the form of arrests, raids, diversion programs, and incarceration, claiming that these are “victim-centered” responses to trafficking.

In many states, including Arizona, the purported rationale for all these interventions is that the US cannot tolerate the fact that there are hundreds of thousands of American youths, most of whom are girls, being trafficked for sex in this country each year. However, given that anti-trafficking coalitions such as the AZHTC in Arizona are forming relationships with people in Short Creek, some of whom are in polygamous family arrangements involving teenage wives with adult men, and most of whom come from the FLDS Church, to suggest that there is no complexity or room for nuance when it comes to understanding female sexual agency is condone child sexual assault. Further, it also suggests that to deny the sexual agency of sex workers is unfounded and that the AZHTC only maintains this position to the benefit of people who share the moral values of middle and upper-class, white, Christians in the anti-trafficking movement.

In alignment with Shirlee Draper's arguments for decriminalization and the separation of the crime of trafficking from the structure of polygamy, sex workers' calls for the decriminalization of their work must be taken seriously as well as their calls for the ideological severing of the crime of sex trafficking from the sex industry. Addressing this issue requires recognizing sex workers' labor as legally and culturally valuable and focusing on the active destigmatization of sex work according to myths rooted in "whorephobia" so that the needs of people anti-trafficking coalitions claim to want to hear are met and understood. Denying sex worker's agency serves the purpose of erasing their identities as workers.

Conducting and publishing research about sex trafficking by gathering data from arrested subjects, who often do not identify as "trafficked," perpetuates a harmful narrative about the disposability of sex workers as collateral damage in the service of the institutionalized US anti-trafficking movement. If anti-trafficking coalitions limit themselves to using carceral measurements to understand the problem of trafficking, the response will continue to reproduce interventions that were born out of the racist and xenophobic anti-white slavery movement of the late-19th and early-20th centuries. This movement has not only catalyzed the broad criminalization of people of color, sex workers, and immigrants through racist narratives and tropes about trafficking, but also inspired vigilante violence against marginalized groups that has persisted for more than a century.

In line with critical trafficking scholars such as Laura Augustin (2007), Jo Doezema (2002), and Rhacel Parrenas (2007), I propose that the framework of human trafficking should be abandoned as a dangerous ideology in the service of white

ignorance and racial capitalism rather than in service of human rights and combating violence against women. The abandoning of this framework is especially called for given the existence of more specific, already existing laws that fit beneath the umbrella of trafficking concerning statutory rape, kidnapping, forced labor, and other crimes. While current trafficking laws define victims based on the assumption that a rational individual cannot consensually exchange sexual labor for something of value, this study has demonstrated that the complex political, economic, and cultural context surrounding such an exchange complicates such claims. Such a conception is rendered even more fraught by the ever-expanding list of behaviors that are legally considered trafficking within the US legal system, which in stark contradiction to its own logics, does not acknowledge that the exchange of sexual labor for any form of value, as it occurs between people who are legally married, can possibly be exploitative. Because the concept of agency is a matter of degree and social positionality, the current binary understanding of force and choice is unable to capture the complexity of human experience. Academics, law enforcement, and nonprofit service providers define the terms of trafficking from positions of privilege within the anti-trafficking NPIC, often mischaracterizing the purported violent and exploitative relationships between traffickers and victims as a form of projection that much more closely mirrors their own violent and exploitative relationships with people they identify as “trafficked.”

Based on the findings of this study, it is clear that the decriminalization of polygamy supports a case for separating trafficking from polygamy and in doing so, allows people who are being harmed within polygamous structures to come forward without fear of arrest or incarceration. Likewise, calls for decriminalization also support a

case for separating trafficking from sex work and, more importantly, destigmatizing the identities of sex workers and the realities of their experiences in this form of labor. In the context of both polygamy and sex work, it is important to consider the potential social consequences of decriminalization in terms of how it might affect people who are not consenting adults, such as homeless and/or runaway youth who trade sex or the children of families living in closed communities like Short Creek. Notably, based on evidence of "Lost Boys" exchanging sex for money after leaving or being kicked out of Short Creek (Qstaff, 2005), it is important to recognize that these youth populations are not mutually exclusive.

Future research calls for scholars in the field of critical trafficking studies to continue to track the diverse and rapidly evolving trends in trafficking discourse within the anti-trafficking movement and other politically organized entities. There is a need to reframe how this movement is understood, from one that serves to protect people from exploitation, to one that is racist, xenophobic, and itself, exploitative. This is especially true given how online radicalization has enabled the rise of QAnon in conjunction with burgeoning fascist movements, which draw power from emphasizing the vulnerability of American children to sexual violence according to fears of their potential exposure to invisible predators lurking in the shadows. Without bridging the gaps between how Americans understand themselves in relation to people with less power, the trafficking paradigm will continue to cause immense harm to people living within and beyond the US.

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APPENDIX A

ASU IRB HUMAN SUBJECTS STUDY APPROVAL



EXEMPTION GRANTED

On 10/19/2017 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	A Pilot Comparative Study Addressing Anti Trafficking Efforts in the State of Arizona vs. the State of Kentucky
Investigator:	Charles Lee
IRB ID:	STUDY00006592
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Human Subjects Form, Category: IRB Protocol;• ASU Interview Protocol.pdf, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);• ASU IRB Recruitment Script.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials;• ASU Informed Consent .pdf, Category: Consent Form;

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 10/19/2017.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Sincerely,
IRB Administrator

