The Persistence of Slavery in Rhode Island: Human Trafficking in the Ocean State (Abstract, Peer-reviewed)

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Panel Proposal

The Persistence of Slavery in Rhode Island

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Emancipations: Lineages, Legacies, and Limits

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This panel will discuss the persistence of slavery in the form of human trafficking in Rhode Island. To address modern-day slavery-like practices, the U.S. passed the Trafficking Victims Protection Act in 2000 and Rhode Island passed the Trafficking of Persons and Involuntary Servitude Act in 2009. Both state and federal anti-human trafficking laws identify two types of human trafficking: forced labor and sex trafficking.

This panel will present the findings of original research done by the five authors during the Spring 2014 on human trafficking cases in Rhode Island from 2009-2013. Sources for analysis of these cases include: police reports, witness statements, court documents and print and TV media reports.

Between 2009 and 2013, there have been six cases of sex trafficking and one case of forced labor identified and prosecuted in Rhode Island by Federal and State authorities. This presentation will characterize the cases, including: background of the victims, how the victims were recruited, how the victims were exploited, how the cases were identified by the police, and the outcomes of the prosecutions.

The description and analyses of these sex trafficking and forced labor cases in Rhode Island reveal that slavery—in the form of human trafficking—still exists today.

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