



ARTWORKS
for FREEDOM

BOUGHT & SOLD: VOICES OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

A photographic exhibit with sound narratives

Images by KAY CHERNUSH | ALL RIGHT RESERVED



First the Dream, Then the Nightmare

“The agency said I will be babysitter in Germany. Good opportunity, this is my dream. So after five days on bus, they tell me no babysitting, go work in sex club. I was shocked. Too afraid to do anything. Later, when a client helps me escape to The Hague, I go. But that guy just sold me to another pimp. When I tell my story, people say, ‘Is there really trafficking here?’”

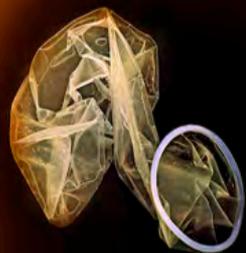
– Russian woman from Siberia, trafficked first to Germany, then to the Netherlands.

Lucy's Left Ear

"After the beating I lived in silence. It was like an open wound. The world closed on me. But telling the story, you can heal inside. My hearing is starting to come back. In a strange way I feel grateful for all the pain I experienced. Without it I wouldn't be the strong person I am today. Life isn't only working, eating and sleeping. We are put here to do something, to leave a mark."

– Nigerian woman trafficked to France





The waiter



The gynecologist



Security guard



The professor



The lawyer



The old priest



Sales clerk



The drug trafficker



The politician



The mechanic



Taxi driver



Businessman

Day's Work

“The men started arriving at 9, 10 in the morning. All day and night. The house rules were simple: condoms obligatory, no boyfriends. The only period to rest or eat was in between clients. We had lots of disputes between us girls, to get clients. Of course we never saw any money. The clients paid at the desk. I remember every client, every face. It's like a horror movie that replays over and over in flashbacks, in my nightmares.”

-- Brazilian woman trafficked first to Surinam, then to Germany



Counting Down

"...so she shouted at me 'You have to work! If you don't, I'm selling you to someone else.' How much more? How much more men I have to sleep with? Who will be the next one? What will he want? When they buy someone, they want to try all kinds of things. What can I do? I knew I had to go deep in myself, to be smarter than them to survive this prison."

– Russian woman trafficked to the Netherlands.



Leap to Freedom

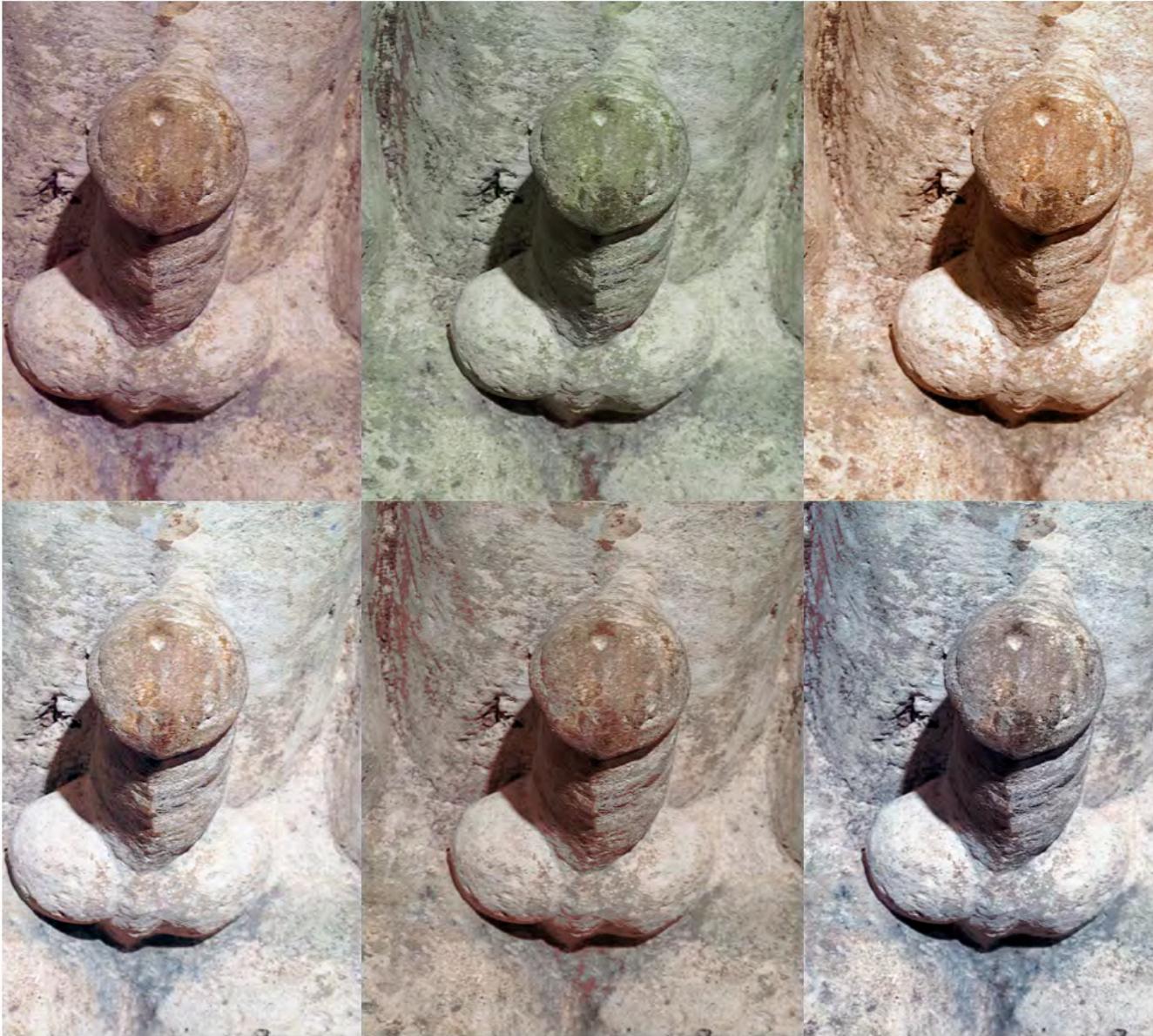
We were going to be married. Instead I was taken to an apartment and locked in. I was very shocked when they told me what I had to do. Service whoever came there – smelly men, fat ones, old, young, drunk, drugged, some really crazy. Some were so cruel, so very violent. I was desperate to escape. One day when the cleaning woman opened the window, I jumped out. My legs were broken, but I dragged myself into the street. I got free.”

– Malian woman trafficked to France.

Health Hazard

“Our pimp moved us around a lot, sometimes on the German side of the border, sometimes on the Dutch. In this one club it was very bad. The customers were rough, like animals. All they needed was a hole. Any hole would do. And they paid more not to use a condom. So for us it was like playing Russian Roulette. We were forced to do it without condoms and quite a few of the girls became HIV positive. What did he care. He said he could find new girls anytime.”

-- Serbian woman trafficked to the Netherlands





4x Virgin

"I was ten when she sold me. The men, they think if they have sex with virgin girl they get good luck. They will get sons. They will get money, get very rich. They pay very much money for sex with virgin girl, young virgin girl. So after first time, you get stitched up....two, three, four times.

I was four times virgin."

– *Cambodian girl trafficked within Cambodia.*

Barcode

"It was a big club. 180 women, three girls to a room. We were forced to go with a certain number of men everyday – keep them happy, keep them drinking, have sex with them. If we didn't meet the quota, our 'debt' went up. There was no escape. The club owner had some kind of relationship with the police. It was like being kidnapped, except that we were the ones paying the ransom.

– Brazilian woman trafficked first to Surinam, then to the Netherlands.





Chili Pepper Bath

“I was very young. 10, 11. When I couldn’t earn the money he wanted me to earn – in that way – he took me home and beat me. And beat me. He put water in the bath and he put pepper in it. So I had to get naked and lie down in the cold water. He rubbed the pepper on me and it burned. I was screaming, crying, begging him...”

– Nigerian woman trafficked within Nigeria, then to Morocco, then to Spain, then to the Netherlands.



Sheared

"Little sleep, little food. Not one day off. Is this in the contract? The contract was approved. Back home it was approved. In Singapore approved. But the man, he gave me to his 25-year-old daughter, to work for her. Is this in the contract? I was beaten and caned. Kicked by the children....she told them it is OK to kick me. One time my employer got very angry. In a rage she sheared off my hair. Is this in the contract?"

– Filipino domestic worker on contract in Singapore.



Paper Promises:

“The contract was worthless, but we didn’t know it until too late. The *gatos* tricked us because we were desperate for work. They took our documents. They promised us better conditions, better wages. Then they deducted every single item of food, housing, everything.... We even had to pay to use the toilet. It was impossible to get ahead of the debt. They used our ignorance against us.”

– Brazilian landless laborer trafficked within Brazil.



Lowest on the Foodchain

I needed money for my children's education. I didn't want them to end up poor like me. But the crew leader didn't give us workers the money we were promised. He kept us in the fields for 11, 12 hours a day. We lived in shacks and paid \$5 just to get hosed off once a week. But people want their food cheap. Without people willing to pay a fair price for their food, will there ever be fair working conditions?

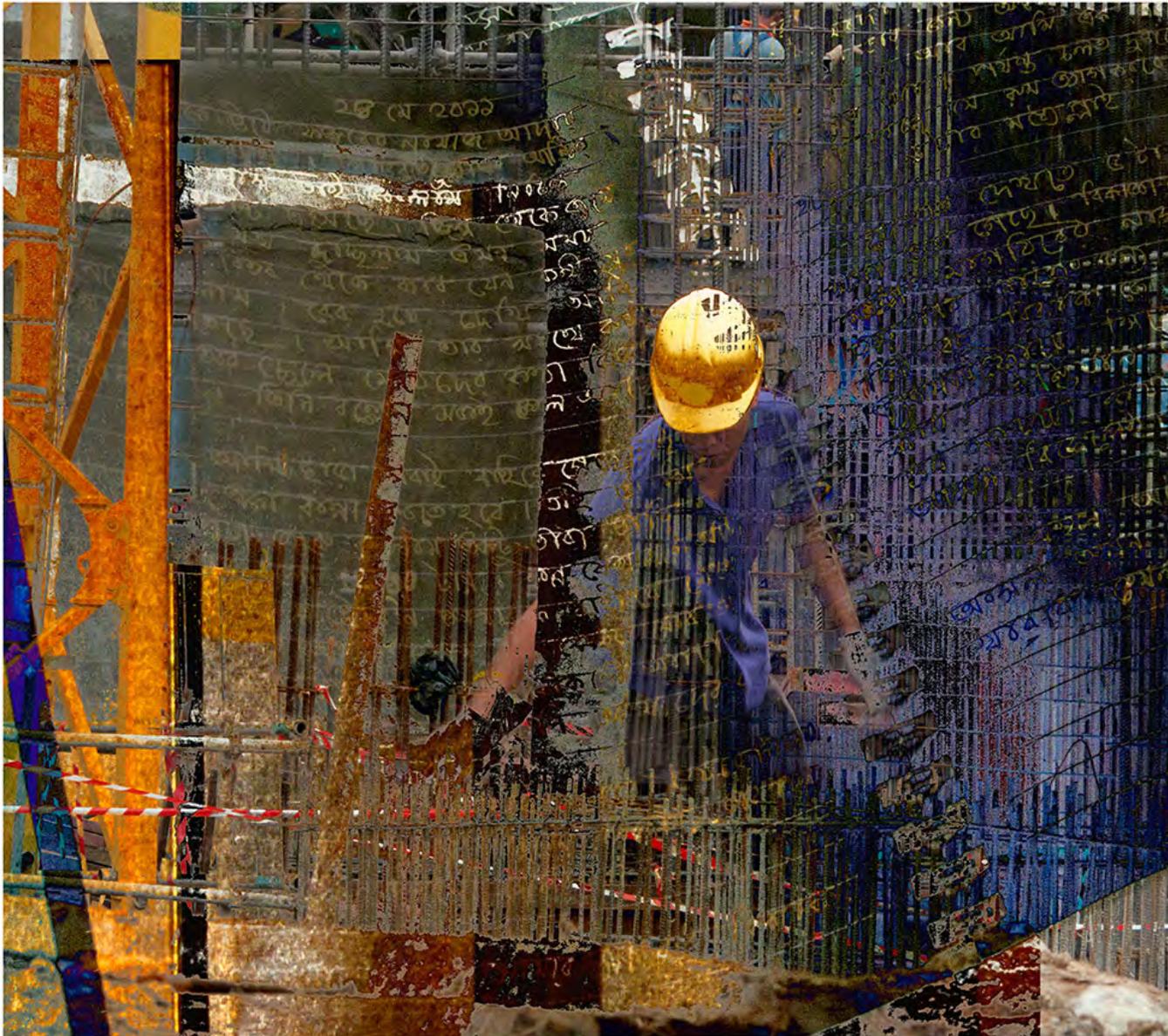
- Central American migrant trafficked to the United States.

Ghost Workers

“They promised us work, but treated us like dogs. At the border, an agent sold me to a ship captain. We set to sea in a shaky fishing boat....kept on board for three months straight, no going ashore. When I protested, I was dropped at a pier, locked in a container for three weeks. Nobody noticed. I was invisible.”

– Burmese migrant trafficked within Thailand and on high seas.





Deeper In Debt

Back home there was no way to provide for my family. When sickness came I had to borrow money and sell my father's land. I thought if I came here I could help them. But now I have only more debt. To renew my contract, I have to pay again \$1800. Company is not supposed to take any renewal money, but they all do it. The boss man says if I don't pay more he will send me to repatriation center. Very hard work...very much debt. So many stories like mine.

– Bangladeshi migrant laborer in Singapore.

Behind Closed Doors

"I cleaned, I polished, I washed, I cooked. I took care of their children. 24 hours a day....24/7. The lady of the house, she accused me of stealing. For any mistake, she beat me. They gave me only scraps to eat. I wasn't allowed much of anything really. I wasn't allowed to use the phone or go out. I was paid 50 cents a day. The Mister said he was sending the rest of my pay to my family. It was a lie. I was just their slave."

- Indian woman trafficked to Dubai.





The Price of Freedom

"This is what 50,000 Euros looks like. This is my so-called debt, what my trafficker says I owe him. He says he spent all this for my passport, my papers, my transport and for my housing, phone, food, clothes, and for all his troubles to make payoffs and arrangements here and there. And whenever I get sick and need medicine, when I can't work, then the debt just gets bigger. How can I ever pay such a sum? How can I ever get free?"

– Nigerian woman trafficked to Italy.



Locked In, Tricked Out

"To be an entertainer, that was the job. But when I got to Singapore, they told me I have to entertain clients at this pub by providing all kinds of sexual services. They took all the money I made. After a few weeks, me and one friend tried to go home. But they had our immigration cards and documents. So we went to police and made a report. Those three traffickers were all arrested. They paid some fines, but only one went to jail. Four months. For me it's like a lifetime fine."

– Filipino woman trafficked to Singapore.



Police Rescue

“Eleven months, locked in that apartment. I thought I was in hell. When the police burst in, I was so happy, so relieved. They arrested everybody. Then I was very scared. Scared from police. Scared from my pimp. Who can I trust?”

– Brazilian woman trafficked from Spain to Denmark.



The Game, The Track, The Life

“Just because I came from a house in the suburbs didn’t mean a thing. He knew how to pick damaged, abused, no-self-esteem girls. He held me by mental chains that were just as thick and heavy as any metal chain could be.”

-- American woman trafficked from Washington DC to New York at age 13





Somebody's Sister Daughter Mother

"There was this one customer. He saw the pain in my eyes. I felt broken, inside and out. He asked what's wrong with you. And I say I cannot go on anymore, doing this work. I do this not because I want it. He never touched me. He could see my human. He helped me escape. But it took long to pick up the pieces of my life."

– Bulgarian woman trafficked to France.



Somebody's Brother Son Father

Why do you care if older men are with younger women?
Is it any of your business? In my opinion very few men
are having sex with minors in Pattaya. Yeah, it happens,
but they have different values, a different culture.
The women are different here. They're available.

How do I know she's being forced?

- Sex tourist in Thailand.



Sex Tourist

"Many *farang* men come here to Thailand, looking for girls, and boys too. American, German, English, Dutch, French, Scandinavians, Arabs, Japanese, Koreans. They coming from rich countries. So many. Maybe back home they can't get girl friend. They lonely people. Work work work all the time work. Here they rent girl, one hour, all night, have as much girl friend as they want, as much sex.

They must have a hole where their heart should be."

- Thai woman trafficked within Thailand, from rural north.



Survival Mask

"I put on a mask to survive, to do that work. Otherwise I would feel the pain and anger. I was an actress. I turned a knob. But underneath I was really depressed. You feel you're dirty, you feel you're raped. Now I'm learning how to forgive the people who hurt me. It took me years to remove that mask. Finally I found myself again."

- Estonian woman trafficked to the Netherlands.



Voodoo Inverso

“Before leaving Nigeria, this trafficker tricked me with a fake voodoo ceremony. I was very frightened. He told me I will die a terrible death if I don't pay back everything, in order to get this good job in Italy that is waiting for me. Of course there was no job. So when I stopped paying after 12,000 Euros, they sent someone to my village and crushed my father's legs. Now I turn the voodoo back on him. I am not afraid anymore.”

– Nigerian woman trafficked first to Italy, then France.



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