



Stop the Traffik: Steve Chalke - Book review by Sam Luscombe

I came to this book thinking that I already knew about the issue of human trafficking, expecting to pick up some useful statistics (I was writing an article on the issue for work), and not much more than that.

Since 2006, the Stop the Traffik coalition has been campaigning for an end to the modern day slave trade. Every year, hundreds of thousands of men, women and children are trafficked across borders. They are subjected to forms of exploitation including forced labour, being sold into the sex trade, forced marriage, illicit adoption, exploitation in the army and in armed conflicts, begging and criminal activities.

All of the above, I'd already heard.

So I wasn't prepared for the strength of emotion I felt as I read about the issues and encountered the stories in what is essentially a quick-reference guide to human trafficking. I realised that in all my previous encounters with the campaign, I'd just allowed the statistics to wash over me. It had all felt very remote: sad, but distant from me and from my experiences. Somehow, reading this book changed that for me. It shook me out of my complacency. It made me angry. At times I struggled to continue reading it. Some of the stories made me feel sick to my stomach.

Trafficking is cruel. It takes no prisoners. It preys on the vulnerable. It offers those trapped in poverty the dream of a brighter future and a fresh start, when the reality is that they will be enslaved and exploited. Steve Chalke's book served to put names to the numbers for me. It reminded me that every victim of trafficking is somebody's mother or sister, father or brother, daughter or son. It told some of their stories, and in doing so, brought the issue into sharp relief.

And I hadn't realised that trafficking is a truly global phenomenon. It happens in small African villages and in cosmopolitan UK cities. It happens in the streets, towns and cities where we live, whoever and wherever we are in the world. It could happen to someone I know. It's that close to home.

Whether or not you're already familiar with the Stop the Traffik campaign, I'd recommend that you get your hands on this book. It filled in some of the gaps in my knowledge, gave me a much better picture of the nature and scale of human trafficking, made me want to take action, and, crucially, gave some practical ideas about what I could do. Get hold of a copy – and help to raise awareness of the issues by passing it on when you've finished!