

Brian Donovan.

**White Slave Crusades: Race, Gender, and Anti-vice Activism, 1887-1917.**

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Media and policy interest in the sex industry has been dominated in recent years by the issue of sex trafficking, the abduction and enslavement of women (and children) for the purposes of selling sexual services. In Canada, the first person charged with human trafficking went to trial in 2007; additional indicators of the salience of this issue are the numerous non-profit groups, both local and global, organized to combat the problem of human trafficking for sex work, and the many books, movies, documentaries, and television shows devoted to stories of trafficked women. This last mode of cultural production has produced a recognizable trafficking narrative used to great effect in numerous serialized crime dramas, quasi-documentaries, and crime reality shows: young adolescent women are abducted or lured from impoverished or corrupt countries (Asia and Eastern Europe are often depicted as source countries) and kept in conditions of virtual slavery in wealthy countries until rescued by members of modern police forces.

Existing research on the topic in Canada suggests that the media and political interest in trafficking far outstrips its significance as a proportion of sex industry activity. This kind of selective attention to coercion and enslavement in the sex industry is far from new, however. Brian Donovan's *White Slave Crusades: Race, Gender, and Anti-Vice Activism, 1887-1917* reminds us that the turn of the last century saw purity activists, moral crusaders and feminists united in a fight against "white slavery" in North American brothels. The white slavery campaign aimed to call public and policy attention to the supposedly large numbers of women working in brothels who were held there against their will. In reality, however, white slavery was about much more than this: white slavery rhetoric was used equally by activists from the left and the right, and helped to bolster claims for a large array of social causes ranging from housing reform to restricting immigration. It was imbued with symbolism and imagery pertaining to normative notions concerning gender and sexuality, race/ethnicity, urban order, and citizenship.

The significance of the purity crusades, such as the white slavery campaign, to formative debates about moral and social order has been the focus of a large scholarship (see in particular Beisel 1997; Hobson 1987; Pivar 2001; Walkovitz 1980). Donovan's contribution to this literature is his explicit focus on the convergence of gender and sexuality with race and ethnicity in anti-vice activism. Through a comparative examination of white slavery rhetoric in four different anti-vice campaigns, he argues that early 20th century anti-vice campaigns played a critical role in creating racial hierarchies and demarcating racial and ethnic boundaries.

With the exception of two theoretical chapters detailing the significance of sexuality and race to constructions of citizenship, and of white slavery as a cultural genre, the bulk of the book is devoted to the four case studies: the campaign spearheaded by Katherine Bushnell and Frances Willard of the Women's Christian Temperance Union; the anti-vice campaign in Chicago, led by noted social critics such as Jane Addams and Clifford Roe (also America's most prolific writer on white slavery); a grand jury investigation headed by J.D. Rockefeller into white slavery in New York; and the campaigns against "yellow slavery" (the sex industry in Chinese districts) in San Francisco. The choice of case studies reflects Donovan's intent to illustrate how the white slavery campaign, which on the surface was about moral regulation, also tapped into a range of ethnic/racial concerns of the time, particularly nativist resentments concerning immigrant and Chinese labour, tensions between

race and gender as markers of suffrage, and the changing racial demography of the north after Reconstruction.

The strengths of this work lie in the excellent use of archival material, including the organizational records of anti-vice organizations and speeches, books, and pamphlets produced by these organizations, as well as the rich detailing of the social and cultural context within which the white slavery campaign was waged. The rapid influx of immigrants, especially from new source nations, such as Eastern Europe, the migration of African-Americans from the south to the northern cities, and the importation of Chinese labour into the west coast, meant that the very idea of "white" was under construction at the time; the idea of white slavery brought into relief the significance of whiteness as a marker of purity and moral and sexual agency. In addition, the cultural and political activities of the 19th century women's movement, such as the WCTU, in tandem with the campaigns of moral reformers such as Clifford Roe and Anthony Comstock, meant that some of the very basic principles of gender and sexuality (including how to understand the sexual and moral agency of women) were up for debate. Together with the demographic shifts associated with immigration and migration, as well urbanization (which, among other things, meant the creation of new places for people of all sorts to mix), the cultural, social, and moral geography of America was in flux. The white slavery narrative, in effect, produced a social and cultural map, delineating what were safe (that is moral) and unsafe actors and places. Cities, and in particular, dance halls and other places where men and women, immigrants and non-immigrants, and whites and blacks could interact, were sites where "white" girls were at profound risk of being lured or abducted by immigrants, Chinese, and African-Americans, who were all assumed to lack the sexual and moral restraint that characterized native-born American males.

In essence, white slavery activism produced cultural knowledge useful to navigate the uncertainties of this rapidly changing social universe. This cultural knowledge, according to Donovan, racialized sexual and moral agency, and so posited a cultural and moral basis for racial membership. In other words, whiteness also meant purity; and a pure nation, by extension, was white. Here, the broadness of the white slavery campaign becomes apparent: while its stated objectives were to clean up sin and vice in the new urban spaces of America, in fact, white slavery rhetoric combined normative notions of sexuality and race in ways that accomplished a racialization of American citizenship.

This is a well-written and richly detailed monograph, appropriate for senior undergraduate and graduate students. Donovan's description captures the many facets of the white slavery campaign, including as a social movement populated by activists who were motivated by a real concern to free women from bondage and expose those who enslaved them, as well as a locus of important cultural debates concerning the rapidly changing social order of the time. To my mind, however, a weakness of this book is that the broader sociological significance of these very interesting historical case studies is not adequately addressed. There is already large social history scholarship on the anti-vice campaigns of the late 19th and early 20th century. An important sociological contribution to this literature, especially as we are in the midst of a strikingly similar campaign (now focused on cross-border trafficking) would be to show how historical lessons from the white slavery campaign would help in understanding the debates concerning sex trafficking today. The current prominence of the sex trafficking issue shows the ongoing relevance of sexuality and race to the production of citizenship; an equally important question, however, is why sex work continues to prove such a fertile ground for a large range of social and cultural debates, including those pertaining to citizenship and social inclusion.

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