Observatório da Emigração

Human Trafficking and Migration

Interview with Dr. Jacquelyn Meshelemiah

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Dr. Jacquelyn C.A. Meshelemiah is a Licensed Social Worker (LSW). She earned her Bachelor of Science in Social Work (BSSW), Master of Social Work (MSW), and Doctorate (PhD) from the College of Social Work, of The Ohio State University, USA. Dr. Meshelemiah has taught numerous courses across the curricula, but now exclusively teaches Assessment & Diagnosis in Clinical Social Work Practice, as well as Human Trafficking. She is the author and co-author of numerous publications, such as "Human sex trafficking" and, her latest, "Human rights perspectives in social work education and practice". Has also done a series of presentations and trainings at the university, local, national, and international levels. Her primary research agenda centers on social justice, human rights, and anti-trafficking work. She has a cross-comparative analysis of human trafficking in Ghana, Uganda, Ethiopia, England, Mexico, Canada, Costa Rica, and the United States.

Título Tráfico de seres humanos e migrações

Jacquelyn C.A. Meshelemiah foi assistente social durante vários anos, focando-se atualmente na investigação e docência. Fez o bacharelato, o mestrado e o doutoramento em serviço social, na Faculdade de Serviço Social, da Universidade Estadual de Ohio, EUA. Meshelemiah tem ensinado inúmeros cursos, dedicando-se, de momento, exclusivamente ao ensino de Avaliação e Diagnóstico em Clínica Prática de Trabalho Social, bem como de Tráfico de Seres Humanos. É autora e coautora de inúmeras publicações, tais como "Human sex trafficking" e, a sua mais recente, "Human rights perspectives in social work education and practice". É igualmente autora de diversas conferências e formações em universidades nacionais e internacionais. Os seus principais interesses de pesquisa são justiça social, direitos humanos e trabalho antitráfico. Desenvolve análise comparativa de tráfico de seres humanos em Gana, Uganda, Etiópia, Inglaterra, México, Canadá, Costa Rica e EUA.

Keywords Human trafficking, migration.
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Observatório da Emigração (ahead OEm) – Thank you for accepting the invitation. To contextualize, in the Emigration Observatory we deal with Portuguese living abroad. But since you were invited to the European Masters of Family and Children and Social Work at ISCTE in a seminar in partnership with Emigration Observatory, we thought it would be interesting for anyone who is interested in traffic of human beings and its relation with migration, to have your knowledge in our Observatory. We have published a Factsheet on "Portuguese trafficked citizens [Cidadãos portugueses traficados]", by Mara Clemente, in here**. To start we would love to know when you started to research human trafficking.**

Jacquelyn Meshelemiah (ahead JM) – Thank you for having me here. I began this work in 1996 at the State University New York, Buffalo, over twenty years ago, after I completed my PhD[1], and was working as an assistant professor. As a doctoral student, my area of interest was on substance use or drug use. And that's why I was invited to be part of a research project on prostitution; there was a lot of drug use and prostitution in Buffalo at that time. It all started with a young woman I met who had been trafficked. In addition, at that time, it was not called human trafficking or trafficking in persons, so she considered herself a child prostitute. She talked to a group of us about being raped by a person whom she thought was her boyfriend, how he taped her having sex. And the thing that pulled all of us in and had us all horrified, was when she talked about being forced to have sex with dogs on a regular basis. At that time, when I heard her talk about sex with animals, it was something I had never heard of; you know, average woman having sex with dogs. And, at that time, I said: "If this happened right here in America, I'm certain it's happening in other places". To me this exceeds prostitution. This is something that we have not named or labelled at this point, but there is a name for this type of abuse of a person for sexual and exploitation purposes.

OEm – What is exactly human trafficking or trafficking in persons? And you mention that when you spoke with this woman, this word was not much used or she was not aware of that?

JM – I met her in 1996. It wasn't until very recently, in 2000 that the United Nations and the US Government, officially coined human trafficking and trafficking in persons. The way the United Nations defines trafficking in persons, which is also another word for human trafficking, is as a recruitment, harbouring, receipt, transfer and transporting of persons, those are the acts, via force, fraud, coercion, deceit, abuse of power and also exploitation because of their vulnerabilities. And the purpose of all these acts and means is to exploit others. Often times

[1] Jacquelyn Meshelemiah did her master and PhD in social work.

being those who are migrating to other areas and those who are impoverished and desperate for something different and something new.

OEm – So trafficking can be related to some people who migrate, and also to tourism and sex tourism. Could you comment this? What is your opinion on this?

JM – Migration is a really important factor to consider when it comes to trafficking. Many people do not correlate trafficking with migration. That is a core piece of it in many countries, including the United States, as well as abroad. But also, there is such a thing as domestic trafficking, when people are trafficked within their actual home countries, home cities, home states. And so, what I have found abroad, as well as domestically, is that people traffic individuals in lots of different ways– sex and labour. What I have found abroad, when it comes to sex tourism, unfortunately, is that many countries heavily rely on currency from foreigners. And what that translates into is people travelling abroad to buy individuals for sex purposes, and this includes boys, girls, as well as women, in terms of these sex tourists. And, oftentimes, the governments are complicit. They know what is going on, but it is about the currency being in that country. Human trafficking involves a lot of money. Some of the estimates are as low as 32 billion annually, which is not very low. Whereas some of the higher estimates are at about 150 billion annually. And many people say that trafficking of humans, in particular, is very lucrative, because you can sell a human over and over again and continue to make money, whereas if you sell drugs or arms you sell those things just once. It appears that money is a huge factor in trafficking. Exploitation as well, greed, but absolutely money—labour services.

OEm – How large do you think the problem is?

JM – Well, according to the latest statistics from the Global Slave Index, the estimate is about 45 million persons who are entrapped around the world, who are trafficked. And these numbers are up about 13 million from just 2 years ago. The numbers are steadily starting to increase because of all the civil unrest that is going on, in particular in the Middle East as well.

OEm – And who are human traffickers?

JM – They are very diverse in their composition. A lot of people tend to just assume that it's just drug cartels, organized crime rings and corrupt governments. Those are indeed individual perpetrators, but sometimes it actually includes spouses, parents, family members who actually traffic other individuals. It can be two persons trafficking several persons, hundreds or thousands at a time. The composition is actually very diverse. Some are uneducated people and some are very educated people. Because when you think about, for example, organ trafficking, you need medical personnel involved. And so, it can be educated people. But it also involves the whole entire range of people, in terms of being perpetrators.

OEm – The prime targets of human trafficking, who are they?

JM –When I travel abroad and I learn about trafficking in other countries, it seems to be the persons, often times, who are not from that particular area of exploitation. Inside of the same country, if I'm in the Central area, for example, it's the people from the South. It's the people who are considered to be the outsiders. Often times it's the outsiders but when I think about the United States for example, when it comes to domestic trafficking, these are young ladies and sometimes transgender persons, who are citizens and who are also trafficked. It tends to be the people who we give very little value to, as human beings. And this also, obviously, includes people who have migrated, who are different, speak a different language, worship a different god, have different cultural norms. People who we do not perceive as average, typical or normal in that respective society. People who we can reduce to not being fully human beings or citizens.

OEm – I remember that, some years ago, it came in the media, some Portuguese were seduced to work abroad, I think in the UK and Netherlands. It was for labour, to work in agriculture, and it was Portuguese with few skills. Then, it came that it was a network of trafficking for labour exploitation. And, in the seminar where you were on Friday, Human Migration and Trafficking in Africa, you were talking with the director of the Observatory of Human Trafficking in Portugal, Rita Penedo, and she was saying that not all of us are potential victims, because it's, as you said, the main focus of these groups of perpetrators are the ones seen as outsiders. Certain people from certain areas, and usually from other areas, for instance in Portugal, many women who are victims of human trafficking for sex exploitation, they are from Romania, but Romania from a certain area where the unemployment rate is very high. So not everyone is a target to human trafficking. Some are much more than others. It's usually people with fewer resources.

JM – And I really like the fact that she has emphasised that point, because in this area of discourse, on trafficking of persons, people often say anyone could be a victim. The truth is traffickers just don't target anyone. They traffic vulnerable people, because it would not be to their advantage, for example, to abduct, kidnap, traffic persons who are highly visible and vital to one society. That would bring lots of attention to them, if college professors started to end up missing, for example, or politicians started to end up missing, for trafficking purposes, this would warrant lots of attention. They look for those people who are disposable. No one is going to miss them or believe they just disappeared without their own consent. They do traffic and target certain groups of individuals. For example, as I said before, the main targets, when it occurs inside of their home countries, are people who moved from their home, their town, their village, so it's easy to just assume they've gone on to do something different. Their power relations are cut and their support webs are gone.

OEm –And why do you think that human trafficking persists?

JM – You know, trafficking, slavery, I would say has been around forever. There are always going to be people who devalue others, who think they're less than human and that can be treated in a very inferior kind of way. And there's always going to be work that needs to be done. There's going to be a demand for sex, as always. You put all those things together, a demand, and there's going to be a supply as well. People are going to make ways to earn money on the backs and sufferings of others. There's always going to be people to be exploited. There's always going to be people who believe that others deserve to be exploited. There are always going to be people who look for profits on the back and work of others. And we tend to devalue people who do not look like us, speak like us and believe like we do. And, as a result, that's just a ripe condition for exploitation of other people.

OEm – And how does human trafficking looks like in the USA?

JM – Despite being a very educated country, many people still, in the United States, are not educated about modern slavery. Modern slavery is another term to be use for human trafficking or trafficking in persons. A lot of people tend to believe that trafficking, slavery, is a problem of developing countries and is not a problem that Americans need to be concerned about. So the problem tends to be not well known. In what I have found, when it comes to trafficking, it's pretty similar around the world. Especially when it comes to sex trafficking. Women used for the purposes of forced prostitution is common across the world. One of the main forms that many Americans do know about is children being trafficked for sex purposes. And they know about "exotic" women from other places who have migrated there or have been tricked to come there, for sex purposes. So, sex trafficking is a huge issue in America. But, also labour. But I'm not quite sure if many people actually identify labour trafficking when they see it. When they see, for example, the Mexicans, who have migrated to America, relegated to the periphery, in terms of restaurants, agriculture, landscaping or the Asians in sweatshops. They tend to assume this is their lot in life. They [are believed to] have a low-level set of skills; someone has to do the work, and these individuals are simply working the jobs. So they're not even, often times, aware that this is a form of labour trafficking. That is a huge part of our culture.

OEm – In Portugal, according to the data of the Observatory of Human Trafficking, the main form of human trafficking is labour. Particularly in the agricultural farms in the South of Portugal in Alentejo.

JM – Yes, and to reiterate that point there, according to the International Labour Organization, labour trafficking is the most widespread form of trafficking in the world. As I said about what is happening in America, when it comes to the Mexicans and the Asians working in low skilled

jobs, it is seen as "normal". Labor exploitation is globally seen as normalized when there is nothing natural about being exploited.

OEm – And what is your country doing to address the problem?

JM – The United States, you know, I would say at the federal, state and local levels is attempting to do some things, domestically as well as internationally. I would just start at the federal level: in 2000, in sync with the United Nations' Trafficking in Persons Protocol, the United States developed its own federal protocol, which is the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. And they since have reauthorized it five times to address trafficking domestically in terms of people in the country, international victims and even some people who cross borders when it comes to labour practises. Therefore, there are federal laws. In response to that, many states in the country have followed suit with state laws that address trafficking. At the local level, many cities are implementing trafficking task forces to address practice issues regarding helping survivor's transition after they have been rescued from trafficking purposes. So there are federal, state and local initiatives to address human trafficking, including with governors. The US is also trying to address human trafficking abroad. One of the most important things that is being done, which was an initiative from the US government, is the Trafficking in Persons Report that the United States government puts out once a year. They actually dispatch people across the world to look at activities of countries regarding their efforts to address prosecution of perpetrators, prevention of human trafficking and protection of victims. The 3 P's: Prosecution, Prevention and Protection. And they subsequently rate each country, over a hundred and some nations, on these 3 efforts.

OEm – According to your experience and your research, what are the main difficulties between the laws and its implementation?

JM – That is huge. I always say to students and people in general that laws are great on paper. I need to see them enforced and implemented. And the truth is there are some laws, on the books right now, that protect victims and prosecute traffickers, that even those who are subject to implementation and enforcement are not aware of them. They don't know the laws. As first responders, law enforcement officers need to stay current of laws. Especially regarding child prostitution, sex trafficking, and trafficking in general. There's been research done, even from a student of mine who surveyed police departments across the county about their awareness of the new laws regarding trafficking. And many simply do not know about the laws. Laws that have been in place for, at that point, about ten years at the federal level, and some at the local state level. They were simply unaware. There are still, unfortunately, law enforcement officers who call sex trafficked children child prostitutes. And legally, they're not

child prostitutes, which is a completely different thing. Children cannot be consensual in commercial sex activities.

OEm – When is comes to addressing trafficking in the US, what do you think the biggest challenges are?

JM – The biggest problem to me is ignorance, which is lack of education. Ignorance, just not knowing the issue, is present. The lack of education and the belief that trafficking, once again, is a problem of developing countries, not the United States of America. I think, as a country, we have not come to terms with our own history of slavery. When it comes to transatlantic slavery in our own country, I think that many cannot digest the possibility that some form of it continues to happen on the soil of the United States government. And that can only be prevented with education—being that is one of the first steps and one of the main initiatives of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. That is one of the main initiatives, to let people know it exists, so they can identify it and then attempt to address it—policy wise, practice wise and even at the micro level, one to one—identifying it and calling for assistance.

OEm – When I listened to your presentation, you said you had already done research on human trafficking in many countries. I remember particularly your research in Ethiopia, Ghana and Uganda. Could you talk about those experiences? Or, for instance, if you found appropriate to speak about your research on human trafficking in Ghana, Uganda and Ethiopia? Because there were different forms of human trafficking and some of them I was not aware until you spoke of them in the seminar.

JM – I also went to Costa Rica to examine it as well. I tried to examine it in Malta. I've been to Canada, Mexico, the UK. What I found, for example, when it comes to trafficking abroad, and even the term trafficking is not widely used in certain areas of the world. They may just say slave or they may say trafficking in persons or some other name I don't understand. So the word is not always understood. Many people don't understand what is trafficking or even the term. They're just are not familiar with the term trafficking, although I have found the word slavery is consistently understood around the world. Where I've been, the term used is slaves. Many understand that. And so, when I went to Ghana, I started to notice immediately sex tourism in the hotel, with women as well as boys. I noticed that right away, and I even tried to challenge hotels that would allow this to happen. They would just not understand my sense of frustration and anger when I started to notice sex tourism which is a really, really big deal. When I first noticed the little boys, which appeared to be 8, 9, 10 year olds, I thought for a second, initially, that it was about international adoptions. But it became very clear, very quickly these were not men from Europe, for example, with boys they're about to adopt. And it was confirmed again and again at the front desk of hotels, when I went to confront them:

"Something is not right about this guy right here". I was told on more than one occasion to not go there, to not persist, because this could result in my passport, for example, being confiscated. So, I know for a fact this was a case of sex tourism. Although, besides the usage of boys for sex purposes, I also noticed that there were boys who were being trafficked in the fishing industry, which is very common in this country.

OEm – And in Ghana there are thousands and thousands of children who migrate alone, unaccompanied, from the North of Ghana to the South, which is quite a huge area, and when they arrive to the South, to the cities, they are unaccompanied, they have no protection, no resources. So, has you said they are completely vulnerable to trafficking to fishery.

JM – Absolutely. I'm not sure how many people understand the vulnerability of an unaccompanied child. I think, unfortunately, a lot of people just think it's just the way it is: kids are resilient, they'll be okay. The truth is, they're not okay when they're unaccompanied. They're completely at the mercy of adults around them. So when someone offers them work, whichever it is, they accept it because they have passed through so much and they think it is their best solution. They are not going to schools in their villages and they are completely vulnerable, and they trust adults who say they will give them somewhere to sleep and food to eat, in exchange for some type of work, if that's part of their contract.

OEm – And in Uganda, could you talk about your experience?

JM – I went to Uganda, actually, to discuss my research with fishermen in Ghana, on the West. But when I got there, I was immediately told about other issues that the people who I met, the physicians for example, wanted me to look at that they thought were more pressing. The sex trafficking is important, it is an issue, and this is why I went to the HIV/AIDS clinic first, this is where it all started, to see how STI's were being transmitted, as a result of all the sex trafficking. When I got there, however, I met many physicians who were saying: "Yes, sex trafficking is a problem, but we have a problem with children who are being kidnapped and sold and used for sacrificial purposes". And before I arrived on that soil, in Uganda, in 2013, I had never heard of child sacrifices in Uganda. And what I learned was that, child sacrifice is bad in all forms, but I, at the time understood it to mean: you kill the child, their suffering is over with, and then that's it. What I learned in Uganda about child sacrifice isn't child selling and child stealing. This is a torment process over a period of time, for many children. It includes cutting, mutilation, removal of genitalia and body parts, over periods of time, in an attempt to use as many parts as possible from that child. They [a segment of the Ugandan population] believe that if they possess parts of another human body, and of children that are supposedly pure, they will become better. There are 3 things: health, wealth and revenge—in terms of

using body parts as concoctions to poison enemies. And health and wealth were the main two things I heard about repeatedly. This belief they were coming to this sudden fortune of money if they consume this concoction, including the child's body parts, will somehow result in that. Uganda, in particular, has a problem with children that a lot of people in the world do not know about. Children are subject to child abductions and child stealing, but also child soldering. You know, it's been well documented that Uganda is number six in the world for child soldiers. Not just for the fighting but also for the sexual exploitation of girls as brides and sex slaves for the men in control and the boys who are also child soldiers. The conflict persists in many parts of the world that most people do not know it's even happening.

OEm – I was not. Until I heard you, I was not. And, could you speak about your experience of human trafficking with children in Ethiopia?

JM – I always heard about sex trafficking in Ethiopia for some time. And the thing about Ethiopia that is unique versus Ghana and Uganda, is this devout orthodox Christian belief system there. It is very common to hear people, see people praying outside, covering their heads. Very orthodox, in many ways. And there is a lot of stigma, like in all societies but in particular Ethiopia. A lot of stigma around sex in society. So, to be a prostitute or a trafficked person, is particularly stigmatizing. When I discovered, based on my experience and exposure to trafficking of women and girls, I was told by many people: this is the lowest a person can go in this society. For example, they have a huge campaign there about the use of condoms. This is part of some grant the government was given, I suppose, to talk about protection because there are problems with unprotected sex around the world, including Ethiopia. So, the campaign goes like this: "Use condoms, use condoms, use condoms". But the message really is, one to one: "if you are married, you should not use condoms. If you use condoms, you shouldn't be having sex to even need condoms." So the message is mixed. Therefore, you have some young ladies who are having [commercialized] sex, often times, with no condoms. And they're considered to be the outcasts, the prostitutes, the undesirables. And so, the issue is, obviously, with syphilis, herpes, HIV transmission because of all the stigma around sex. The truth is, if the woman or girl is from, you know, the South, and she's now migrated somewhere to the Central part or a different part of the country, she would not be well received and she would be vulnerable to being trafficked in a very religious country. So, the exploitation and the stigma and the guilt and the shame and the blame, are off the charts.

OEm – Being vulnerable in not only about being out of your place, without the people who protect you, but it also relates to language. For instance, the Romanians who come to Portugal, in human trafficking, don't speak Portuguese, and Romanian is not an accessible language. I think most of them don't even speak English, so they cannot even be understood. In India, even if it's inside the country, people from North India don't understand the languages of South India and vice-versa. In Africa, I believe it happens the same, whether between countries or whether abroad. You cannot even try to explain what is happening to you, which is a first step to be understood.

JM – I like that part you mentioned about language. Language is a huge factor in trafficking, a huge factor. Although a lot of Arabic countries are colonized and the official language is Portuguese, or French, or English, the truth is many of them hold on to dialect [or native languages]. There could be hundreds of dialects in one country. You are truly at the mercy of the people, any of us in general, when you go somewhere and don't know the language. You can be innocently taken on a taxi ride somewhere, or get into transport somewhere, or get duped into sex trafficking or a labour trafficking scenario, simply by not knowing where you're going and what's being said to you. And even signing documents, you don't even know what you are signing or agreeing to. They could be signing away their lives for 5 years of work. And not even realising its part of their contract or agreement with someone. Absolutely, language is huge, a huge barrier and risk factor for those who are migrating.

OEm – I was thinking about your experience, because… Well, sometimes it's easier for a researcher from outside, from someone who comes from the USA, to enter into a society to do field work, because you can trust someone will not tell your things to other people nearby. Sometimes that has advantages. But at the same time, it's such a sensitive issue. You cannot just arrive in one place and say: "so can you tell me how is the human trafficking?". That implies a lot of knowledge, scientific knowledge, experience, but I'm sure also a lot of sensitivity and you had to take a lot of care. Otherwise, I'm sure you could never have access to what you have researched. Child sacrifice, child sex networks, those are very sensitive issues. As you said in the hotel, they could have confiscated your passport. And you are not focused only on one country. You focus on Mexico, Ethiopia, Ghana, Uganda… Could you talk about the difficulties you have faced? As a researcher, as a woman, what was difficult for you?

JM – My main difficulty as a woman researcher is based on the fact that I often go to countries where patriarchy is the norm and they expect to see male researchers. Besides that, my difficulties are primarily centred around frustration. People assuming many things about me as a privileged American. "She's coming in here, with her narrow views about our culture, our people and working norms". And so, I sometimes felt push back because they thought that I

didn't understand what work really was in their country, and how there was a necessity for children to work or for people to work long hours. Or to have relatives from the North to come to the South/Central areas and work without education or proper housing or food. A lot of times I think that I'm not given credit for knowing what I know on human behaviour and, at the same time, trying to respect culture. So one of my many challenges is to try to convince people: "I want to respect your culture, I've done my homework on your culture but this is a problem". So, the first challenge is to show them that I'm trying to understand the situation, and I'm trying to educate at the same time. So, what I find is, I think people are reluctant to talk to me initially, because their names may be tied with my research results, or what I'm trying to say or what I'm trying to assert about the government. Trust is a really big issue. My way to overcome is through time: stay for a while and keep coming back. There is no way I could have interviewed, for example over 200 fishermen, who I believe were considered to be slaves, without having gone to Ghana numerous times. So they knew I was someone who was obviously invested. Another thing is money; I need to pay people for their time. I need to pay them, compensate them or I'm going to be guilty of exploiting them as well, if I use their time and don't pay them appropriately. So, I need to. There were some people who I interviewed who had never received money their entire lives. So I felt the need to establish that importance with my own research review board, in the States, to get approval to pay people X amount of currency to interview them.

OEm – So at the same time that you do research, you are also doing some transformation in the education or giving some awareness to those people.

JM – I believe that part of that awareness piece is, when I talk about my research to people before I do it and why I'm doing it—even the survivors and victims start to understand: "Oh, what I'm doing is not the normal. This is exploitation, this doesn't feel good. It doesn't feel good". I think that's the fisrt step to show them they're being exploited. And that's what happened in Ghana with those 221 fishermen I interviewed. We did it in 24 hours. That many men came in 24 hours. Because they had something to say. And all of this started out of me observing two men having an argument and one man called the other one a fisherman and he was enraged. That was the worst insult possible. And I remember asking people in the community: "Why is this such an insult?" And I was told: "They're just slaves." They're just slaves. So, I knew that was an issue. So when I developed my instrument, it was based on the way Ghana defined human trafficking in that country and my questions were based on their laws. And so we asked the questions to the fishermen, they had lots to say. It was a convenient sample, they were referring people, snowballing people, referring them to me, and they kept coming all day. It was going on for 24 hours, minus the night time, they kept coming to me and my researchers for an interview, to be talked to. They were only aware they had something to

say when they started talking. And by the way, the fishermen, almost all of them, started as boys. I don't recall even one that started being as fishermen as a man, which made them more vulnerable.

OEm – In this case, the difficulty you talked about before about being a woman researcher, while interviewing 221 men, must have felt enlarged. There are also other countries you do research on where you felt it too?

JM – Mexico and Ethiopia are very male centered, even the US. I do want to normalize sexism. Sexism is real. And that is one of the things that differ, in my opinion, the USA from abroad when it comes to trafficking. In the United States, we normalize sexism, classism and racism. It is just those people. And in other countries, it's about the language, the religion, the clan, or tribal affiliation. It is just those people, us versus them. And this always happens; I find that everywhere I go. I find that when I'm traveling trying to do this work there's always a group of people who are marginalized. Every country decides who they will be. And they're the ones who we are going to find vulnerable to being trafficking.

OEm – And these politics of exclusion, sometimes, not only we do it on a very basic level, I can see that in the media, on women who are victims of human trafficking and they are seen sometimes by Portuguese, sometimes in the media, as them. Them, the Romanians and the Brazilians, them. Always them. Not the Portuguese who are from the same area.

JM – In the United States, they would say: "Oh, they're used to that. That's what they do. That's who they are." It's a good way to diminish people. Take the guilt and blame, and responsibility off ourselves.

OEm – Many of your data you presented I was not aware and it's very disturbing, I was thinking that this, at a certain point, must sometimes be very disturbing for you. How do you cope with it?

JM – It is disturbing. Despite working as a researcher, meeting real survivors and real victims, I am still very disturbed 20 years later. People do often assume that I'm used to it, that I've normalized the trauma of people I work with, people I come into contact with, as a researcher, but it's true—it's very daunting, it's very overwhelming. I'm very emotional about the victimization of people in this world. And the only way I can continue this work, persevere in this work, is to believe that I have been commissioned by God, to expose this major evil in the world. I feel that I'm compelled to do this work and to educate others. You know, it would be easier for me to find something less stigmatizing, less real, to focus on in terms of my work. Something that's less criminalizing and victimizing to people. But I can't, because every time I want to just stop this, I meet someone else who tells me their story, and I cannot shake the

victimization from my head. Even just two weeks ago, when I was part of a panel in the United States of America on sex trafficking, one of the survivors got up and talked about having sex with dogs. So, 20 years later, I heard the same story again about this victimization and animal perversion. And so, my point is, I know it's widespread, I know it continues to go on, so I feel compelled to continue to educate people and to do what I can to make this known—and if I can have impact on peoples' behaviours and affect policies, I want to be a part of that work. I want to be a part of that progress.

OEm – One of the topics you also mention in your presentation is how difficult it is to take this to a court. And after taking to a court, secondly, how difficult it is to prove. And you mention, I think, I'm not sure, in Ethiopia, only two people were accountable for more than 30 thousand victims of human trafficking?

JM – Absolutely. And that's because of people relying on networks. They trust these networks. They want to help them get to Yemen, Jordan or Saudi Arabia—help them to get passports and visas. Many are smuggled to Saudi Arabia, take the boats, they find ways to get to the Middle East to work, not realising it will be a trafficking situation. Labour for the men, sex for the females and labour. Domestic labour, servitude for females, along with sex. As you talked about language, in these cases the same happens: in Saudi Arabia they don't speak the language, they're not able to understand, and their networks are completely cut. It is a huge country where they cannot walk to the neighbouring countries. Although, the Ethiopian Government has made official statements saying: "No more travel to Saudi Arabia", for example. And Saudi Arabia has deported many of them back to Ethiopia. Saudi Arabia is well aware of who they're victimizing. That's very clear. It's not for discussion. But people are starting to understand in Ethiopia, their relatives have not contacted them in years or months. They've not sent back remittances. So they know something is going on, and there have been actual rescues. There have been trucks of men who have been rescued in parts of, enroute, or parts of the Middle East, where it's documented they've been abused, their backs are cut up from beatings, so it's been documented. And so, what happened just last year, when I was in Addis Ababa in 2015, I was in the airport, it's a true story. I will never, ever forget these faces. I came to the airport, and it was crowded, more crowded than usual. And the reason why this is so distinct to me is that the airport was filled with very thin, sunken faces individuals, who were so dirty. I'll never forget the dirt on these people. Their skin, their clothing. Their [the men] clothing were tattered, the pants were torn, the side of their shirts were torn, and many did not have shoes on. They looked so terrified. They looked scared to death. Many of the women were covered up except for their eyes. The black on their dresses, the hijabs, everything was just dirty. Dirty, dirty, dirty and everyone looked so scared. And I remember standing there thinking: "What is going on? Who are these people?". And I was by a window,

and there was a huge plane out there from Saudi Arabia. I heard they were deporting them back. And that particular day was the first plane back to Ethiopia. And I was asking people in the airport: "Why are they so afraid? Why do they look like this here?", and they started explaining to me a little bit more details. And one of the things they talked about was: "They're all so ashamed. They didn't make it abroad." [For me personally, I wondered why Saudia Arabia did not have the decency of giving these men and women a pair of shoes and a clean outfit to wear home to greet their families in.]

OEm – Of course. They have not made success, they are still victims and they still have to face the shame of the families.

JM – Yes. And the women were considered to be prostitutes and whores. There was so much stigma with being back. And they had nothing. I was told they were all given a small amount of money, so they were in lines for the ATM to get it. I heard they were given it by Saudi Arabia, in the process of the deportation—the entire airport in that area were filled with these men and women. And the thing about the trauma that bothers me and really disturbs me about trafficking survivors and victims is that people assume if we rescue them, that's good enough. Addressing mental health issues is the last priority. Ethiopia is just now starting to talk about mental disorders. So many of these women and men are going to be released, they were released, and now they're supposed to just adjust on their own and live through the trauma. This was the saddest day of my professional career as a researcher– in seeing these many [formerly] trafficked people. [At the urging of the Ethiopian government, this mass deportation took place as phase 1 of returning Ethiopians after years of being documented as slaves in the Middle East.]

OEm – So, how will those human beings cope in the future with other situations?

JM – Not very well. There's just a problem with parity and mental health care and physical health care in the whole world. Yes, we're going to address a wound or a lesion on a leg pretty quickly. Tuberculosis, Malaria—pretty quickly. But mental health is invisible; it's not going to be a priority even for the United States. It's not a priority.

OEm – Is there any other thing that you would like to address?

JM – I would just love for people to recognize and realize that, one: modern day slavery is present and it's widespread. The trafficking of persons is a public health issue that we all should be very concerned about. I don't think it's okay nor acceptable to just continue to reduce people to objects and things. It is not okay to continue to exploit people – 45 million people and counting – it is an unacceptable practice that continues to pervade the lives of many people around this world, while others sit back and do nothing. It is completely against all that humanity stands for. It's a gross violation of one's human rights and as a signatory on the UN protocol on human rights, the United States, Westerners, people around the world and

countries that exploit others and have slaves, all have a responsibility to do something to address human trafficking. We all have a responsibility to do something to address trafficking.

OEm – And just relating to Portugal, I would like, also, to stress that this keeps happening in Portugal, in the South of Portugal with emigrants from Nepal, Bangladesh, etc… It is labour exploitation and many times it's already labour networks by the emigrants of their own countries, working the farms of fruit and vegetables. And, at the same time, with Portuguese abroad, and this is the Emigration Observatory. For instance, a slight way of human exploitation was the Portuguese who went to work in Angola in civil construction and many times as managers, but when they arrived there, they kept their passports. And if they got sick they did not have an adequate health support. So the moment you even go with a good salary, supposedly good salary, and you are managing and coordinating others, the moment they take your passport to the enterprise, that's exploitation and trafficking. And many of them could not get their passport back until the employers from Angola decided to. It often takes a lot of time and some of them die. So, this is also to advert the Portuguese that this is happening nowadays, just nowadays, very near. And I'm not even mentioning Lisbon, where there is so much labour and sexual trafficking.

JM – And let me just please add one last comment to follow up regarding labour trafficking. We always want to put the responsibility, onus, on someone else. As consumers, we must be more responsible to others. There's a huge price that comes along with low prices. And as a consumer, I would implore everyone to do their homework and find out where the products they're using, and consuming, is coming from, who is making them. And if there's any slavery, anywhere in that chain, to reject that product. To not use that product. To protest. Because we are part of the problem when we're part of the demand. As a consumer, individually, I am part of the problem if I continue to consume products that are made on the backs of slaves. So, we're all complicit.

OEm – And it's not all clothes that come from Bangladesh, or China. It's even I drink, or the vegetables or fruit I eat in Portugal.

JM – Everything, absolutely. Clothing, electronic products, food, cars, all of those things matter. We must do our homework. We are very powerful when unified as consumers, to fight human trafficking, especially labour trafficking. We're very powerful together.

OEm – Thank you so much for your interview and for your lovely work combining research, teaching and policy design. Thank you so much.

JM – You're welcome. Thank you for your time today.

[Interview held in Lisbon, October 24, 2016, edited for publication on March 2019.]

Observatório da Emigração

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