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Christopher Paoella, Valencia College in Orlando, Florida, USA

'Against Her Will and Crying Out': Poverty and Human Trafficking in Late-Medieval Europe

Abstract:

Today, poverty and corruption are often cited as major underlying causes of the modern slave trade and labor and sex trafficking, but neither they nor the human trafficking activities they encourage are products of modern society, modern values, or of any modern 'sexual revolution.' No, indeed: they are instead socioeconomic conditions with deep historical roots that transcend borders, cultures, and economic systems, and whose effects were (and continue to be) concrete, immediate, and personal.

Human trafficking networks flourished in the late-medieval world. Although kidnapping and abduction are among the clearest and most obvious examples of sex trafficking, familial pressure and predatory employment were other common means of procuring labor for the growing commercial sex industry of late-medieval Europe. Poverty left women and girls vulnerable to exploitation by family members and by predatory employers in industries such as food service and hospitality, textile production and care, and domestic service. Once a victim entered the commercial sex industry, violence compelled her labor, and stiff competition for limited employment opportunities left her with few alternatives.

Bio:

Christopher Paoella earned his doctorate in medieval history at the University of Missouri, Columbia, in 2019. Today, he teaches ancient and medieval history at Valencia College in Orlando, Florida. He researches the deep history of human trafficking across North Africa and Eurasia from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Era, and the dynamic relationships among gender, racial, socioeconomic, religious, and cultural identities that have shaped (and continue to shape) human trafficking patterns and activities.

His recent publications include, "'For She Is Not to Work:' A Noble's Experience of Human Trafficking in the Viking Age" in *Portraits of Medieval Europe*, forthcoming from Routledge Publishers, and his first monograph, *Human Trafficking in Medieval Europe: Slavery, Sexual Exploitation, and Prostitution*, was recently published by Amsterdam University Press in 2020. He has also presented his research at major national and international conferences including The Third Global Meeting on Slavery: Past, Present, and Future, in Berlin, Germany, the 82nd Annual Meeting of the Southern Historical Association in Dallas, TX, and the 52nd Annual International Congress on Medieval Studies, in Kalamazoo, MI.

Finally, he has delivered free public lectures and participated as a panelist in public outreach events on human trafficking awareness in Orlando, FL and Columbia, Jefferson City, and St. Louis, Missouri. In Missouri, he was a member of the Research Collaborative for the Human Trafficking Task Force under the auspices of the Attorney General for the State of Missouri, and a member of local anti-human trafficking organizations in both Columbia and St. Louis.