

Article

Learning from Black Lives Matter: Resisting Purity Culture in US Antitrafficking

Yvonne C. Zimmerman

Methodist Theological School in Ohio, Delaware, OH 43015, USA; yzimmerman@mtso.edu

Abstract: Persistent racial disparities in antitrafficking in the US reflect the antitrafficking movement's reliance on a moral economy of purity and blamelessness that is steeped in White supremacy. I deconstruct two key strands of this moral economy: the middle-class economic values associated with the Protestant ethic, and the patriarchal, Christian values around gender and sexuality associated with purity culture. Both of these strands skew White and fail to work reliably for Black people. Constructively, I argue that the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement is an important model for the antitrafficking movement as it models the explicit rejection of and divests from the logics and practices of White supremacy. As a Black-centered political movement that is committed to resisting the unjust dehumanization of Black bodies, BLM's responses to systemic injustice and harms consistently prioritize the well-being of Black lives and the flourishing of Black communities. I elaborate specific ways that the antitrafficking movement can learn from the wisdom that BLM provides.

Keywords: human trafficking; race; Black Lives Matter; Protestant ethic; purity culture

1. Introduction

I spent much of fall 2022 in the US-American heartland city of Des Moines, Iowa, where, as Pieper Lewis's sentencing date approached, aspects of her story were splashed across local news headlines almost daily. On 1 June 2020, Pieper Lewis, a fifteen-year-old Black girl, stabbed and killed Zachery Brooks, a thirty-seven year old Des Moines resident. At the time, Lewis, whom the press described as a "repeat runaway", was living with her pimp and boyfriend, Christopher Brown, who "required her to have sex with other men for money" (Tumin 2022). Lewis's witness statement reported that Brooks was intoxicated when he picked her up from Brown's apartment that evening and that he made Lewis take shots of vodka and drags of marijuana after they arrived back at his apartment, eventually causing her to lose consciousness. Sometime later, she awoke to find Brooks raping her. She tried to make him stop, but lost consciousness again. When she awoke later, Brooks was passed out on the bed and her clothes were missing. She also saw a box of KY Jelly on the nightstand, and realized she had not successfully stopped the assault. She took a knife from the nightstand and stabbed him (Tumin 2022).

That night was not the first time that Brooks raped Lewis; the month previous, Brown made Lewis stay with Brooks while his daughter and her mother visited, and Brown explained to her that she was expected to have sex with Brooks in exchange for being allowed to stay there. According to Lewis's witness statement, she did not want to stay with Brooks or have sex with him, stating that, "I had no other place to go" (Tumin 2022). Brooks raped her five times during the time she spent with him.

Although Lewis was just fifteen years old, she was charged with first-degree murder and tried as an adult. She pleaded guilty to manslaughter and willful injury, which carries a 20-year prison sentence. At her sentencing on 13 September 2022, the judge presiding in Lewis's case granted a deferred judgement. A deferred judgement means that her record can be expunged if certain conditions of her sentence are met. These conditions include five years of closely supervised probation (including placement in a residential facility, where



Citation: Zimmerman, Yvonne C. 2023. Learning from Black Lives Matter: Resisting Purity Culture in US Antitrafficking. *Religions* 14: 430. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14040430>

Academic Editor: Denise Starkey

Received: 7 February 2023

Revised: 3 March 2023

Accepted: 14 March 2023

Published: 23 March 2023



Copyright: © 2023 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

wearing a court-ordered GPS tracking device is required), payment of \$150,000 restitution to Brooks's family, and performing 200 hours of community service each year for three years ([Associated Press 2022](#); [BBC News 2022](#); [Tumin 2022](#)).

Following the sentencing, Lewis was remanded to the Fresh Start Women's Center in Des Moines, a community-based corrections facility formerly known as the Iowa Women's Residential Correctional Facility. She stayed in the program for just over seven weeks before removing her GPS monitor and leaving the facility on 4 November 2022. A warrant was subsequently issued for her arrest, and Lewis was re-booked in the Polk County Jail on November 8. According to *The Des Moines Register*, the probation report asked for her probation to be revoked and for her original sentence to be imposed ([Jones and Block 2022](#)).

I suspect that the reasons this case captured my attention are similar to why it captured the attention of so many others: a young woman, still a minor at the time of her sentencing, was not only being held criminally responsible, but being charged as an adult for actions she took in defiance of and resistance to horrendous crimes committed first against *her* when she was just fifteen. That the homeless, trafficked teenager is deemed responsible for paying over \$100,000 in restitution to her trafficker and rapist's family seems ludicrous. What about the crimes committed against Pieper Lewis? How did *she* become the recognized wrongdoer in this situation? I cannot shake the feeling that this is an egregious miscarriage of justice. With these questions in mind, my starting point in this project is the failure of antitrafficking laws and antitrafficking social services, what I refer to collectively as 'antitrafficking', to protect and provide resources for Black girls and young women like Pieper Lewis.

'Human trafficking' is a strongly debated, hotly contested term. The intensity of these controversies about how to conceptualize and define human trafficking notwithstanding, Pieper Lewis's situation undoubtedly meets the legal definition of this crime. Human trafficking refers to the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act (Trafficking Victims Protection Act 2000, sec. 108(8)). Force, fraud, and coercion compromise a person's ability to leave a situation. As anthropologist Denise Brennan explains, while specific trafficking situations can seem dramatically different from one another, the element that unites them is that "all trafficked persons ... have a compromised ability to walk away" ([Brennan 2014](#), p. 13). The inability to leave or get out of a situation indicates the kind of loss of control of one's life that constitutes human trafficking. The term 'human trafficking' therefore refers to situations in which people have lost control of their lives such that they are paid nothing or next to nothing for their work, and they are unable to leave their situation without fear of violence ([Campbell and Zimmerman 2017](#), p. 273). Notably, the US's federal antitrafficking law, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), has no coercion requirement for minors. Sociologist Jennifer Musto explains that this means that "youth involved in the sex trade are de facto defined as victims, whether or not they frame their experiences as such" ([Musto 2016](#), p. x). For minors, the exchange of a sex act for money or another item of value is sufficient to substantiate human trafficking.

Whether considered as the minor she was in 2020 or the adult that the criminal legal system deemed her, Pieper Lewis's situation meets the criteria of human trafficking. Not only was she a victim of human trafficking *before* she picked up the knife and stabbed Brown, *she was a victim of human trafficking in the very situations in which she killed him*. However, because she killed her rapist and trafficker, Lewis is considered a criminal offender—a murderer—in the eyes of the law. Although several news headlines provide lip service in recognition of Pieper Lewis as a victim of human trafficking, the criminal legal system has certainly not responded to or treated her as such. How does a girl like Pieper Lewis—and how do *so many* girls and women like Pieper Lewis—slip through the cracks of the antitrafficking apparatus and, instead of receiving the support and services they need, end up becoming branded as criminals who are locked up in jails and prisons ([Kaba 2021](#), p. 38)?

Certainly, one factor in this pattern of slippage is the criminal justice system's strong preference for uncomplicated victims. Uncomplicated victims are unequivocally innocent and thus experience victimization from a state of purity and blamelessness. Their blamelessness makes advocacy on their behalf easy. Advocacy for complicated victims is more difficult. Complicated victims are not necessarily altogether innocent. Complicated victims may not suffer the harm of their victimization passively and, in their resistance, may engage in "wrongdoing", such as breaking the law or harming others. In one way or another, complicated victims are not fully aligned with the innocence, purity, and blamelessness that is often presumed to accompany (if not define) what being a victim means. Clearly, Lewis is a complicated victim.

Another compounding factor in this slippage is race. Here, it is not just that Lewis is complicated, it is also that she is Black. The over-policing of Black communities is well known, as is the fact that over-policing contributes to the disproportionately high rates at which Black people are incarcerated in this country. Black men bear the brunt of this over-policing, over-criminalizing, and over-incarcerating; however, an exception to this pattern is Black women and girls in the sex trade. Although Black girls experience sex-trafficking at higher rates than their peers in other racial groups, Black girls frequently are not acknowledged as trafficking victims and are instead arrested for prostitution-related offenses ([Rights4Girls 2021](#)). According to FBI statistics, 71% of minors arrested for prostitution-related offenses in the US are girls ([Federal Bureau of Investigation 2019](#), tab. 38, p. 40). Despite making up just 13% of the population, over 60% of the minors arrested for prostitution-related offenses are Black ([Sankofa 2015](#), p. 1645).

Some might attempt to justify or at least contextualize these statistics by highlighting that law enforcement uses this "arrest-to-assist" approach as a strategy for identifying trafficking victims and initiating their rehabilitation ([Musto 2016](#), p. 39). While some girls and women are connected to services following arrest or detention by police, many are not. Statistics on prostitution arrests from my home in Columbus, OH, illustrate the racial dynamics of the arrest-to-assist models. The city of Columbus is located in Franklin County, which has a population of approximately 1.3 million people. The county's racial demographics are 61.3% White, 22.7% Black, 5.9% Latinx, and 10.1% other/unidentified. In the five-year period spanning 2012–2017, there were 7184 prostitution-related arrests in Franklin County. Of these arrests, 74% of persons were White, 22% were Black, and 4% were other/unidentified. Four percent of these arrested persons received referrals to CATCH Court, the specialized human trafficking docket in Franklin County's municipal court system that is designed "to address the needs of defendants who have been charged in the Franklin County Municipal Court with prostitution, solicitation, loitering to solicit, or other offenses if the defendant has a history of being a victim of human trafficking" ([Schultz et al. 2020](#), p. 5). Of the 4% referred to CATCH Court, 67% were accepted into the program. Ninety percent of the individuals referred and accepted into CATCH Court were White and just ten percent were Black ([Estabrook and Zimmerman 2021](#)). These statistics show that although the racial demographics of prostitution arrests in Franklin County are generally consistent with the overall racial demographics of county residents, this consistency breaks down and skews White at the level where defendants are identified as victims of human trafficking and referred to CATCH Court. The racial demographics of the women who receive referrals to CATCH Court are significantly Whiter than both the overall racial demographics of individuals with prostitution-related arrests and the racial demographics of Franklin County as a whole. White defendants are referred to CATCH Court at considerably higher rates than Black defendants. Black women and girls arrested for prostitution-related offenses are less likely to be recognized as victims of human trafficking and connected with support and services; furthermore, they are more likely to be criminalized and subjected to punishment.¹ Young Black women like Lewis are more readily recognized as criminals than as victims of human trafficking.

How can the ways that antitrafficking persistently skews White be accounted for? I argue that the antitrafficking movement is founded on a moral economy of purity and

blamelessness that is steeped in White supremacy. As such, this moral economy was never intended to serve the interests and protect the well-being of Black girls and women like Lewis. Constructively, I contend that the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement is an important alternative to the moral logic of the antitrafficking movement, modeling an explicit rejection of and divestment from the logics and practices of White supremacy. As a Black-centered political movement that is committed to resisting the unjust dehumanization of Black bodies, BLM's responses to systemic injustice and harms such as human trafficking consistently prioritize the well-being of Black lives and the flourishing of Black communities. Thus, the central contention of this article is that the antitrafficking movement needs to learn from, and be reframed by, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement.

My argument proceeds as follows: The first section introduces the BLM movement and describes its response to human trafficking. The second section elaborates why I think that the antitrafficking movement needs to be reframed by BLM. Drawing on womanist Christian ethicist Katie Cannon's (1988) work in *Black Womanist Ethics*, I show how the middle-class economic values associated with the Protestant ethic skew White and fail to work reliably for Black people. Then, using religious studies scholar Meredith Minister's (2018) work on purity culture in *Rape Culture on Campus*, I show how White, patriarchal, Christian values around gender and sexuality construct the category of sexual purity that informs public perceptions of trafficking victims. Together, these deconstructions of two key strands of White Protestant Christian social ethics reveal their respective and conjoined investments in White supremacy. The third and final section indicates how BLM reframes antitrafficking by elaborating several specific ways that the different moral framework and system of values that organizes BLM would better serve people who experience trafficking.

2. The Black Lives Matter Movement

In the essay "Human Trafficking and Religious Movements", I explore several facets of the social movement ecology in which the antitrafficking movement is situated, highlighting how efforts to end human trafficking are related to the 19th-century abolition movement, the early 20th-century social purity movement, and the late 20th-century religious freedom movement (Zimmerman 2019). That work was primarily sociological, describing how the antitrafficking movement has re-appropriated elements from other social movements in its development and trajectory over the past twenty-plus years. In contrast, the present project is speculative, as I think through how the antitrafficking movement might make use of resources available to it from adjacent social movements to address the problem of how antitrafficking persistently, even intractably, skews White. I believe that to solve this problem, the movement will need to de-center Whiteness, and there is no better social movement to look to for decentering Whiteness than the Black Lives Matter movement.

2.1. Introducing Black Lives Matter

The Black Lives Matter movement (or, as it is also known, the Movement for Black Lives) is a social and political movement committed to ending patterns of racially motivated violence and systemic police brutality against Black people (Black Lives Matter n.d.a). The movement began in the summer of 2013 in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the murder of seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin. Organizers Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi created the social media hashtag #BlackLivesMatter as a call to action "in support of all Black lives" and, more specifically, to "propel the conversation around the state-sanctioned violence" in relation to Black people (Black Lives Matter n.d.b).

From this initial hashtag and call to action, the movement rose to national prominence following the 2014 police killings of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and Eric Garner in New York City. In the intervening years, movement participants have protested the deaths of many other Black people by police actions or while in police custody. Following the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer in June 2020, the movement went on to mobilize massive public protests against police violence toward Black citizens in cities and towns across the country. According to the *New York Times*, as many as

26 million people participated in BLM marches and demonstrations during the summer of 2020, making this social movement not only the largest movement for racial justice since the 1960s civil rights movement, but the largest social movement in US history (Buchanan et al. 2020).

The organizational structure of BLM is unique because it functions as a decentralized network of activists without a single identifiable leader or figurehead and no formal hierarchy. The decentralized structure of the movement does not mean the movement is leaderless; rather, its collaborative, communicative, and democratic nature makes it just the opposite: leaderful (Barrón-López 2020). Therefore, a range of views coalesces in the BLM movement. The common ground amidst this range is the acknowledgement that systemic racism in America overwhelmingly affects Black people, and the movement critiques police violence against people of color (Howard University School of Law Library 2018).

BLM's social and political critique of racism in America is rooted in a significant body of scholarship produced since the 1980s, including Kimberle Crenshaw's (1989) "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex", Angela Davis's (2003) *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, and Michelle Alexander's (2010) *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in an Age of Colorblindness*. However, BLM is not just, or even mainly, an academic movement. Indeed, the power of this movement is its ability to resonate with and mobilize ordinary people. Therefore, even when prominent umbrella organizations within BLM articulate and advance policy agendas, this should be understood as part of a larger collective, community-based, and collaborative process of building Black political will and power (M4BL 2020c). This means that not everyone who identifies with or supports the BLM movement necessarily endorses, or is even familiar with, any particular initiative or set of policy proposals on which smaller, constituent BLM organizations are working. Uniting the movement is a shared understanding of the necessity of critiquing the dominant socio-political institutions and processes that stigmatize Black individuals and harm Black communities, along with the presentation of an alternative political and social vision.

The goal of bringing significant structural change to the criminal justice system is one that is widely shared among different constituencies of the BLM. For example, the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation, Inc. describes its mission as follows: "to eradicate white supremacy and build local power to intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes" (Black Lives Matter n.d.a). Similarly, the "About Us" page of the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) website states: "We believe that prisons, police and all other institutions that inflict violence on Black people must be abolished and replaced by institutions that value and affirm the flourishing of Black lives" (M4BL 2023). Across the many manifestations and iterations of this social movement, drawing attention to "how criminalization, regardless of race or class, is grounded in anti-Blackness" is a consistent theme (Kaba 2021, p. xxii).

Created by three queer women of color, another unique and notable feature of BLM is the way that the movement integrates questions of sex and gender into its political critique of racism and social justice organizing. The "Vision for Black Lives" explains this strategic decision to center female and trans leadership and voices in the movement:

We are intentional about amplifying the particular experiences of racial, economic, and gender-based state and interpersonal violence that Black women, queer, trans, gender nonconforming, intersex, and disabled people face. Cisheteropatriarchy and ableism are central and instrumental to anti-Blackness and racial capitalism, and have been internalized within our communities and movements. (M4BL 2020c)

In the "Herstory" of BLM, the decision to center the leadership around women, queer, and trans people in the movement is further explained in terms of learning from the past: "To maximize our movement muscle, and to be intentional about not replicating harmful practices that excluded so many in past movements for liberation, we made a commitment to placing those at the margins closer to the center" (Black Lives Matter n.d.b). Breaking

from the history of marginalization from formal leadership in US-based Black liberation movements, the leadership of women, queer, and trans people is central in BLM.

The inherent dignity of Black people, individually and collectively, is among BLM's central affirmations and is a key intervention that BLM offers "in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise" ([Black Lives Matter n.d.b](#)). The conception of Black dignity that BLM disseminates is uniquely and radically inclusive. As elaborated in the preamble to the "Vision for Black Lives" BLM's operative conception of dignity affirms:

We believe in elevating the experiences and leadership of the most marginalized Black people, including, but not limited to, women, femmes, queer, trans, gender nonconforming, intersex, Muslim, disabled, D/deaf, and autistic people, people living with HIV, people who are criminalized, formerly and currently incarcerated, detained or institutionalized, migrants, including undocumented migrants, low and no-income, cash poor, and working class, homeless and precariously housed people, people who are dependent on criminalized substances, youth, and elders. It is our hope that by working together to create and amplify a shared agenda, we can continue to move towards a world in which the full humanity and dignity of all people is recognized. ([M4BL 2020b](#))

This conception of dignity not only includes those who are marginalized but intentionally centers their experiences and leadership. The preamble explains: "There can be no liberation for all Black people if we do not center and fight for members of our communities who are living at the intersections of multiple and mutually reinforcing structures of oppression" ([M4BL 2020b](#)). In this way, dignity is not identified with overcoming or triumphing over marginalization or sources of social oppression but is recognized as extant within marginalized and oppressed lives, communities, and spaces.

The importance of Black political will and power stems from dignity, which is defined as above. As the opening line of "Vision for Black Lives" explains, "Black life and dignity require Black political will and power" ([M4BL 2020c](#)). The "Vision for Black Lives" is a comprehensive and visionary policy agenda created by the Movement for Black Lives for the post-Ferguson Black liberation movement. Rooted in the recognition that the state apparatus has "consistently created conditions of violence, deprivation, and exclusion for Black people", the policy agenda elaborates policies that address "the current material conditions of our people" ([M4BL 2020b](#)). There is recognition that BLM's "vision of a fundamentally different world" is not only a matter of policy change; nonetheless, policy change is crucial to addressing the suffering that attends Black life in America. The basic demands behind the "Vision for Black Lives" policy platform are:

We demand repair for the harms that have been done to Black communities, in the form of reparations and targeted long-term investments. We demand economic justice. We demand defunding and dismantling of the systems and institutions that criminalize, control, and cage us. We demand divestment from ideologies, laws, policies, and practices that harm us, and investment in our communities and movements. We demand political power and community control over the institutions which govern our lives. ([M4BL 2020b](#))

Reflecting these demands, the policy platform consists of six foci or "planks": end the war on Black people; reparations; invest-divest; economic justice; community control; and political power.

2.2. Black Lives Matter and Human Trafficking

Several planks of the BLM policy platform directly connect to human trafficking and the US's antihuman trafficking policy. A full analysis of the implications of each plank of the platform for human trafficking policy is beyond the scope of this article. Here, I focus broadly on the first plank, "End the War on Black People". This plank is composed

of thirteen policy briefs; for my purposes here, I focus on policy brief nine, “End the War on Drugs”.

The policy brief entitled “End the War on Drugs” (M4BL 2020a) explains how the US’s policies against illegalized drugs since the 1970s have been weaponized in the state’s ongoing assault on Black people. It explains the issue as follows:

The “War on Drugs” has been a primary driver of mass criminalization, incarceration, and law enforcement violence targeting Black people over the past five decades, devastating families, communities, and generations. Prostitution enforcement has consistently served as a mechanism for profiling, pathologization, targeting, physical and sexual violence, criminalization, and structural exclusion for Black women, trans, and gender nonconforming people, and regulation of sexual and reproductive autonomy. Both the drug war and prostitution enforcement divert millions of dollars away from meeting the needs of people with substance dependence and people in the drug and sex trades, including non-coercive, accessible, and evidence-based treatment, housing, health care, education, and living wage employment (2).

In other words, policies and practices connected to the initiative to end the illegal drug trade are behind many of the harms that Black people and communities experience.

Prostitution enforcement is a tool in the US’s antidrug initiative that is particularly harmful to Black people and communities. In the US, prostitution, or the trading of sexual services for material (usually financial) gain, is illegal with the exception of certain very limited areas in Nevada. However, prostitution laws are used disproportionately against Black people. For example, in 2018, Black and Latinx people made up 91% of the arrests for ‘loitering for the purposes of prostitution’ in New York (M4BL 2020a, p. 6). As noted in the introduction, Black youth make up 62% of the minors arrested for prostitution-related offenses in the US, despite making up just 13% of the population (Luo 2020, p. 9). The brief summarizes,

Prostitution laws have consistently been used to surveil, police, and criminalize Black communities, homes, and businesses. They have particularly facilitated police and community violence—including sexual violence—against Black women, trans, gender nonconforming and disabled people. Criminalization of prostitution originated and continues to be used as a basis for exclusion and deportation from the U.S. (M4BL 2020a, p. 6)

Importantly, the brief calls attention to the reasons why people trade sex, explaining as follows: “The vast majority of people who trade sex do in order to meet basic needs for housing, food, education, medical care, childcare, and eldercare [People] may participate in the sex trade because it offers flexibility and accommodations jobs in formal economies do not. It can also substitute and supplement for inadequate or denied disability benefits and to cover exorbitant medical costs” (M4BL 2020a, p. 6). In other words, taking up commercial sex work is often a strategy for meeting basic needs and for dealing with poverty.

Not all people who trade sex use drugs, and not all people who use drugs trade sex; however, drug and prostitution law enforcement often operate in tandem. The brief explains that they are often “enforced by the same vice units, using many of the same tactics, against the same people, deploying similar criminalizing narratives, imposing punishment instead of support” (M4BL 2020a, p. 3). In turn, the tangible effects of these law enforcement practices in the lives of those they target are also similar. The policy brief explains: “Drug and prostitution laws have also consistently been used to exclude and deny Black people access to housing, employment, education, family, social services and benefits, immigration status, and community, while simultaneously failing to address the needs of people struggling with substance use or dependence and economic survival” (M4BL 2020a, p. 3). Both separately and together, drug and prostitution enforcement “have driven systemic and widespread racial profiling, discriminatory enforcement, physical

and sexual violence, extortion and abuse, gross sentencing disparities, and mass criminalization, incarceration, institutionalization, civil commitment, detention, deportation, and exclusion of Black people over the past 50 years” (M4BL 2020a, p. 3). A commonly invoked justification for the continued enforcement of these laws is that enforcing drug and prostitution laws makes communities more safe and secure. In reality, these activities often do just the opposite by destabilizing communities and making life in them more precarious and dangerous.

The policy recommendations attached to this analysis are to “immediately and retroactively decriminalize drug and prostitution-related offenses and invest savings into programs and services identified by people in the drug and sex trades, and implement a full and comprehensive reparations package for people, families, and communities harmed by the drug war and criminalization of prostitution” (M4BL 2020a, p. 2). At the federal level, the decriminalization of prostitution includes a repeal of the 1910 Mann Act and 2018 FOSTA-SESTA legislation (Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act/Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act) as well as the revocation of the anti-prostitution pledge or ‘prostitution loyalty oath.’ At the state and local level, the policy brief recommends defunding and dismantling the vice units that typically enforce prostitution and drug laws (M4BL 2020a, p. 10).

Both of these recommendations have significant implications for the US’s antitrafficking apparatus. To convey the significance of these implications, it is necessary to understand how antitrafficking enforcement intersects with prostitution enforcement in the US. Although human trafficking is legally defined as forced and exploited labor in the TVPA, the legislation still focuses extensively, if not disproportionately, on cisgender women and girls in sexually exploitative situations as the quintessential trafficking scenario (Musto 2016, p. xi). Then, in the years immediately following its passage, the wider conception of human trafficking the TVPA offered was reduced and redefined to mean anyone who is trading sex, whether under the conditions of force, fraud, or coercion or not. All sex work was framed as exploitation. The reframing of all commercial sex work as human trafficking over the past ten years has had the effect of collapsing any meaningful distinction between prostitution and sex trafficking; prostitution is human trafficking. In turn, this conceptual collapse creates a legal tension that creates an ambivalent and precarious position for people in the sex trade. On the one hand, people who sell sex are criminalized under prostitution laws; on the other hand, people who sell sex are said to be victims of human trafficking. Legally, people who sell sex are thereby simultaneously victims of the crime of human trafficking and offenders (or suspects) of prostitution-related crimes. As Musto (2016) argues in *Control and Protect*, the outcome of this legal ambivalence is that law enforcement officers often treat the people they are supposed to be helping (because they are trafficking victims) as criminals (because they are engaged in prostitution). In turn, this legal ambivalence contributes to a tactical ambivalence when responding to prostitution/human trafficking: the idea of an arrest as a helping solution for people who sell sex because that person may be a human trafficking victim. Musto documents how the nature of these arrest encounters can rapidly and dramatically switch so that a person may in one instant be treated as crime victim and in the next as a criminal offender. The point is that the conceptual and legal conflation of prostitution and human trafficking encompasses both treatments—as victim and criminal—within the limits of the law. The BLM policy brief recognizes the disproportionate rate at which people of color generally and Black people in particular are criminalized under prostitution laws, and the devastating and lasting impacts this criminalization has on their lives.

The federal-level policy changes that BLM’s policy platform calls for as part of its call for the decriminalization of prostitution highlight the coincidence of the US’s antitrafficking and antiprostitution policies. For example, the 1910 Mann Act was one of the first laws passed in the US to address the issue of human trafficking, then called “trafficking in women”. This law is widely considered the precursor to the (Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA) (2000)), the federal law establishing human trafficking as a crime

today. The purpose of the 1910 Mann Act was to protect women from recruitment into the commercial sex trade by outlawing the transportation of women and girls across state lines “for the purpose of prostitution, or debauchery, or for any other immoral purpose” ([The Mann Act 1910](#), §§2421–2424). The protections this early antitrafficking law provided were incredibly limited. First, trafficking was imagined as a gendered harm, something men did to women. Men could not be victims of “trafficking in women”. Furthermore, trafficking in women was imagined as a crime that was primarily perpetrated by darker complexioned and/or foreign men ([Bernstein 2007](#); [Doezema 2000](#); [Peach 2005](#)).² Second, the harm “trafficking in women” caused was imagined as sexual harm. Women who were trafficking victims were understood to experience sexual violation. Third, trafficking was imaged as a racialized harm, an experience unique to White women as conveyed in the term “white slavery”. Also popularly known as the “White-Slave Traffic Act”, Black women were not covered by the Mann Act’s provisions. In essence, the condition of “white slavery” that the act of “trafficking in women” was understood to cause specifically and exclusively referred to the sexual violation of White women and girls. In this way, the US’s earliest antitrafficking efforts systematically excluded Black women and girls and erased the sexual harm that they experienced. The Mann Act has been significantly revised over its 110-year lifespan—its language is no longer gender- or race-specific, and its scope of application has been narrowed from any sexual activity deemed immoral to only that which is legally criminal—but remains in effect ([Blakemore 2019](#)).

The antiprostitution pledge, or prostitution loyalty oath, is not a stand-alone law but instead a legal stipulation that was added to the US’s antitrafficking law as part of the 2003 reauthorization of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. The antiprostitution pledge made stated opposition to prostitution as a condition for eligibility to receive federal HIV / AIDS and antitrafficking funds. A February 2002 National Security Directive issued by President George W. Bush explains the logic undergirding the adoption of the antiprostitution pledge. It states: “The United States opposes prostitution and any related activities, including pimping, pandering, and/or maintaining brothels as contributing to the phenomenon of trafficking in persons. These activities are inherently harmful and dehumanizing. The United States Government’s position is that these activities should not be regulated as a legitimate form of work for any human being” ([NSPD-22](#)). As I argue in *Other Dreams of Freedom*, the incorporation of the antitrafficking pledge into the US’s antihuman trafficking law was a key achievement in the orchestrated effort to treat all commercial sex work as human trafficking and to defund organizations that did not endorse this view. I conclude: “The Prostitution Loyalty Oath did more than make opposition to prostitution a, if not the, defining feature of the United States’ anti-trafficking stances; this policy opened the space for sexual morality to play an unprecedented role in perceptions of human trafficking” ([Zimmerman 2013](#), p. 154). In 2013, the US Supreme Court ruled that the anti-prostitution pledge improperly restricts US groups’ constitutional rights; however, it ruled in 2020 that since the First Amendment does not apply to foreign nationals, foreign-based organizations can be subjected to the stipulations of the pledge ([Agency for International Development v. Alliance for Open Society International Inc. 2013](#); [AP News 2020](#)).

Passed in 2018 during the Trump administration, the legislative package known as FOSTA-SESTA (Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act/Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act) was intended to fight online human trafficking by amending part of Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act of 1996 to remove the guarantee of immunity for Internet providers from liability for criminal activity by third parties that occurs on their networks. Jennifer Musto et al. explain that: “Prior to the passage of FOSTA/SESTA, Section 230 stated that internet providers who host or republish speech should not be treated as the publisher or speaker of any information provided by others, nor held liable on account of the publishing on the website by third parties (47 U.S. Code § 230 2021)” ([Musto et al. 2021](#)). Under FOSTA-SESTA’s amendment of Section 230, Internet providers can be held criminally liable in cases where material on their online platforms is perceived to be promoting prostitution—for example, because of posts on their sites

perceived to be advertising sex ([What Is SESTA/FOSTA? n.d.](#)). Antitrafficking advocates who support FOSTA-SESTA celebrate it as “a way to help people in trafficking situations facilitated by technology and online classified ads sites, for instance, by holding websites like Backpage accountable” ([Musto et al. 2021](#)). Concerned that the law makes no distinction between consensual adult sex work and sex trafficking, critics of FOSTA/SESTA worry that the law “hurts sex workers by taking away the ability to screen clients, it forces people back to the streets and into more dangerous situations, it heightens risk of arrest, and it contributes to sex workers’ vulnerability to third-party market facilitators (e.g., traffickers or pimps) among other harms” ([Musto et al. 2021](#)). An additional related concern is the particular risks the law poses to groups who are already over-criminalized, including cisgender and transgender sex workers and migrants of color ([Musto et al. 2021](#)).

Repealing the Mann Act and FOSTA-SESTA and revoking the prostitution loyalty oath would significantly impact antitrafficking in the US by annulling or abolishing antitrafficking interventions that exacerbate the vulnerability of people in the sex trades to violence, exploitation, and harms of various types. The other two recommendations the policy brief presents, the defunding and dismantling of vice units and the development of a comprehensive reparations package for people adversely by the criminalization of the sex trade, also stand to positively impact people who are vulnerable to experiencing trafficking. Vice units are the policing divisions typically charged with the enforcement of drug and prostitution laws. The brief explains that vice policing has notoriously exploited racist stereotypes and logics since their inception at the turn of the 20th century, “profiling and targeting Black, Native, and Asian women, who are framed as inherently promiscuous and sexually available and deviant under different logics serving anti-Black racism, colonialism, and imperialism” ([M4BL 2020a](#), p. 3). Regardless of its intent, the actual result of vice policing often is surveillance, harassment, and even actual violence toward people in, or perceived to be in, the sex trade. What vice policing does *not* do is meet the basic needs that drive people into the sex trade in the first place. Indeed, “criminalization of prostitution-related offenses drives people in the sex trades further into poverty, closing off access to housing, employment, health care, reproductive rights, family, and community” ([M4BL 2020a](#), p. 7). Dismantling vice units would interrupt the effects of over criminalization so that people who trade sex could live more openly and safely and enjoy better access to justice systems that help to reduce marginalization and violence.

Vice units are expensive to maintain, with estimates of the cost of vice and drug law enforcement in the billions of dollars each year. The brief proposes that money saved by defunding and dismantling them could be redirected to meet the needs of the communities they previously targeted, including “medical care, including voluntary, quality, low-threshold and harm reduction-based drug treatment, mental health treatment, and parental and family support, for housing, living wage employment, and basic necessities” ([M4BL 2020a](#), p. 7). In other words, rather than funding the vice unit apparatus that contributes to the stigmatization, violence, and impoverishment of Black and racial minority communities, the money saved by dismantling vice units should be redirected into programs and services in those communities that meet their existing needs. Accompanying this, the “End the War on Drugs” policy brief calls for the development of a comprehensive reparations package for people adversely affected by the criminalization of the sex trade. At the federal and state levels, reparations measures would include ensuring access to opportunities in legal drug markets; restoration of the value of assets seized through asset forfeiture; and implementation of vacatur and expungement processes that would seal, destroy, or otherwise vacate the legal records of people with criminal convictions and, where applicable, the removal of their names from sex offender registries ([M4BL 2020a](#), p. 10). At the local level, reparations would involve reallocating funds currently used for vice and drug law enforcement to initiatives that provide for the needs of people in the sex and drug trades, as already mentioned. This includes investing in housing that is high-quality, accessible, and affordable; employment opportunities that pay living wages; universal child care; and treatment and support for substance use and dependence that is

free, accessible, affirming, non-judgmental, voluntary, low-threshold, harm reduction- and evidence- based, as well as available to all, including to people who are pregnant, parenting, disabled, LGBTQ and gender nonconforming, English language learners, and migrants. The vision is to provide these services in a non-stigmatizing manner without connection to law enforcement. Neither access to these services nor eligibility to participate in them should mandate abstinence from drugs and alcohol or commercial sex work (M4BL 2020a, p. 12). All of these investments would strengthen communities and lessen the vulnerability of people in them to becoming entangled in trafficking relationships. People whose basic needs are met, who are employed at a living wage, and whose communities are vibrant and strong are at low risk of experiencing human trafficking.

Prostitution is an issue that is deeply intertwined with the dominant perception of human trafficking in the US, and which dominates much of the US's antitrafficking policy. BLM's response to prostitution begins with a recognition that people enter the sex trade as a strategy to meet their basic human needs—for food, housing, healthcare, and economic stability. Whether for sex, labor, or some combination of both, people are vulnerable to experiencing exploitation that rises to the level of human trafficking in situations where they have limited options. Although human trafficking is not a discrete plank in the BLM policy platform, the demand that the state end its systemic punitive assault on Black people and provide for the needs of its Black and Brown citizens addresses crucial structural factors that make people vulnerable to becoming ensnared in trafficking relationships. This call is consistent with BLM's animating vision of moving "towards a world in which the full humanity and dignity of all people is recognized" (M4BL 2020b). Moreover, there is recognition that the creation of this world has two dimensions. One is "make[ing] demands of a state which has consistently created conditions of violence, deprivation, and exclusion for Black people", while the second is "enter[ing] into a new covenant with each other. *We seek solutions to violence within our communities that do not lie in the violence of a state and institutions created to destroy us, but in self-governance and mutual commitment and responsibility to each other's safety and well being*" (M4BL 2020b). In such communities, human trafficking of any sort cannot thrive. The emphasis that BLM puts on community-based responses to violence and harm and on meeting the basic human needs of members of the community make this movement worth the attention of the antitrafficking movement.

3. Critiquing the Moral Economy of Antitrafficking

The antitrafficking framework systemically fails Black victims of human trafficking. Whether it is through nonrecognition as victims or misrecognition as criminal offenders, Black trafficking victims repeatedly fall out of the antitrafficking framework. This failure of antitrafficking for Black people is the reason why the antitrafficking movement needs the analysis and perspective that the Black Lives Matter movement provides.

Understanding this failure requires an understanding of the dominant framework through which trafficking is understood in the US. Although human trafficking exists in every labor industry, the dominant public perception of human trafficking conflates sex work, or prostitution, and human trafficking.³ As a result, commercial sex is widely understood as human trafficking. The conflation lends a humanitarian veneer to law enforcement activities aimed at eradicating commercial sex, especially street-based prostitution. Many jurisdictions have stepped up the enforcement of prostitution and solicitation laws specifically in the name of fighting human trafficking. The rationale is that cracking down on prostitution will undercut the stability of the sex industry, force people who sell sex off the streets, and possibly rescue some trafficking victims in the process.

However, the way that these crackdowns on prostitution human trafficking are carried out are fraught with racial biases. Study after study shows that law enforcement initiatives that attempt to crack down on prostitution, including those that treat defendants as victims of human trafficking, tend to specifically target people of color who are involved in the street-based sexual economy. For example, as noted previously, 91% of arrests for 'loitering for the purposes of prostitution' in New York in 2018 were Black and Latinx individuals,

while the majority of sex work-related massage parlor arrests were Asian immigrant women (Luo 2020, p. 9). In 2014, 94% of the defendants in Brooklyn, NY's Human Trafficking Intervention Court, who were charged with 'loitering for the purpose of prostitution', were black (Ray and Caterine 2014, p. 17). In California, Black women are arrested for prostitution at a rate that is 14 times higher than their percentage in the population (Hasenbush et al. 2017).

Men too are affected by these racial biases. Of the nearly 500 suspects identified in US human trafficking cases between January 2008 and June 2010, 80% were people of color, and more than half (62%) were Black (Banks and Kyckelhahn 2011). In another study, more than 85% of the men arrested for buying sex in Chicago between 2010 and 2012 were either Black or Latino (Lovell 2012). Consistent with the long history in the US of stereotyping Black men as sexual predators, Black and Brown men are the demographic most likely to be handed long prison sentences when convicted of human trafficking offenses. Tough antitrafficking laws legislating harsh criminal penalties to punish traffickers are widely touted as the best way to tackle human trafficking and loudly trumpeted as evidence of care and concern for people, especially women and minors, in the sex industry. However, when consideration is given to the way that these laws are enforced in predominantly poor communities of color to target and criminalize racial minority individuals, a different picture emerges.

Overt racial bias may account for some of this targeting of people of color; however, there are significant structural factors at play as well. Nina Luo explains that these initiatives often deliberately target Black, Latinx, Native American, immigrant communities, and other communities of color that are disproportionately impoverished due to "long histories of state violence, family separation, redlining, labor exclusion, community divestment and environmental destruction" (Luo 2020, p. 9). In turn, reliance on informal economies such as the sex trades is a common survival strategy for people who are experiencing poverty and are excluded from formal economies. The presence of the sex trade in these communities leads to communities of color being disproportionately criminalized and policed (Luo 2020, p. 9). The net result is the over-criminalization of Black women as prostitutes—they are largely overlooked as victims of human trafficking and Black men are profiled as human traffickers or other sexual offenders.

Ideal victim theory helps clarify racial biases in antitrafficking. Developed by criminologist Nils Christie (1986), ideal victim theory is an explanatory framework for the mistreatment of victims in the justice system. In this framework, an 'ideal victim' is "a person or category of individuals, who, when hit by crime, most readily are given the complete and legitimate status of being a victim" (p. 18). Corrigan and Shdaimah (2015) identify the attributes of an 'ideal victim': being "a weak person in comparison to the offender, engaged in morally sound or ordinary, everyday behavior when the crime happened, and having no criminal history..." (p. 431). Domestic violence researchers J. Davies, E. Lyon, and D. Monti-Catania (1998) propose a closely related model, that of the 'pure victim'. Summarizing their work, trauma expert Karie McGuire (2019) describes the 'pure victim' as "a woman who adheres to traditional gender roles, is passive, non-violent, and emotionally dependent on her abusers" (p. 539). Similarly, Kaba (2021) uses the notion of 'the perfect victim' in her work, describing perfect victims as "submissive, not aggressive; they don't have histories of drug use or prior contact with the criminal legal system; and they are 'innocent' and respectable" (p. 39). Whether framed as the ideal victim, pure victim, or perfect victim, the common characteristics that these varieties of ideal victim theory share a lack of criminal history, conformity to socially accepted gender roles, and innocence. Above all, the ideal victim has done nothing wrong and is blameless.

Basia Spalek (2006) argues that the ideal victim is the figure in whose name victim services are justified. When applied to antitrafficking, the ideal trafficking victim is the figure in whose name antitrafficking services are imagined and, more broadly, in whose name social opposition to human trafficking is justified. In US antitrafficking today, the ideal victim is a young, White, American, cisgender young woman or girl in a sexually

exploitative situation. [Showden and Majic \(2018\)](#) describe the ideal innocent trafficking victim in the US antitrafficking lexicon as “white, middle-class, cis-gender girls vulnerable to a predatory man, who is usually portrayed as black or brown” (p. 3). Although the emphasis on innocence remains constant, the careful observer will notice changes have occurred to some of the demographic features of the ideal trafficking victim since 2000 when human trafficking was officially recognized as a crime with the passage of the TVPA. [Musto \(2016\)](#) explains: “Once figured in mainstream media as a girl or woman forcibly trafficking into prostitution and invariably hailing from third world origins, the image of a trafficked person has shifted to include American girls and women trafficked for sex, now assumed to be modern-day slaves and ‘hiding in plain sight’”(xi).⁴ I would add to Musto’s characterization of these changes that it is less that the image of the ideal trafficking victim has shifted to include American girls and women who experience sex-trafficking, but that the latter image has actually *supplanted* the former. Dramatizing the magnitude of this shift, in 2019, the Trump administration quashed \$13.5 million dollars in grant funding that was to be dispersed by the Department of Housing and Urban Development in collaboration with the Department of Justice and Health and Human Services to provide housing for trafficking victims. The grant was abruptly shut down following an update to the funding announcement clarifying that recipients of the funds could “serve noncitizens” ([Khim and Strickler 2019](#)). Whereas noncitizens were imagined as the quintessential victims of human trafficking in 2000, such individuals are no longer central to the US’s antitrafficking project.

The ideal victim of human trafficking is innocent. Whereas in 2000 conceptualizations of trafficking victims’ innocence could accommodate a noncitizen and undocumented status, such is no longer the case. At that time, individuals designated as ‘trafficked’ were already recognized as “exceptions to an otherwise punitive immigration regime”, and it appears that the shift in US trafficking policy to domestic trafficking has undercut the stability of such exceptions ([Brennan 2014](#), p. 11). An undocumented status compromises, or at least complicates, the perception of perfect innocence. An expression of American exceptionalism, perfect innocence, is something that only American citizens are imagined to possess. However, innocence is not just nationalized but also specifically racialized. When applied to human trafficking, the ideal trafficking victim is White, (cisgender) female, and young. Together, these characteristics contribute to a virginal image. Ideal trafficking victims are sexually innocent White girls from loving, middle-class homes who are forced into trafficking against their wills. Formed in the cocoon of this protective milieu, ideal victims have no mental illnesses, no addictions, exhibit no problematic behaviors, and are altogether helpless to extricate themselves from trafficking situations without assistance from external helpers ([Palackdharry 2021](#), p. 20). In other words, ideal trafficking victims are imagined both as having *done* nothing wrong and as *being* nothing wrong; they are pure, blameless, and altogether uncomplicated.

The problem, of course, is that these ideal(ized) characteristics do not fit the population of people who are statistically most likely to experience trafficking ([Choi 2015](#); [Fadima et al. 2016](#)). Risk factors that make youth vulnerable to human trafficking include a history of sexual and/or physical abuse, community or family instability and dislocation, child welfare involvement (especially placement in the foster care system), experiencing homelessness or running away from home, disconnection from the education system, and poverty ([Walker 2013](#); [Rights4Girls 2019](#)). Black girls are disproportionately likely to experience these risks and, not surprisingly, Black girls experience sex-trafficking at higher rates than their peers in other racial groups. At the same time, Black girls frequently are not acknowledged as trafficking victims and are instead arrested for prostitution-related offenses ([Rights4Girls 2021](#)). White women and girls in the sex trade are more readily recognized as fitting the image of the ideal trafficking victim and, in turn, are acknowledged as victims of human trafficking. This recognition is far less readily available to Black girls and women in the sex trade, even when their situations fit the official criteria for human trafficking. In essence, ideal victims of trafficking are White rather than Black or Brown.

These systemic failures indicate that antitrafficking in the US desperately needs to be reformulated. In *Brokered Subjects*, Elizabeth Bernstein (2018) argues that to arrive at a place where “we [will] be in a position to fully consider alternative ways of framing social problems and of formulating constructive interventions (what Yvonne Zimmerman has usefully termed ‘other dreams of freedom’) that would help spur meaningful and lasting justice” for people who currently are negatively impacted by both the excesses and deficits of the US’s antitrafficking policies and overall antitrafficking apparatus, it will be necessary to review the “component parts [of the trafficking discourse] and how these parts congeal” (p. 168). The two crucial parts of this discourse that systematically fails Black people that I review here are the economic values of neoliberal capitalism (which I call *the Protestant Ethic*) and the sexual values of White, heteropatriarchal Protestantism (which I call *purity culture*). I foreground the role of race and racial politics in both of these lines of analysis, showing how both the economic ethics and sexual ethics play into the ongoing dynamics of White supremacy in the US.

3.1. Economic Values: The Protestant Ethic

One reason the antitrafficking framework fails victims who are Black is that the economic values of neoliberal capitalism, or the Protestant ethic, were never meant to serve Black people. The Protestant ethic (sometimes also called the Protestant work ethic or the American work ethic) was famously elaborated by sociologist Max Weber ([1930] 2000) in his classic text, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. The constituent elements or values of the Protestant ethic are self-reliance, thrift (or frugality), discipline, and hard work (or industry). The notion that success is possible for anyone who genuinely tries is a crucial part of the ideology that unifies these values into a coherent whole.

In the American cultural understanding of what ‘genuinely trying’ means, dedication to hard work is constitutive of effort. This belief situates hard work as a quintessential American value. In American culture, work is considered inherently good and intrinsically valuable. Christian ethicist Jeremy Posadas (2020) explains how work is regarded in American culture “as central to human being as such and as a key to validation as a properly functioning member of society” (p. 113). Americans consider work to be indispensable to the formation of moral character and essential to responsible citizenship. Accordingly, the general expectation is that all adults should occupy themselves with some sort of labor, whether paid (in a job) or unpaid (as an apprentice, student, parent, or other caretaker). This expectation holds even if the work one does is unpleasant, unfulfilling, physically harmful, or interferes with family and other obligations, and even when the work does not earn wages sufficient to support oneself. The aphorism “He [sic] who does not work shall not eat” expresses the crux of this expectation.⁵

The American ideology of work is shot through with religious and spiritual dimensions. This is not to deny its pragmatic aspects, of course. Work or the production of material goods and services contributes to the economy, as these goods and services are bought and sold. The money generated in this process makes it possible for capitalism’s participants (i.e., workers) to support themselves and, through the profits generated in the ongoing buying and selling, for the economy to grow. Work makes it possible to secure the necessities for living and causes the economy grow, both of which lead to prosperity. At the same time, Christian theologies of work emphasize work as a godly activity that is simultaneously glorifying to God and in specie formational of human beings. The godly nature of work was a central theme in the theological constructions of sixteenth-century theologian and Protestant reformer, John Calvin. According to Calvin, work both contributes to the moral formation of individuals and to the health of society more broadly. Calvin’s most distinctive contribution to the theological reflection on work was his belief that wealth—understood to be generated through work—is a unique and distinctive representation of divine favor. Wealth was a sign of pleasing God. Calvin thus argued that attaining wealth through work should be a major goal in life (Townes 2010, pp. 65–66). In this way, pursuing wealth became synonymous with seeking God; within this framework,

work was understood as the elemental act of this pursuit. Hence, humans at work were viewed as intrinsically pleasing to God. In their working, humans were understood as rightly oriented toward God, while those not engaged in labor were unaligned with divine purposes. These theological ideas are deeply embedded in the American cultural psyche.

Colonialism is “the policy of exploration, exploitation of resources, trade, global missionary endeavors, annexing of lands and slavery/transformation/annihilation of indigenous peoples” that emerged during the 16th century in Britain and other European nations (Carter 2021, pp. 11, 91; McGrow 2017, p. 85). Colonialism enabled and fueled the growth of capitalism, which is an economic system based on the private ownership of the means of production and their operation for profit.⁶ How Calvin’s views on work and wealth lent religious support to capitalism are easy to recognize. But because of the relationship between colonialism and capitalism, his ideas should be recognized as consistent with a colonialist mindset as well. Thus recognized, it is important to consider how Christian ideas were used to legitimate colonialism. Cannon (2008) reflects on the dense connections between Christianity, White supremacy, and chattel slavery, a particular component of colonialism that buttressed fledgling capitalism, in the essay “Christian Imperialism and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. She argues that a theologic of racialized normativity, or “the constellation of structured White supremacy ideology, wherein Caucasian people of European descent proclaim themselves ordained by God as the superior, *natural masters*, hereditarily pure, glorious, free citizens, while crafting subordinate status justifications for people of African descent as *natural slaves*, inherently defective, depraved, and inferior” (p. 131), supplied the moral legitimization for slavery. What identifies this set of ideas as a ‘theologic’ is the way it conjoins the ideology of White supremacy, which claims White people as the norm for humanness and people of color as inherently inferior, and theological understandings of Christianity through the claim that this racial hierarchy is ordained by God. Cannon explains the consequence of this conjunction: “Such idolatry taught [slave] traffickers that this highly respected, booming, lucrative transatlantic commerce of embodied commodified labor violated neither divine nor natural law” (p. 131).

Against this background, it is possible to better understand how treasured (and also theological) American ideas about work are enmeshed within the theologic of racialized normativity that Cannon describes. The theological rationality in which human labor is categorically pleasing to God without consideration of the conditions under which it is performed or the level of wages earned produces a disrecognition of the immorality of exploitative or underpaid labor. Likewise, the theological rationality in which wealth signifies God’s favor without consideration of the means through which wealth is generated produces a disrecognition of the immorality of exploitative wealth-generating systems (such as colonialism, chattel slavery and, today, neoliberal capitalism⁷). Put differently, the theological claims that work is intrinsically pleasing to God and wealth evidences divine favor impede recognition of the ways that work and labor may also be sites of oppression and mechanisms of harm. In this way, these theological teachings about work and wealth lent religious legitimacy to the institution and practice of chattel slavery that enslaved millions of Africans and their descendants for over 200 years. Although the abolition of chattel slavery ended the legal practice of slavery in the US, this legal change did not dismantle the ideological underpinnings, religious and otherwise, that supported it. Thus even today, to question whether labor is intrinsically ennobling, to call attention to the ways that compelled or exploited work erodes the social bedrock, or to disavow wealth as indication of divine favor produces feelings of cognitive dissonance and even sacrilege for many Americans.

The opening pages of *Black Womanist Ethics* concisely describes the failure of the Protestant ethic and its constituent values for Black Americans. Cannon writes,

Developing confidence in one’s own abilities, resources and judgements amidst a careful use of money and goods in order to exhibit assiduity in the pursuit of upward mobility have proven to be positive values for whites. But, when the oligarchic economic powers and the consequent political power they generate,

own and control capital and distribute credit as part of a legitimating system to justify the supposed inherent inferiority of Blacks, these same values prove to be ineffectual. Racism does not allow Black women and Black men to labor habitually in beneficial work with the hope of saving expenses by avoiding waste so that they can develop a standard of living that is congruent with the American ideal. (Cannon 1988, p. 2)

Although the values of the Protestant ethic largely work effectively for White Americans, because of entrenched, systemic racism, they do not work quite so reliably for Black people. Cannon argues that the effect of racism is to force Black people “to the lowest rungs of the social, political and economic hierarchy” where, thus confined, they are effectively *prevented* from achieving economic success (Cannon 1988, p. 3). Although the Protestant ethic claims that success is possible for anyone who tries, its formula for economic success does not work under conditions of confinement. As Cannon points out, the Protestant ethic really only produces economic success for people who are already free, self-directing, and who enjoy a wide range of choices in their lives and for their futures (Campbell and Zimmerman 2017, p. 283). The Protestant ethic is in this way less a method for *achieving* freedom (economic or otherwise) than it is one for maintaining freedom already possessed. In calling attention to its racialized dynamics—that is, how it works more reliably for White people than for Black people—Cannon highlights the Protestant ethic’s practical entanglement in racism and White supremacy.

Penned in the late 1980s, Cannon’s analysis of how Black Americans are “locked in systems of subjugation from which they can seldom extricate themselves” remain true today (Cannon 1988, p. 145). Statistics on wage differentials in the US illustrate the ongoing reality of systemic racism. According to the Institute for Women’s Policy Research, in 2021, women as a group earned less than men in almost all occupations, earning 83.1% of what men earn for a gender wage gap of USD 16.9 cents on the dollar. However, Black women who worked full-time made just 63.1% of White men’s weekly earnings, while White women made 79.6% (Hegewisch and Mefford 2022). Furthermore, in 2021, one in five Black women was employed in the service sector, a broad occupational group with the lowest earnings, which includes healthcare workers, retail cashiers, housekeeping staff, food servers, fast-food workers, and receptionists. By contrast, only one in eleven White men, and just slightly over one in ten White women were service sector workers. Occupational segregation is therefore a significant factor in the differentials between Black women’s wages and the wages earned by White people (Hegewisch and Mefford 2022). The staggering inadequacy of the US’s federal minimum wage amplifies the effects of these racialized and gendered wage differentials; an hourly wage of USD 7.25 falls dramatically short of what is required to sustain an individual at a dignified standard of living.⁸

People experiencing severe poverty in the US are disproportionately people of color. Because of its implication in dynamics that have perpetuated and legitimated the economic suppression and marginalization of Black Americans since the time of chattel slavery, the Protestant ethic is not a reliable means by which Black Americans can break out of poverty. However, this ethic and its values continue to be recommended today as the uniquely American way for achieving financial stability, including for people who have experienced or are vulnerable to experiencing human trafficking. The truth is that working hard often does not solve the problem of poverty because labor in the free market does not guarantee a living wage. Market forces move to the benefit of the owners of capital, who are disproportionately White men. All of the values of the Protestant ethic—self-reliance, thrift, discipline, and hard work—lend a moral veneer to *their* success and guarantee its perpetuation. But the ethic is essentially impotent in conditions of deprivation and poverty. There is reason for grave concern when these values are recommended to victims of trafficking as those dispositions and practices that will secure their freedom.

However, the truth is that Americans are largely ambivalent about labor exploitation and labor trafficking. Although labor trafficking is a recognized form of human trafficking and acknowledged as morally wrong, the level of moral outrage about forced and exploited

labor is nowhere near the level of fervency of outcries against the sex industry as inherently exploitative and altogether pales in comparison to that which is generated by sex trafficking. It is to this difference, and specifically to the value of White female sexual purity, that I turn next.

3.2. Sexual Values: Purity Culture

Sara Moslener (2015) opens the book *Virgin Nation* by calling attention to how the history of sexual purity in the US begins with a startling reversal of the traditional Christian theological anthropology, which taught that women were morally and spiritually inferior to men. She explains what occasioned this momentous event:

The reversal of this formulation was useful to burgeoning capitalist society, where separate spheres [Victorian gender ideology] worked to offset the quasi-nefarious dealings of men in public life with the nurturing nature and piety of women who maintained the domestic sanctuary. The virtue of purity as a uniquely feminine aspect was part of the larger project to alleviate Protestant anxieties about personal wealth and engagement with the market economy. Women's ability to maintain the virtues of religious piety and sexual purity allowed white, middle-class men to pursue economic success and thus reassure white middle-class Protestants of their cultural dominance. (p. 16)

In essence, the installation of female sexual purity, specifically White female virginity, as the personification of morality and the ensuing project to venerate and vigorously protect it provided a convenient cover under which middle-class White men could pursue economic success (wealth) through “quasi-nefarious” means. As discussed in the previous section, these means included the exploitation and systematic economic disenfranchisement of African Americans through chattel slavery. In this way, the ethics of sexual purity, or purity culture, complement the economic values of Protestant ethic and, as I will show, they too are bound up with White supremacy. As with the Protestant ethic, purity culture and its attendant values were never meant to include, protect, or otherwise serve Black women.

Purity culture is the entire complex of ‘dos and don’ts’ that constitute and signal sexual purity (Allison 2021, p. 29). Sexual purity has both tangible and symbolic dimensions. Tangibly, sexual purity refers to a lack of sexual experience, or virginity. Specifically, sexual purity requires abstention from non-heteromartial sexual activity, including pre-marital sexual activity, extra-marital sexual activity, (polyamory and adultery), commercial sex work, and all same-sex sexual relations (even between married spouses). The only kind of sexual activity that fully meets the standards of sexual purity is sex between married male and female spouses. Emily Joy Allison (2021) summarizes the sexual ethic that purity culture demands as the expectation that people refrain from sexual activity until entering a life-long “legal, monogamous marriage between a cisgender, heterosexual man and a cisgender, heterosexual woman” (p. 31). Symbolically, sexual purity signifies moral virtue. In the moral lexicon of purity culture, sexual innocence symbolizes moral purity. In the book *Rape Culture on Campus*, religious studies scholar Meredith Minister (2018) characterizes purity culture as “a kind of pedagogy” because it teaches people what they are supposed to do and how they are supposed to be in order to preserve their sexual purity (p. 4).

The demands of purity culture weigh particularly heavily on girls and women because of the gender ideology that purity culture assigns to sexual purity as being a distinctly female trait. Derived from 19th century Victorian gender ideology, other features of the way purity culture configures gender include a binary conception of gender in which all people are either male or female; emphasis on the differences between men and women that are said to be biologically rooted; and a presumption of male superiority, including the expectation that women will defer to men (Minister 2018, p. 2). Proceeding from this gender ideology, the different messages that purity culture provides to boys and men and girls and women regarding sexual behavior are notable; purity culture teaches men and boys to avoid temptations toward sexual activity, while it teaches women and girls to avoid

being sexual temptations for males (Dingle 2017). Women and girls are thus taught to be sexually pure and, more crucially, that their sexual purity is a barometer of their entire moral status. Purity culture teaches that girls and women's morality is defined by their sexual purity.

Purity culture, though, is more than just the desire for sexual purity; Minister argues that sexual purity is also a cultural demand. As such, the threat of violence lurks behind incitements to sexual purity. Consequently: "When people, especially gender, sexual and/or racial minorities, fail to be sexually normative (pure), their failure becomes an excuse for rape" (Minister 2018, p. 4). In other words, purity culture does not passively present the notion of sexual purity as optional; purity culture *demand*s purity and treats those who do not meet its standards harshly. In the logic of purity culture, failing to achieve or to maintain purity (whether the failure is actual or perceived) makes a person deserving of violence. Purity culture is in this way intimately tied to rape culture, which Minister defines as "a socially accepted pattern that legitimates violence to police socially nonconforming activities, including expressions of sexuality and gender" (p. 1). Rape culture, she explains, "deems anyone found not following the rules of purity culture deserving of sexual violence and/or rapeable" (p. 4). In this way, purity culture normalizes rape culture.

The relationship between purity culture and rape culture is important to understand and is often misconstrued. Purity culture is often understood as the specifically religious expression of rape culture that manifests in Christian environments (Minister 2018, p. 4). For instance, in #Churchtoo, Allison (2021) describes purity culture as "the spiritual corollary of rape culture created in Christian environments by theologies that teach complete sexual abstinence until legal, monogamous marriage between a cisgender, heterosexual man or a cisgender, heterosexual woman for life—or else" (p. 31). Other theological teachings that uphold evangelical purity culture include gender complementarity, male leadership, modesty, and abstinence-only sex education (p. 29).⁹ Christian theological teachings buttress purity culture and provide moral legitimation for it through the claim that the gender ideology and sexual ethics that purity culture teaches are ordained by God, and so purity culture is undoubtedly "both rooted and heightened in evangelical communities" (Minister 2018, p. 8). At the same time, Minister argues that purity culture should not be considered only an evangelical Christian phenomenon since extensive purity expectations pervade US-American culture well beyond the insular confines of conservative Christian communities. Furthermore, treating purity culture as strictly religious and rape culture as strictly secular has the unintended effect of erasing the significant influence that Christian teachings also have on rape culture (Minister 2018, pp. 4–8). Christian theological teachings about gender, sexuality, and sin underwrite purity culture and rape culture alike.

Purity culture's primary focus is on gender and sexual conduct, whereas rape culture polices *all* socially nonconforming activities with violence—gender and sexuality, to be sure, but also race, nationality, and capability (Minister 2018, p. 1). However, the feminized social norm of purity draws meaning from the entire interconnected ecosystem of socially conforming and nonconforming activities and traits that rape culture polices. Minister (2018) notes that, in this way: "Purity discourses define and regulate not only sexual, familial, and privatized assumptions about what is normal but also what is assumed to be normal in public, including national norms, racial norms, and norms of bodily ability" (p. 5). Epistemologically, purity culture consists of an extensive series of moralized binaries distinguishing between purity and pollution (which rape culture turns into standards of normalcy and deviance). The extended series of moralized binaries flow from and support purity culture's primary binary category, which is the gender binary differentiating men and women. Table 1 displays some of the main binaries that constitute US-American purity culture.

Table 1. Purity culture.

Purity	Pollution
Human	Animal
Male	Female
Cisgender	Gender nonconforming
Heterosexual	Homosexual/queer
White	Black
Free	Unfree/dependent (slave)
Property-owning	Non-owners
Able-bodied	Disabled
American	Foreign
Christian	Non-Christian (heathen)
Civilized	Uncivilized/wild
Public	Private

As noted, purity culture is the entire complex of ‘dos and don’ts’ that constitute and signal sexual purity (Allison 2021, p. 29). The pedagogical instruction purity culture gives women for signaling their humanity and moral integrity is to demonstrate their sexual purity through being sexually chaste, demure, submissive to men, pious, and domestically inclined. But even before any individual woman goes about embodying these prescribed qualities, women whose identities are marked by more of the traits on the ‘purity’ side of binary have an advantage of being socially perceived as naturally more pure. In this way, simply *being* (or presenting as) cisgender, heterosexual, White, able-bodied, and/or American signals purity. An important upshot of this understanding of purity culture’s inner logic is the recognition that purity culture is racially coded, a point to which I will shortly return (Minister 2018, p. 17).

Minister (2018) argues that the enactment of violence is the mechanism whereby purity culture becomes a part of rape culture (p. 23).¹⁰ Rape culture turns the distinctions between purity and pollution that purity culture posits (in Table 1) into social demands, and it uses violence to enforce these demands on everyone. In other words, rape culture recasts purity as a social norm and pollution as deviance that is threatening to the social order. Table 2 shows how rape culture turns purity into an exacting and nonnegotiable demand, or social norm, that it enforces with violence.

Rape culture uses violence to police conformity to these binary social norms (i.e., purity). In the logic of this system, anyone who fails to conform to this interlocking set of social norms (i.e., follow the rules of purity) is perceived as deserving of violence (Minister 2018, p. 4). Sexual violence is the type of violence for which rape culture is most well-known. Its basic principle is that anyone who does not follow the rules of sexual purity is rapeable. However, sexual violence is not the only form of violence that rape culture employs. According to Minister, the violence of rape culture may also be physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual; she elaborates that it may also “come in the form of limited opportunities or conscripting another’s time or space; it may be extrajudicial or it may be sanctioned by law and even encouraged by lawmakers and police” (p. 1). Regardless of the form, the function of violence in rape culture is to uphold social norms by policing deviance. Again, the specific social norms that rape culture polices are provided by the set of binaries constituted by the purity/pollution divide, which is at purity culture’s heart. Rape culture turns violence into a predictable, and socially and morally legitimated, response to failures to uphold purity expectations (p. 23).

Table 2. Rape culture.

Social Norm (Purity)	Is Distinguished from Deviance/Pollution through ...	Deviance (Pollution)
Human		Animal
Male		Female
Cisgender	V	Gender nonconforming
Heterosexual	I	Homosexual/queer
White	O	Black
Free	← L →	Unfree/dependent (slave)
Property-owning	E	Non-owners
Able-bodied	N	Disabled
American	C	Foreign
Christian	E	Non-Christian (heathen)
Civilized		Uncivilized/wild
Public		Private

As noted above, purity culture is racially coded. Moslener (2015) describes the 19th-century Victorian gender ideology in which purity culture is rooted as “steeped in Anglo-Saxon superiority” (p. 37). Anglo-Saxon superiority was a 19th-century racial ideology of White supremacy that included the belief that sexual purity is “most prominently exhibited in the cultural, physical, and moral superiority of . . . [the] Anglo-Saxon race” (pp. 17–18). Under the sway of this racial ideology, White people perceived themselves to be more inherently and naturally pure than any other racial group, and White women in particular were singled out as most fully embodying sexual purity. Sexual purity was thought to come easily—naturally—to White women, because it was inherent in their natures as White people; in contrast, sexual purity was not believe to be inherent to the nature of other racial groups, particularly Black people. In this way, sexual purity is both gendered female and racially coded as White.

Racial ideologies of White supremacy are buttressed by sets of demeaning ideas about Black sexuality. In *Sexuality and the Black Church*, Kelly Brown Douglas (1999) describes widely circulated stereotypes about Black sexuality, which depict Black people as “highly sexualized, lascivious beings” to whom sexual purity is altogether foreign (p. 11). For example, the trope of Jezebel portrays Black women as licentious and essentially unrappable because they always crave sex. Emerging during the era of chattel slavery, the Jezebel trope functioned to justify White men’s sexual abuse and exploitation of Black women by depicting them as constantly desiring sex. Today, the stereotypes of the welfare queen and the pregnant Black teen update the Jezebel trope and continue to depict Black women as inherently licentious and therefore disinclined toward, if not incapable of, sexual restraint (Minister 2018, p. 17; Townes 2010, pp. 64–65). Both the older and updated stereotypes portray Black women as sexually deviant, not just the opposite of sexual purity but also threatening to the stability and flourishing of the social order through their (alleged) constant desire for sex. Meanwhile, the stereotype of the Black buck, the trope which lies beneath the stereotype of Black men as rapists who particularly target White women, depicts Black men as animalistic and sexually untamable. This stereotype identifies Black men as the principal threat to White women’s sexual purity. This manufactured threat in turn both fabricates and legitimates the necessity for White men to vigilantly protect White women against the threat of sexually aggressive Black men. Together, these denigrating depictions of Black sexuality turn Black bodies into “pawns in the attempt to reify assumptions about (white) gender, especially the demand for white women to be pure and demure and the demand for white men to protect white women” (Minister 2018, p. 38).

This is accomplished through stereotyping Black people, men and women, as inherently incapable of sexual restraint.

Rape culture demands sexual purity from women of all races. But because of the cultural logic that deems sexual purity as inherent to White women while simultaneously disputing the possibility that Black women can even be sexually pure, the burden of sexual purity is different for Black women than it is for White women (Minister 2018, p. 17). In the logic of purity culture, sexual purity is a status that, essentially, is epistemologically unavailable to Black women. If being White makes White women more naturally sexually pure, being Black makes Black women more naturally sexually impure, or so the logic goes. Even in cases where they are equally or more sexually inexperienced than a White woman (i.e., the tangible dimension of purity culture), Black women are *still* regarded as more sexually impure (i.e., the symbolic dimension of purity culture). Under the logics of White supremacy, only White women fully embody sexual purity.

My previous works, particularly *Other Dreams of Freedom*, explore how Protestant Christian values around gender and sex underpin the US's efforts to end human trafficking. In particular, I highlight how two components of evangelical Christian sexual ethics, marriage and sexual abstinence until marriage, were promoted by the George W. Bush administration in the early 2000s as key antitrafficking strategies (Zimmerman 2013). The present analysis interrogates this same set of values, this time under the rubrics of purity culture and the ethics of sexual purity. However, whereas previously my primary concern was to highlight the ethical implications of imposing these values on trafficking survivors who do not necessarily ascribe to them or resonate with their premises, my present aim is different. Here, I aim to draw attention to how these values are deeply implicated in White supremacy and the ongoing dynamics of racism. The values of sexual purity that purity culture recommends and that rape culture turns into social norms and demands of everyone and, in turn, enforces with violence, *were never intended to work for or to protect the interests of Black people*. The purpose of these values was to shore up the cultural dominance of White people. As I have shown, purity culture writes off the possibility of Black female sexual purity from the start. As applied to human trafficking, this write-off means the values around gender and sexuality that purity culture offers do not and will not work as effective antitrafficking strategies or remedies for Black girls and women who experience trafficking. So long as the logic remains in place that disqualifies Black girls and women from sexual purity (and, in turn, the moral innocence that sexual purity ostensibly signals), survivors and victims of sex trafficking who are Black cannot reliably count on being recognized as legitimate victims of trafficking, *even* when their situations meet the official criteria of this crime. They cannot count on recognition as trafficking victims because the ideal victim of trafficking, in whose name services are offered and remedies imagined, is always already White.

Sexual violation and economic exploitation are widely perceived as the two main components of human trafficking. Hence, as victims of trafficking are identified, offered assistance, and are in the process of exiting trafficking relationships, the vision of freedom they are offered through the services, forms of support, and counsel they are given for maintaining their freedom usually revolve around these twin axes. My focus has been to highlight the racial dimensions of the moral counsel that underwrites antitrafficking in the US, both in the economic values and strategies recommended to (and expected of) trafficking survivors (i.e., the Protestant ethic) and in the sexual values recommended to (and expected of) them (i.e., purity culture). While this conjoined set of values as an antitrafficking strategy is often relatively effective for White people, these same values do not reliably deliver on their promises for people of color and particularly Black people. The persistent failure of the antitrafficking framework for Black girls and women betrays its roots in White supremacy and participation in systemic racism. For antiracist antitrafficking remedies and strategies that work for all trafficking survivors, it will be necessary to look elsewhere—for different values and different moral frameworks.

4. Learning from Black Lives Matter

The Black Lives Matter movement offers a different moral framework and different system of values that I believe could resource the antitrafficking movement in divesting from White supremacy so that it can serve the needs of all people who experience trafficking. The ways that the antitrafficking movement could be positively influenced and resourced by BLM are numerous. In closing, I point to three key insights from BLM that I think are particularly pertinent to the kinds of changes that I believe would most impact antitrafficking in the US.

First, BLM offers the antitrafficking movement an alternative to the binary moral epistemology of purity culture. Many assumptions of purity culture underwrite the sexual ideology that antitrafficking assumes and promotes. As I have shown, the moral structure of purity culture is composed of a series of interlocking binary distinctions. One side of each binary is identified with purity and elevated as the social norm, while the other side of the binary is identified with pollution and connected with deviance, thereby representing a social threat. As I have also highlighted, this moral structure relies on violence to maintain the distinction between the binary pairs. Failure to achieve or conform to the social norm legitimates the use of violence. The moral structure of BLM is very different on two counts. For one, BLM does not endorse interpersonal violence. Secondly, BLM's moral epistemology is not constructed through binary oppositions; it rejects the notion that the categorical distinctions that binaries impose are socially or morally necessary. Moreover, it recognizes that the project of creating and maintaining such division is fundamentally violent and harmful to the people on whom they are imposed. Acknowledging people's humanity and dignity and creating conditions in which people and communities can flourish does not require binary categories of male and female, White and Black/POC, straight and queer, and even victim and offender/criminal. Indeed, these binaries inflict harm rather than impart dignity.

Black lives currently experience some of the highest rates of social, political, and interpersonal violence. BLM works to conceive of social practices and instantiate political arrangements in which Black lives matter and can thrive. To 'matter' means being at the center of social, political, and moral consideration and connotes moral worth. BLM's grounding philosophy is inclusive community, which means that the community includes everyone. In inclusive community, priority is given to the needs and wellbeing of the most vulnerable members. No one is written off or out of inclusive community. In contrast to purity culture's logic, in inclusive community recognition of a person's moral worth is not contingent on goodness, purity, or enacting any other attribute of desert. Simply put, inclusive community does not consider these morally salient. BLM offers a moral vision in which Black lives—and therefore all lives—are recognized as inherently morally valuable.

What does BLM's moral framework of inclusive community bring to antitrafficking? Antitrafficking advocate Hannah Estabrook (2022) insightfully reflects on the effect that binary moral structures such as victim/perpetrator, innocent/guilty, and sex trafficking/prostitution have on responses to human trafficking. Honing in on the effects of one particularly hotly contested binary in the antitrafficking field, Estabrook writes: "When we ask about the difference between sex trafficking and prostitution, it actually seems to me that we're attempting to create a line of demarcation about where we should view women as victims (and therefore care about them) and criminals (and therefore care *less* about them)" (p. 33). Inclusive community enlarges the scope of care (i.e., no one is excluded from care). Furthermore, removing ideological barriers that only allow expressions of care toward some individuals and not others expands people's capacities to care for others generously. BLM offers a moral epistemology in which binary distinctions of all types are unnecessary and irrelevant, because all parties are worthy of care and deserve flourishing lives.

The second insight that BLM offers the antitrafficking movement is the possibility of creating safety outside of carceral logics (Kaba 2021, p. 118). This insight stems from BLM's rejection of violence, including the violence inflicted on individuals and communities by

the police who supposedly wield violence legitimately and for the purposes of maintaining public safety. BLM does not recognize violence or forced used by the police as legitimate, and it challenges the idea that safety is created through the exercise of force and violence as propaganda. BLM insists that safety and community security are not the fruits of force and violence but of met needs and the presence of inclusive community. Put differently, safe communities are ones where people's needs are met and ones where they have a sense of belonging.

Elizabeth Bernstein (2007) argues that one of the defining features of the contemporary antitrafficking movement is the consensus among its constituents on the role of carceral paradigms of justice in antitrafficking efforts (p. 144). Briefly, this consensus is that the criminal justice system is the best mechanism for effectively curtailing trafficking crimes. The endorsement of punitive carceral interventions, including arrest, detention, and incarceration, flow from this consensus. These strategies can be used to punish johns and pimps as well as to apprehend people who sell (or are suspected of selling) sex and who may also be victims of trafficking (Bernstein 2010, p. 56). In this way, carceral paradigms of justice presume the legitimacy of force and violence used by the police and criminal justice system; their logic implicitly assumes that safe communities free of human trafficking can be created through the identification, detainment, and removal of the traffickers and other criminal wrongdoers from them. The essence of the logic is that the more 'bad' people who are locked up, the greater the safety for everyone else.

Of course, the more complicated reality is that this type of community disruption does not strengthen communities, but rather weakens them. BLM thus offers the antitrafficking movement the possibility of imagining ways to respond to human trafficking without automatic recourse to the criminal justice system and its violent, punitive tactics. For example, what might community resistance to human trafficking look like that does not primarily rely on the police and policing? How might incidences of human trafficking in certain neighborhoods be reduced if, instead of greater law enforcement presence, those communities were provided with resources to meet residents' needs (for example, for healthy food, safe housing, transportation, medical care, psychological care, non-stigmatizing drug treatment, job skills, and job opportunities)? What if the ways that people who are vulnerable to exploitative situations attempt to organize and protect themselves through, for example, developing resources such as bad date lists and other systems of mutual aid and support, were applauded and given wide social support?

A third insight BLM offers the antitrafficking movement is to focus on structures and structural change. BLM's sociopolitical critique of US society is an example of a cultural analysis that understands social dynamics through the role of structures. In turn, the solutions it envisions focus less on individual change than on structural change. Americans commonly conceptualize the social world through the lens of individualism, which Allen G. Johnson (2006) defines as a way of thinking about the social world such that everything that happens in society "begins and ends with what each person thinks, feels, and intends" (p. 77). In this perspective, social problems arise from the cumulative actions of individuals; solving social problems, therefore, begins by changing the actions and behaviors of individuals. Here, the assumption is that individual change produces social change. However, what individualistic analyses frequently overlook is the role of cultures, structures, and institutions in perpetuating social problems. Therefore, rather than starting with individuals as the basic social unit, structural and cultural analyses start with social structures. These analyses hold that individuals are produced by the social conditions in which they live; in other words, it is that individuals are a product or effect of the aggregate of patterned social arrangements in society in and through which individuals live their lives. According to this understanding, solving the social problems that individuals experience begins at the structural level with changes being made to the structures. Individual change follows structural change.

BLM's analysis of the response to commercial sex work as discussed earlier in this article is clear example of what I mean by closely attending to structures in social analyses.

For example, BLM does not treat commercial sex as a problem of individual morality, either on the part of people who buy sex or on the part of people who sell sex. Rather, BLM understands the street-based sex trade as a manifestation of larger systemic dynamics of exclusion, marginalization, and inequality. Poverty, racism, misogyny, queerphobia and violence, unsafe homes and housing, lack of access to employment, affordable housing, quality childcare, transportation, health care including gender-affirming health care, and mental health resources are social realities that shape the lives of people who sell sex on the streets (Kaba 2021, p. 37). Public education campaigns to discourage and stigmatize commercial sex and laws that criminalize prostitution do nothing to address these realities. As Kaba observes, attempts to effect social change that fail to address the “why?” behind a harm or problem will never actually contain the harm itself or solve the underlying problem: “Cages confine people, not the conditions that facilitated their harms or the mentalities that perpetuate violence” (p. 24). In fact, laws criminalizing prostitution often end up intensifying dynamics of marginalization and exclusion. For instance, a criminal record of solicitation or prostitution charges impedes access to housing, employment, health care, reproductive rights, and more. Without access to these social supports, it is virtually impossible for people who sell sex or have sold sex to get the kind of financial foothold that is necessary to leave poverty and become self-sufficient. BLM recognizes that economic and social precarity are the root problems of which street-based prostitution is a symptom. This is not an individual problem of perverted sexual morals, but a collective social problem about access to and the availability of life necessities.

BLM provides the antitrafficking movement an example of how to press powerfully and persuasively for meaningful social change without resorting to moralisms or denigrating groups of people through claims (or insinuations) about their ‘natures.’ BLM models what it means to recognize individuals (and the particular choices that individuals make) as situated within and indelibly shaped by social structures. Thus, at the level of intervention, it changes the question that antitrafficking activists, advocates, and service providers might ask from ‘how should people behave to avoid trafficking?’ (a question of individual behavior), to ‘what do people need for safe and stable lives?’.

5. Conclusions

The above insights but scratch the surface of how BLM serves as a generative model for reframing antitrafficking. To become a fully inclusive movement able to advocate for all people who experience human trafficking, the antitrafficking movement must divest from its constitutive logics associated with White supremacy. This is no small task, but BLM shows the possibility of another way.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

- ¹ Importantly, Musto highlights the often “blurred lines between protection and punishment” for trafficking victims and others in the sex trade, such that even when people are recognized as victims of human trafficking, they are still often subjected to invasive, punitive, and surveilling interventions offered in the name of ‘protection’ and under the guise of helping them (Musto 2016, p. 28).
- ² Analyses of the types of cases prosecuted under this law show that it was most frequently used to punish interracial relationships between men of color and white women (Zakhari 2004; Blakemore 2019).
- ³ According to a 2017 report by the International Labor Organization (ILO), approximately 64 percent of trafficking is labor trafficking, 17 percent is state-imposed forced labor, and 19 percent is sex trafficking (International Labor Organization 2017, p. 29).

- 4 In *Other Dreams of Freedom*, I discuss at length the ideal human victim that the supporters of the federal antitrafficking legislation had in mind through the legislative process that resulted in the TVPA. I argue that the presentation of trafficking victims (as vulnerable Brown women from the third world) was strategic for securing evangelical Christians' support for the antitrafficking law because this depiction directly drew on tropes with which they were familiar through the earlier religious freedom movement. Through the religious freedom movement, American evangelicals developed a sense of empathy with and for poor women in the third world, especially the global south, on account of their perceived vulnerability to religious persecution. Depictions of victims of human trafficking in identical terms as those used to portray victims of religious persecution in the religious freedom movement drew on the empathy and compassion for 'third world women' that this prior movement had cultivated, making its extension to include concern about sexual exploitation in human trafficking a short leap (Zimmerman 2013, pp. 46–48).
- 5 This is a New Testament aphorism from 2 Thessalonians 3:10 that was cited by John Smith in 1609 to the colonists at Jamestown, VA.
- 6 Posadas (2020) defines capitalism as a political economy in which "the material resources for maintaining human life—and, more importantly, the means for making those resources usable—are not held collectively by society, freely available for use by all, but instead are privately owned. One obtains these resources by purchasing them from their private owners, and most adults gain the money needed to purchase them through waged employment (hourly or salaried). The vast majority of this employment is performed for the purpose of making a profit for the employer, and the ultimate purpose of profits is to expand the privately owned wealth of employers. With few exceptions, one can only have access to the necessities of living by performing waged employment, owing and investing wealth, or being dependent on someone who does one of these two things" (pp. 111–12).
- 7 Christian ethicist Gloria Albrecht defines neoliberal capitalism as a political economic theory within capitalism that places great faith in the ability of unregulated markets to find the best economic balance among multiple players and the best solutions to an increasing number of social problems. Calls for national policies that emphasize export production, privatization, and deregulation; reductions in government employment and expenditures (especially social services), and fiscal policies that promote the international movement of capital, credit incentives for producers and reductions in business taxes and tariffs. Often the policies are defended by appeals to freedom. "A free—that is, a privatized—market is expected to extend individual liberties and to promote democratic forms of government." (Albrecht 2002, p. 13).
- 8 In 2023, the hourly wage needed for an individual to earn a living wage in the U.S. ranged between \$14.85 per hour in South Dakota and \$23.13 per hour in Washington D.C. (World Population Review 2023). In 2019, the living wage for a family of four (defined as two working adults and two minor children) was \$16.54 per hour (Nadeau 2020).
- 9 Allison (2021) explains theologies of gender complementarianism as follows: "Complementarianism is the theology that says that while God created both men and women as equally valuable, worthy, and loved, men and women have different roles to fill in the home, church, and broader society that are not interchangeable with one another. Men are to lead; women are to follow. Men are to initiate; women are to accept. Men are to be strong, decisive, and straightforward; women are to be soft, compliant, and strategic" (p. 147). Theologies of gender complementarianism uphold and give religious sanction to the binary construction of gender on which purity culture is based.
- 10 Minister clarifies that the fact that violence is not explicit in purity culture and merely lurks "is not to suggest that purity culture does not do harm or even use covert forms of violence that cause harm" (Minister 2018, p. 29). Both purity culture and rape culture are harmful, but they have different relationships to violence.

References

- Agency for International Development v. Alliance for Open Society International Inc. 2013. 570 U.S. 205.
- Albrecht, Gloria H. 2002. *Hitting Home: Feminist Ethics, Women's Work, and the Betrayal of "Family Values"*. New York: Continuum Press.
- Alexander, Michelle. 2010. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in an Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press.
- Allison, Emily Joy. 2021. *#Churchtoo: How Purity Culture Upholds Abuse and How to Find Healing*. Minneapolis: Broad Leaf Books.
- AP News. 2020. Supreme Court Upholds Prostitution Pledge for AIDS Funding. *AP News*. June 29. Available online: <https://apnews.com/article/health-us-supreme-court-brett-kavanaugh-supreme-courts-courts-3807be588f4d82949a7759420a969d48> (accessed on 14 January 2023).
- Associated Press. 2022. An Iowa Teenager who killed her accused rapist is sentenced and ordered to pay \$150K. *National Public Radio*. September 14. Available online: <https://www.npr.org/2022/09/14/1122904939/iowa-teenager-pieper-lewis-killed-accused-rapist-ordered-pay-150000> (accessed on 14 January 2023).
- Banks, Duren, and Tracey Kyckelhahn. 2011. *Characteristics of Suspected Human Trafficking Incidents, 2008–2010*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics.
- Barrón-López, Laura. 2020. Why the Black Lives Matter Movement Doesn't Want a Single Leader. *Politico*. July 20. Available online: <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/07/22/black-lives-matter-movement-leader-377369> (accessed on 14 January 2023).
- BBC News. 2022. Iowa Teen Who Killed Alleged Rapist Sentenced and Fined. *BBC*. September 13. Available online: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-62898366> (accessed on 14 September 2022).
- Bernstein, Elizabeth. 2007. The Sexual Politics of the New Abolitionism. *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 18: 128–51. [CrossRef]

- Bernstein, Elizabeth. 2010. Militarized Humanitarianism Meets Carceral Feminism. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and History* 36: 45–71. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
- Bernstein, Elizabeth. 2018. *Brokered Subjects: Sex, Trafficking, and the Politics of Freedom*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Black Lives Matter. n.d.a. "About." Black Lives Matter. Available online: <https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/> (accessed on 14 January 2023).
- Black Lives Matter. n.d.b. Herstory of Black Lives Matter. Available online: <https://blacklivesmatter.com/herstory/> (accessed on 14 January 2023).
- Blakemore, Erin. 2019. The 'White Slavery' Law that Brought Down Jack Johnson is Still in Effect. *History: A&E Television Networks, LLC*. February 25. Available online: <https://www.history.com/news/white-slave-mann-act-jack-johnson-pardon> (accessed on 14 January 2023).
- Brennan, Denise. 2014. *Life Interrupted: Trafficking into Forced Labor in the United States*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Buchanan, Larry, Quoc Trung Bui, and Jugal K. Patel. 2020. Black Lives Matter May be the Largest Movement in U.S. History. *The New York Times*. July 3. Available online: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/07/03/us/george-floyd-protests-crowd-size.html> (accessed on 14 July 2021).
- Campbell, Letitia M., and Yvonne C. Zimmerman. 2017. Forced Labor and the Movement to End Human Trafficking. In *The Cambridge Companion to Public Theology*. Edited by Sebastian Kim and Katie Day. Boston: Brill, pp. 271–97.
- Cannon, Katie. 1988. *Black Womanist Ethics*. Atlanta: Scholars Press.
- Cannon, Katie Geneva. 2008. Christian Imperialism and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 24: 127–34. [CrossRef]
- Carter, Christopher. 2021. *The Spirit of Soul Food: Race, Faith, and Food Justice*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Choi, Kristin. 2015. Risk Factors for Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking in the United States: A Literature Review. *Journal of Forensic Nursing* 11: 66–76. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
- Christie, Nils. 1986. The Ideal Victim. In *From Crime Policy to Victim Policy*. Edited by Ezzat A. Fattah. London: Macmillan, pp. 17–30.
- Corrigan, Rose, and Corey S. Shdaimah. 2015. People with Secrets: Contesting, Constructing, and Resisting Women's Claims about Sexualized Victimization. *Catholic University Law Review* 65: 436–88.
- Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1989. Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antiracism Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989: 8. Available online: <https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1052&context=uclf> (accessed on 19 March 2023).
- Davis, Angela Y. 2003. *Are Prisons Obsolete?* New York: Seven Stories Press.
- Dingle, Shannon. 2017. #ChurchToo, and Church Especially: Purity Culture Doesn't Protect Women from Abuse; It Prepares Them for It. *Relentless Christianity*, November 24.
- Doezema, Jo. 2000. Loose Women or Lost Women?: The Re-Emergence of the Myth of White Slavery in Contemporary Discourses of Trafficking in Women. *Gender Issues* 18: 23–50. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
- Douglas, Kelly Brown. 1999. *Sexuality and the Black Church: A Womanist Perspective*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books.
- Estabrook, Hannah. 2022. Do You See this (Wo)man? Lessons Learned from Sex Workers. In *Religious Responses to Sex Work and Sex Trafficking: An Outrage Against Any Decent People*. Edited by Lauren McGrow. New York: Routledge, pp. 29–43.
- Estabrook, Hannah, and Yvonne C. Zimmerman. 2021. Anti-Human Trafficking and Black Lives Matter. Paper presented at Ohio Attorney General's Human Trafficking Summit, Columbus, OH, USA, January 14.
- Fadima, Lisa, Celia Williamson, and Tasha Perdue. 2016. Risk Factors for Domestic Child Sex Trafficking in the United States. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 34: 2653–73.
- Federal Bureau of Investigation. 2019. Crime in the United States 2019. Available online: <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2019/crime-in-the-u.s.-2019/tables/table-38> (accessed on 14 January 2023).
- Hasenbush, Amira, Bianca Wilson, Ayako Miyashita, and Madeleine Sharp. 2017. *HIV Criminalization and Sex Work in California*. Los Angeles: The Williams Institute at UCLA School of Law. Available online: <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/HIV-Criminalization-Sex-WorkOct-2017.pdf> (accessed on 14 January 2023).
- Hegewisch, Ariane, and Eve Mefford. 2022. *Gender Wage Gaps Remains Wide in Year Two of the Pandemic*. Washington, DC: Institute for Women's Policy Research. Available online: <https://iwpr.org/iwpr-publications/fact-sheet/gender-wage-gaps-remain-wide-in-year-two-of-the-pandemic/> (accessed on 14 January 2023).
- Howard University School of Law Library. 2018. *Black Lives Matter Movement*. Washington, DC: Howard University.
- International Labor Organization. 2017. *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labor and Forced Marriage*. Geneva: International Labor Organization and Walk Free Foundation. Available online: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_575479.pdf (accessed on 13 October 2022).
- Johnson, Allen G. 2006. *Privilege, Power, and Difference*, 2nd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Jones, Philip, and Francesca Block. 2022. Iowa Sex Trafficking Victim Pieper Lewis Booked into Polk County Jail After Escape. *The Des Moines Register*. November 8. Available online: <https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/crime-and-courts/2022/11/09/pieper-lewis-des-moines-sex-trafficking-victim-jailed-after-escape-iowa/69632189007/> (accessed on 9 November 2022).
- Kaba, Mariame. 2021. *We Do This Til We Free Us: Abolitionist Organizing and Transforming Justice*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.

- Khim, Suzy, and Laura Strickler. 2019. Trump Admin Delays Funds for Human-Trafficking Victims that would Help Non-Citizens. *NBC News*. October 1. Available online: <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/trump-admin-delays-funds-human-trafficking-victims-would-help-non-n1060841> (accessed on 14 January 2023).
- Lovell, Rachel. 2012. Mugshots: Transgender 'Johns'. Re/search Blog, DePaul University. May 31. Available online: <https://ssrcdepaul.wordpress.com/2012/05/31/mug-shots-part2/> (accessed on 14 January 2023).
- Luo, Nina. 2020. *Decriminalizing Survival: Policy Platform and Polling on the Decriminalization of Sex Work*. San Francisco: Data for Progress. Available online: <https://www.filesforprogress.org/memos/decriminalizing-sex-work.pdf> (accessed on 14 January 2023).
- M4BL. 2020a. End the War on Drugs: Policy Brief 9 of 13. The Movement for Black Lives. Available online: <https://m4bl.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/09-End-the-War-on-Drugs.pdf> (accessed on 14 January 2023).
- M4BL. 2020b. Preamble. In The Movement for Black Lives. Available online: <https://m4bl.org/policy-platforms/the-preamble/> (accessed on 14 January 2023).
- M4BL. 2020c. Vision for Black Lives. In The Movement for Black Lives. Available online: <https://m4bl.org/policy-platforms/> (accessed on 14 January 2023).
- M4BL. 2023. About Us. The Movement for Black Lives. Available online: <https://m4bl.org/about-us/> (accessed on 14 January 2023).
- The Mann Act. 1910. Public Law 61-277 [H.R. 12315]. June 25.
- McGrow, Lauren. 2017. *Missionary Positions: A Postcolonial Feminist Perspective on Sex Work and Faith-Based Outreach from Australia*. Boston: Brill.
- McGuire, Karie. 2019. The Embodiment of Complex Trauma in Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking Victims and the Dangers of Misidentification. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 29: 533–47. [CrossRef]
- Minister, Meredith. 2018. *Rape Culture on Campus*. New York: Lexington Books.
- Moslener, Sara. 2015. *Virgin Nation: Sexual Purity and American Adolescence*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Musto, Jennifer. 2016. *Control and Protect: Collaboration, Carceral Protection, and Domestic Sex Trafficking in the United States*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Musto, Jennifer, Anne E. Fehrenbacher, Heidi Hoefinger, Nicola Mai, P. G. Macioti, Calum Bennachie, Calogero Giametta, and Kate D'Adamo. 2021. Antitrafficking in the Time of FOSTA-SESTA: Networked Moral Gentrification and Sexual Humanitarian Creep. *Social Sciences* 10: 2. Available online: <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0760/10/2/58> (accessed on 18 January 2023).
- Nadeau, Carey Ann. 2020. *A Calculation of the Living Wage*. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Living Wage Calculator. Available online: <https://livingwage.mit.edu/articles/61-new-living-wage-data-for-now-available-on-the-tool> (accessed on 14 January 2023).
- NSPD-22. 2002. Available online: <https://ctip.defense.gov/Portals/12/Documents/NSPD-22.pdf> (accessed on 14 January 2023).
- Palackdharry, Syreeta. 2021. *Intersections: Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking, White Christian Supremacy, and a Path Forward*. Ph.D. Thesis, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA.
- Peach, Lucinda Joy. 2005. Sex Slaves or Sex Workers? Cross-cultural and Comparative Religious Perspectives on Sexuality, Subjectivity, and Moral Identity in Anti-Sex Trafficking Discourse. *Culture and Religion: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 6: 107–34. [CrossRef]
- Posadas, Jeremy. 2020. Reproductive Justice Re-Constructs Christian Ethics of Work. *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 40: 109–26. [CrossRef]
- Ray, Audacia, and Emma Catherine. 2014. *Criminal, Victim or Worker?: The Effects of New York's Trafficking Intervention Courts on Adults Charged with Prostitution-Related Offenses*. New York: Red Umbrella Project. Available online: <https://nyf.issuelab.org/resource/criminal-victim-or-worker-the-effects-of-new-york-s-human-trafficking-intervention-courts-on-adults-charged-with-prostitution-related-offenses.html> (accessed on 14 January 2023).
- Rights4Girls. 2019. *Domestic Child Sex Trafficking and Black Girls*. Washington, DC: Rights4Girls. Available online: <https://rights4girls.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/r4g/2019/05/Black-GirlsDCST-May-2019-1.pdf> (accessed on 14 January 2023).
- Rights4Girls. 2021. *Racial and Gender Disparities in the Sex Trade*. Washington, DC: Rights4Girls. Available online: <https://rights4girls.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Racial-Disparities-FactSheet-Jan-2021.pdf> (accessed on 14 January 2023).
- Sankofa, Jasmine. 2015. Black Girls and the (Im)Possibilities of a Victim Trope. *UCLA Law Review* 62: 1642–76.
- Schultz, Tammy, Sally Schwer Canning, Hannah Estabrook, and Priscilla Wong. 2020. Mental Health Needs and Coping Resources of Participants in a Prostitution Pre-Sentencing Court Program. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation* 62: 1–22. [CrossRef]
- Showden, Carisa R., and Samantha Majic. 2018. *Youth Who Trade in Sex in the U.S.: Intersectionality, Agency, and Vulnerability*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Spalek, Basia. 2006. *Crime Victims: Theory, Policy and Practice*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Townes, Emilie M. 2010. From Mammy to Welfare Queen: Images of Black Women in Public-Policy Formation. In *Beyond Slavery: Overcoming Its Religious and Sexual Legacies*. Edited by Bernadette J. Brooten. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 61–74.
- Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA). 2000. Public Law 386-106 [H.R. 3244]. October 28.
- Tumin, Remy. 2022. Trafficked Teenager Who Killed One of Her Abusers Ordered to Pay Restitution. *The New Times*. September 13. Available online: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/13/us/pieper-lewis-sex-trafficking-iowa.html> (accessed on 14 January 2023).
- Walker, Kate. 2013. *Ending the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: A Call for Multi-System Collaboration in California*. Sacramento: California Child Welfare Council.

- Weber, Max. 2000. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by Talcott Parsons. New York: Routledge. First Published 1930.
- What Is SESTA/FOSTA? n.d. Decriminalize Sex Work. Available online: <https://decriminalizesex.work/advocacy/sesta-fosta/what-is-sesta-fosta/> (accessed on 14 January 2023).
- World Population Review. 2023. Livable Wage by State 2023. World Population Review. Available online: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/livable-wage-by-state> (accessed on 14 January 2023).
- Zakhari, Beatrice. 2004. Legal cases prosecuted under the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000. In *Human Traffic and Transnational Crime: Eurasian and American Perspectives*. Edited by Sally Stoecker and Louise Shelley. Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 125–49.
- Zimmerman, Yvonne C. 2013. *Other Dreams of Freedom: Religion, Sex, and Human Trafficking*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Zimmerman, Yvonne C. 2019. Human Trafficking and Religious Movements. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia, Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press. [CrossRef]

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.