

Modern Day Slavery

Modern day slavery as an industry thrives around chocolate production!

Modern day slavery as an industry thrives around chocolate production! It sounds like a sick joke--some racist gone rampant with metaphors but it is no joking matter. This practice is present in Cote d'Ivoire a major world cacao producer (where many of the African cacao plantations are located). The abducted and enslaved come from various nearby countries as well.

During Martin Luther King Day celebrations, "Free At Last, Free At Last, Thank God Almighty, I'm Free at Last" reverberated through the air and my thoughts. Unfortunately this isn't true for all, even today. As a black-chocoholic I'm finding my chocolate addiction more bittersweet than ever.

The good news is that fair-trade and organic chocolate is not indicated in these horrendous crimes largely against women and children. I found a lot of info on a few websites concerned with the Chocolate Industry and Slavery:

<http://vision.ucsd.edu/~kbranson/stopchocolateslavery/takeaction.html>

<http://www.answers.com/topic/labor-exploitation-in-the-chocolate-industry>

<http://gvnet.com/humantrafficking/CoteD'Ivoire.htm>

http://www.vachss.com/help_text/archive/chocolate_slaves.html

<http://www.stophetraffik.org/chocolatecampaign/>

As arises in my writing where I seek to put forth and support ethno-botany and economic botany as it relates to African descended people, I am in a catch 22. On the one hand when handled fairly, as I said through fair-trade, women-run co-ops and organic production firms, chocolate products are very good for African communities economically and that helps socially with school literacy programs and with holistic health by fighting infant mortality, HIV and AIDs, and more.

On the other hand when chocolate is not created or purchased conscientiously it could spell disaster which includes modern day slavery and child abuse. Of course the fair-traded chocolate is far more expensive than some of the popular name brands we are used to but that shouldn't be a deterrent (less is more). We have no choice about paying more unless of course we want to support slavery and extreme child abuse.

The main thing about this and other botanical products is awareness; building, maintaining and raising awareness because these industries are driven by us--the consumers. People think everything natural is good but goodness is a holistic issue--it needs to grow from a good place mentally and spirituality as well.

Stephanie Rose Bird

