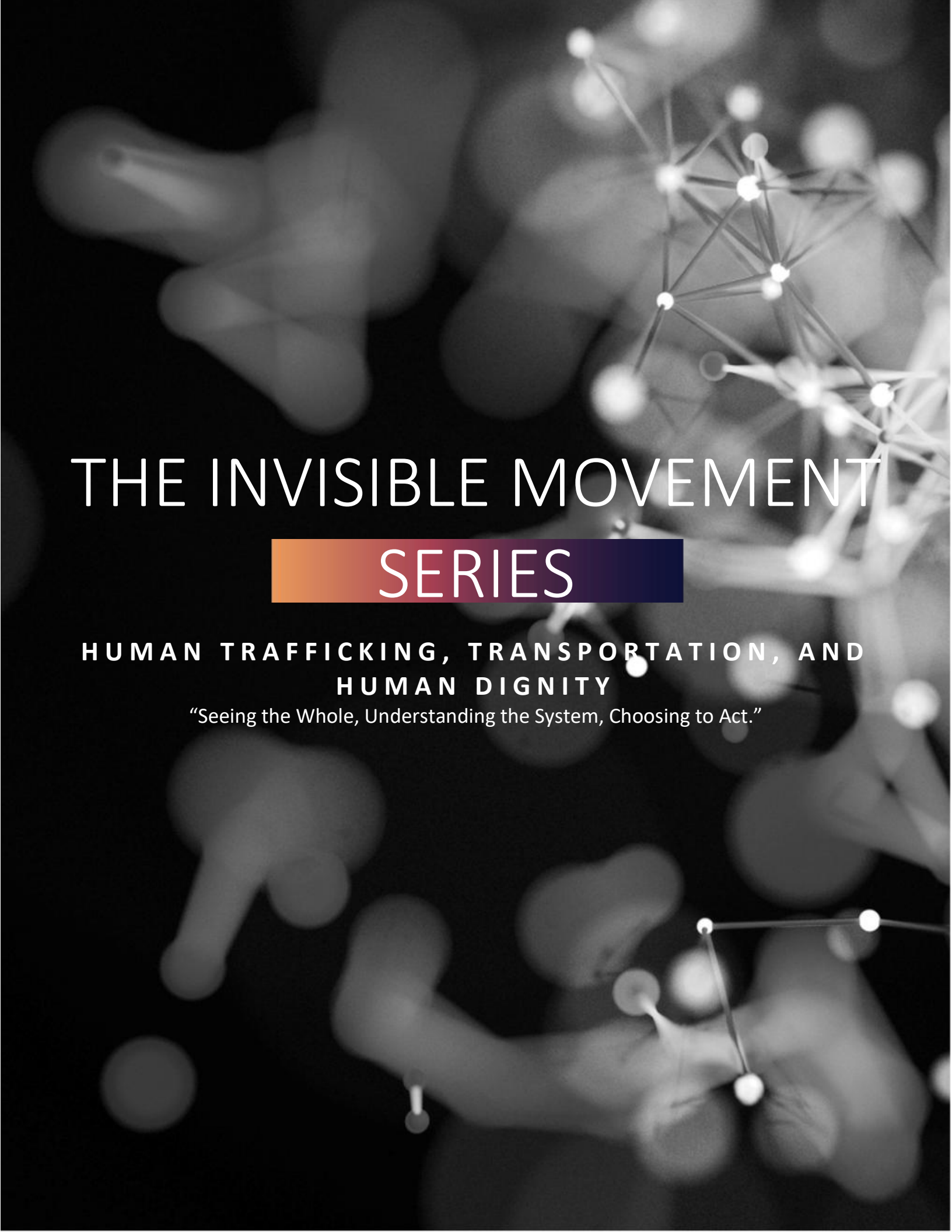


THE INVISIBLE MOVEMENT

SERIES

HUMAN TRAFFICKING, TRANSPORTATION, AND HUMAN DIGNITY

"Seeing the Whole, Understanding the System, Choosing to Act."



SUMMARY

A Year-Long Storytelling & Dialogue Series on the Human Trafficking Ecosystem

Purpose: This initiative is a year-long, mindful storytelling and dialogue series designed to illuminate the full human trafficking ecosystem from its historical roots to the modern systems that enable it, and toward collective responsibility for prevention, healing, and action.

Anchored by a foundational paper commemorating the **30-year milestone of the landmark El Monte labor trafficking case** that freed 72 Thai workers, the series establishes a shared understanding of how human trafficking began, how it has evolved, and why it persists across industries, regions, and communities.

Why This Series Matters

Human trafficking is often addressed in fragments by sector, by crime type, or by response strategy. This series intentionally steps back to see the *whole system*.

WHY THIS SERIES MATTERS

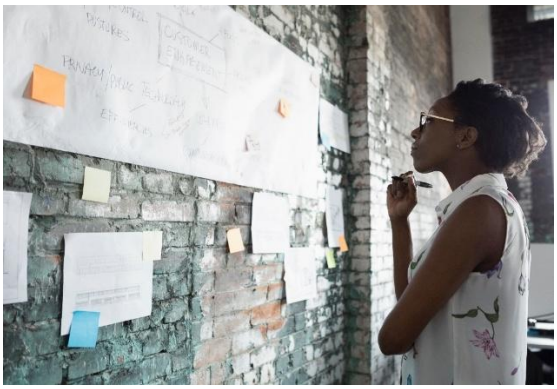
Human trafficking is often addressed in fragments by sector, by crime type, or by response strategy. This series intentionally steps back to see the *whole system*.

We explore:

- Human trafficking as an **interconnected industry**, not isolated acts
- The **movement of people and goods**, with transportation as a critical enabler and potential interrupter
- The **psychology of recruitment and control**
- The **socio-economic conditions** that create vulnerability
- The **mental health impacts** on offenders, victims, survivors, and communities
- The **economic forces** that allow trafficking to adapt and endure

This work is grounded in mindfulness, systems thinking, and human dignity, inviting awareness before action, and compassion alongside accountability.

Each month we present new topics in a storytelling format that creates dialogue and reflection and what it means for individuals, organizations, and society. We hope that it ignites radical, practical, ethical, and accessible steps forward.





SERIES PRIORITIES

- Raise Awareness
- Create a Community of Practice
- Expand the Narrative to Include Demand Side
- Elevate Dignity & Compassion
- Create Partnerships
- Collaborate Resources and Priorities



OTHER PRIORITIES

- Improve Social Media Presence
- Shift How We See, Relate, and Respond



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- Write Articles
- Arrange Webinars
- Create a Movement
- Expand Awareness through Social Media

COUNTER HUMAN TAFFICKING: HOW WE GOT HERE AND WHERE WE'RE HEADED

Human trafficking is hidden in plain sight.
Human Trafficking in all its forms moves through systems we rely on every day, including transportation networks, labor markets, and supply chains designed for speed and efficiency.

Exploitation survives because it adapts to its surroundings and integrates into ordinary operations. Human trafficking often appears through familiar systems operating in plain sight. These conditions shape what becomes possible when we see the whole system, understand how it functions, and choose to act.

What is Human Trafficking in 2026:
January is Human Trafficking Awareness Month. After more than two decades of modern anti-trafficking laws, this moment invites a revisit to its historical roots. Human trafficking has existed long before the Trafficking Victims Protection Act and the Palermo Protocol (discussed below) in the year 2000. Its political and legal framework emerged from centuries of struggle over slavery, forced labor, economic mobility, and self-determination. Like slavery, human trafficking depends on the movement of people for exploitation. Human traffickers move victims into dependency through force, fraud, or coercion. The beneficiaries of this exploitation include buyers of services and consumers of goods produced through forced and coerced labor in global supply chains. Both forms of human trafficking (sex and labor trafficking) share a common structure. Both rely on the movement and exploitation of people.

Historically, systems such as peonage, debt bondage, and employer-binding regimes such as kafala-like systems all relied on restricting workers' ability to move or exit work relationships. They operated through law, contract, debt, or status, which is different from the ownership of slavery. Modern trafficking laws address these same mechanisms under different legal definitions, focusing on recruitment, control, and exploitation rather than title to a person.

After the United States abolished chattel slavery, coercive labor remained. Forced labor was enforceable under administrative and colonial law. This gap was addressed internationally through the League of Nations' 1926 Slavery Convention and the International

WHAT'S NEXT

Labour Organization's Forced Labour Convention of 1930. These international agreements expanded legal definitions from ownership to slavery-like practices and compulsory labor. In doing so, they placed recruitment, transportation, and labor extraction as a central theme.

"Human Trafficking moves in the shadows of our systems. Awareness is the light that exposes the path."

After World War II, the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) marked a foundational moment in a universal definition against slavery. The UDHR declared slavery is incompatible with legitimate governance. In this sense, it functioned much like the Emancipation Proclamation in the United States: a symbolic and legitimating document that became a turning point. The Emancipation Proclamation provided moral purpose and laid the groundwork for later constitutional changes. Similarly, the UDHR provided a shared international framework that recasts domination and exploitation as violations of universal human rights and supported decolonization claims to freedom, dignity, and self-rule. However, condemning slavery in principle did not resolve how to recognize and address it in practice, especially as exploitation adapted to modern labor systems and economic globalization. This shift necessitated the broad commitment to human rights into more tangible tools through the Palermo Protocol in 2000.

The Palermo Protocol defined trafficking through three elements:
(1) acts such as recruitment and transportation;
(2) means such as coercion, deception, or abuse of vulnerability; and
(3) purpose, defined as exploitation. Just like in the Trafficking Victims

Protection Act of 2000 (TVPA), this definition formalized movement as a core legal element while avoiding the assumption that trafficking requires crossing international borders. Trafficking could occur within states, which proved essential in post-colonial contexts where internal labor migration dominates. The Palermo Protocol reflected lessons from colonial governance by focusing on processes rather than legal status and by enabling cooperation without reopening sovereignty disputes.

Taken together, modern anti-trafficking law developed through abolitionist struggles, forced labor regulation, and decolonization. The UDHR supplied moral authority. Decolonization linked human rights to political legitimacy. The Palermo Protocol translated principle into governance. UNODC and ILO frameworks extended this approach by emphasizing labor markets, recruitment systems, and supply chains.

THE INVISIBLE MOVEMENT BEGINS

Movement remains central to both the history of slavery and modern trafficking. Workers move through recruitment systems. Traffickers move across jurisdictions. Goods produced under force, fraud, or coercion move through global supply chains. Exploitation persists or declines along these pathways. When governance intervenes only at the point of criminal prosecution, it arrives too late. When it addresses recruitment practices, restricted mobility, labor regulation, and market demand, it targets the systems that sustain exploitation. Understanding the historical roots of anti-trafficking laws can help us understand the complexities of human trafficking and move forward in helping stabilize vulnerability when we see it.

So, what does history mean for us right now?
Human trafficking is sustained through everyday systems alongside individual wrongdoing. Recruitment pipelines that feel routine. Transportation networks that are designed for efficiency rather than visibility. Labor arrangements are optimized for cost rather than dignity, and goods move faster than accountability.

When exploitation is embedded in normal operations, responsibility becomes diffused and intervention arrives after harm has already occurred. When trafficking is treated solely as a crime to prosecute, responses consistently occur too late. Law enforcement plays an indispensable role and functions as one part of a broader response to human trafficking. When trafficking is understood as a system of movement, incentives, and silence, opportunities emerge to interrupt it earlier. These moments arise before people are reduced to vulnerabilities, before harm fades from view, and before suffering becomes normalized.

This is where the *Invisible Movement* begins.
We need awareness.
We need responsibility.
We need action.

Over the next year, this series will guide participants through the full human trafficking ecosystem from its historical roots to its modern machinery. We will learn about the anti-trafficking “3P” paradigm, which stands for prevention, protection, and prosecution. In addition, we will discuss the importance of the fourth “P,” which stands for partnership. Partnership is crucial because fully addressing the human trafficking ecosystem requires a multidisciplinary approach that builds toward practical, compassionate pathways for disruption and prevention. Each conversation builds on the last, moving from seeing the whole system, to understanding how it operates, to choosing how and when to act.

This series centers on cultivating a community of compassionate humans who value people, freedom, peace, harmony, laughter, and love.

It is a collective journey designed to change how we see, relate, and respond.

If trafficking thrives in what remains unseen, then awareness becomes a form of protection.
The next step is simple:

Begin by seeing the whole system, and your place in it.

CONTRIBUTORS:



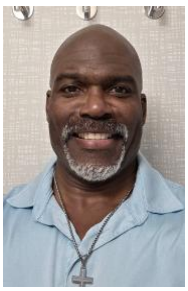
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Ley, Aloha is a seasoned transportation leader with over 30 years of service at the U.S. Department of Transportation, where she held key roles including Chief of Staff, Senior Advisor, and Director across the FAA, FTA, and the Office of the Secretary. She brings expertise in aviation and transit safety, safety management systems, community development, anti-human trafficking initiatives, strategic planning, grants management, and public engagement. Aloha also integrates mindfulness and modern leadership into her work as a certified yoga teacher and practitioner of manifestation and mindfulness mastery. She has social media mastery and is currently pursuing AI mastery. She holds bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Maryland, is a graduate of the Federal Executive Institute. Her career reflects a commitment to innovation, resilience, and meaningful community impact.

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The Mineta Transportation Institute (MTI), founded in 1991, is an organized research and training unit in partnership with the Lucas College and Graduate School of Business at San José State University (SJSU), increases mobility for all by improving the safety, efficiency, accessibility, and convenience of our nation's transportation system. Through research, education, workforce development, and technology transfer, MTI helps create a connected world.

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