

UAlbany SSTEP



STUDENTS STOPPING TRAFFICKING AND THE EXPLOITATION OF PEOPLE

The International Labour Organization estimates that there are over 21,000,000 victims of human trafficking and that they collectively generate \$150 billion in annual profits for those who exploit them. Significantly, nearly all of us at UAlbany and beyond ultimately benefit from this horrifying crime. We may not take advantage of people who are trafficked for sex, but the chocolate we typically buy is made with cocoa grown by slaves in West Africa. Much of the shrimp that we enjoy was caught and processed by people who are forced to work on ships in Thailand. Laborers in Bangladesh struggle under conditions of involuntary servitude to make much of our clothing. Trafficking is even being done to support sexual and commercial enterprises throughout New York.

In the spring of 2017, several UAlbany students combined their talents and energy to form a group that will fight this horrifying practice. Our Statement of Purpose is clear and reflects our determination to make a difference:

We, the members of UAlbany Students Stopping Trafficking and the Exploitation of People (SSTEP) stand in solidarity to express our outrage at the many forms of human trafficking that exist in the world today and to assert our belief that everyone has a role in ending modern slavery. Together, we will

- *Work to increase awareness of human trafficking on campus and beyond;*
- *Identify and publicize activities that each person can do as an individual to fight human trafficking;*
- *Collaborate with other student groups and nonprofit organizations to support national and international initiatives designed to strengthen applicable laws and stop human trafficking;*
- *Encourage the use of Fair Trade products and practices in order to promote economic justice and reduce the sale of products that are grown, processed or made by slaves and exploited laborers; and*
- *Help trafficked victims get a new start in life by preparing gift packages and raising funds for organizations that provide victims with shelter and other critical services.*

In our first semester, we drafted a Constitution, started a very active Facebook page, elected our first slate of officers, and submitted the paperwork necessary to get formal recognition from the University as an official student organization. We also worked with a NYS Assemblywoman to draft and circulate a petition calling on the State legislature to raise the minimum age to get married in New York from 14 to 17. (Those under the age of 17 cannot legally consent to having sex, and the current law facilitates potential abuse.) Other accomplishments included raising funds for sex trafficking survivors who are living in a special safe house in New York City, co-sponsoring a viewing of an award-winning film about child trafficking in Nepal and India, and partnering with Ten Thousand Villages to promote the sale of Fair Trade chocolate. Our membership meetings routinely feature an educational component on some aspect of human trafficking or current events pertaining to trafficking in the United States.

Join us to help or just learn more! You are also welcome to become a member of our Facebook group at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1236230436458088/>. For more information, contact Ali Hansen at ashansen@albany.edu.