Dark Side of Globalization: Trafficking in People
International Conference
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Mershon Center – OSU
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The conference informed OSU students, faculty, and community, and created an opportunity for an open discussion on one of the most serious violations of human rights existing in the 21st century in the world—trafficking in people.

*Trafficking is the recruitment, harboring, transporting, providing or obtaining, by any means, any person for labor or services involving forced labor, slavery or servitude in any industry, such as forced or coerced participation in agriculture, forced prostitution, manufacturing, or other industries or in domestic service or marriage.*

International speakers from India, Poland, The Czech Republic, Bulgaria, The Netherlands, and England as well as speakers from Washington, DC and The Ohio State University addressed the following questions: Why does trafficking in people exist? Why did trafficking develop so fast in post-communist societies? Who is at the highest risk of being in the situation of trafficking? What do the victims experience? What happens to them? How do we help them?

The conference opened with the screening of the internationally acclaimed film *Lilia 4-ever* (2002) which powerfully unveils the secret vice of West European men who seek young girls for sexual satisfaction and the desperation of young people in the former Soviet Union who become easy victims of the “promises” for Western “happiness.”
The keynote presentation (delivered by Maria Tchomarova, director of the Center for Rehabilitation of Women, Adolescents, and Children--Victims of Violence in Bulgaria and an international expert of trafficking in people) offered a detailed and comprehensive analysis of the problem of trafficking. Maria Tchomarova began with the economic conditions as a factor for flourishing of trafficking in the countries from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Today about 75% of the people from the former communist countries live below the level of poverty. Sixty-five percent of the long-term unemployed women are between 18 and 30 years. Lured by advertisements for seasonal work abroad many young people feel that this is their chance for a better life. When transported abroad, however, they become easy victims. Further the presentation detailed the mechanisms used by traffickers to target and recruit young people. The speaker focused also on the psychological conditions of the experience: the victims are physically and mentally abused and manipulated until they become automatic profit producers. Victims who manage to escape usually suffer long-term psychological damages.

Speakers addressed the legal obstacles for combating and preventing trafficking in the United States and in Europe as well as efforts being done to improve legislative systems. Others discussed how the unification of Europe and the acceptance of ten new countries (mainly from the former Eastern bloc) affects and changes the problems of trafficking in Europe. The audience heard about the cultural specificity of the problems of trafficking in India, which differs significantly from the way trafficking operates in Europe and the United States. A presentation tackled the problem of trafficking as a
matter of demand following the Marxist theory of supply and demand. Another critically analyzed short video films part of various prevention campaigns.