

2008 Harriet Tubman Award Winner

Comissão Pastoral da Terra & Reporter Brasil | India

Comissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT) and Reporter Brasil from Brazil share this year's Harriet Tubman Community Award. Together they have played a major role in freeing thousands of people from slavery and have harnessed the power of the marketplace to make slaveholding unprofitable.

The two organizations have found a way of collaborating that builds upon each group's strengths. CPT operates in rural areas and is fueled by a profound belief in God. Reporter Brasil is urban and operates in the world of investigative journalism with a profound belief in the power of knowledge to change the world. They share a common commitment to freedom for every human being, and to helping each sector of society that is touched by slavery to become part of the solution.



Harriet Tubman Award

is given to a community-based organization that is demonstrating how slavery can be dismantled and destroyed. Named

after an escaped American slave who guided dozens of other slaves to freedom on dangerous missions that utilized the network of safe houses known as the Underground Railroad.

CPT and Reporter Brasil are currently Free the Slaves frontline partners. Find out more here.



Xavier Plassat is the coordinator of the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT).

Comissão Pastoral da Terra

A Pioneer

Comissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT) pioneering fight against slavery began in 1975. For more than 30 years they have helped individuals to freedom, and have also worked incessantly against the root causes that allow slavery to exist.

The work has been difficult and dangerous. The majority of slavery in rural Brazil is found in exactly the locations that are hardest to access: remote 'cattle ranches' that have been carved out of virgin rainforest, crude camps where men are enslaved to burn logs into the charcoal that is used to make steel, forgotten soy and cotton farms and logging teams that force slaves to clear-cut large swaths of the Amazon. On a regular

basis, CPT quite literally confronts powerful slaveholders whose wealth depends on slavery, and for decades CPT has not wavered, always standing on the side of the people enslaved.

A Wide Influence of Change

For escaped slaves, CPT is often the first stop along the modern Underground Railroad.. CPT file complaints on behalf of former slaves to Brazil's Ministry of Labor. Thanks to the activism of CPT and other groups, these complaints now trigger the Brazilian government's Mobile Inspection Unit to investigate the location where the former slave was held. To date, Brazil is the only country in the world that operates a Mobile Inspection Unit of this magnitude. Thanks in large part to the work of CPT, these investigations have rescued roughly 28,000 workers since 1995.

CPT also provides legal and social aid to exploited workers and empowers them to demand their right to freedom and a life of dignity. They address land conflicts, help former slaves and exploited workers to sustainable livelihoods, educate the public to avoid being trafficked into slavery and advocate for policy changes at the state, national and international levels. CPT insists upon dismantling the systems that allow slavery to exist. Only then will the roots of slavery die.

Its Future

The fight goes on. Public policies must impact more people. The law needs to hold landowners accountable. Above all, CPT insists on wealth and land distribution to workers. Only then will the roots of slavery die.



Leonardo Sakamoto is the President of Reporter Brasil.

Reporter Brasil

The Slavery Trap

Like CPT, the founders of Reporter Brasil were haunted by the fact that every year, an estimated 25,000 rural workers are enslaved in Brazil. Rampant poverty and few job opportunities allow slaveholders to prey on young men hungry for work. By the time the men realize that the promise of a job is really a cruel trick, they are already enslaved.

Silent No More

A group of dedicated journalists, educators and social scientists could no longer idly sit by. To them, silence equaled complicity. In 2001, they started Reporter Brasil to expose social injustice, especially slave labor. They work day and night. These young, vibrant anti-slavery heroes are sleepless, devoted and not going to stop anytime soon.

Linking Research and Business

Reporter Brasil uses its expertise in research and journalism to strategically fight slavery. When groups like CPT uncover cases of slavery, Reporter Brasil traces the products the slaves

were making to the businesses and consumers that buy them. They bring this information to businesses so they can use their purchasing power in the fight against slavery.

For example, when a charcoal worker escapes and makes his way to CPT, Reporter Brasil's researchers locate the charcoal camp and trace where the charcoal goes next. In many cases, it goes to middlemen who buy the charcoal and use it to make steel, which is then put on ships destined for the US and Europe. This steel is used to make automobiles, washing machines and other home appliances that consumers unwittingly buy every day.

Reporter Brasil brings this information to the businesses involved and shows them how they can use their supply chain to become part of the solution. Businesses working with Reporter Brasil make it clear to their suppliers that slavery in their supply chain will not be tolerated. Suppliers who do not enslave their workers are rewarded with more demand for their products and services.

Wider Impact

Reporter Brasil's work was key to the creation of Brazil's National Pact for the Eradication of Slave Labor. More than 100 companies have pledged to not buy products from businesses known to have slaves. Reporter Brasil aims to dramatically increase that number. Their next goal: launching a similar pact across South America.

Slavery, No Way! Escravo, nem pensar!

CPT and Reporter Brasil have collaborated on a number of initiatives, including their recent "Slavery, No Way!" program which has trained over 1700 teachers. The program targeted the 23 most popular recruiting areas for traffickers who dupe people into slavery. Teachers there were provided tools to discuss slavery in their classrooms and also to raise awareness among workers in their communities about how to identify risks and to know their rights so they will not be tricked into slavery.