

## Slavery and Liberation in Hotels, Restaurants and Bars

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Conrad Lashley is a well-known expert, researcher and published author in the fields of hospitality. In his latest edited book, entitled *Slavery and Liberation in Hotels, Restaurants and Bars*, Conrad tackles a very complex subject matter very much relevant in today's world. Lashley was able to distil such complex thoughts and ideas into uncomplicated, easily understood and well-connected sections.

Published in 2021 by Routledge of the Taylor and Francis Group, the book has 11 chapters offering the reader an in-depth journey from ancient slavery to today's neo-slavery and labour exploitation in the hospitality industry, and presents a way for the liberation of these neo slaves. The book also offers critical and analytical models from Brazil, Europe, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. This publication's target market is students, hospitality professionals, human resource practitioners, and all those who seek to learn more about contemporary forms of human bondage.

From the European involvement in the slave trade and slavery to today's human trafficking and Europe's modern slavery, the world is paying increased attention to the development of neo-slavery. In the introductory chapter, Lashley invites all people managers to learn the importance of asking the question, "What is it like not to be me?", and apply it as a guiding principle in their dealings with others. The first and second chapters, written by Conrad Lashley, explore different ways to outline various ethical and moral positions to assess employees' managerial actions. As labour costs remain pretty significant in the hospitality and service industry, managers always look for ways to reduce these costs. To increase returns, many owners of hospitality service organisations adopt policies that result in direct slavery or wage rates that contribute to a state of neo-slavery. The author describes why over one million slaves currently exist across contemporary Europe, and millions more work and get paid at neo-slave rates. Chapter two also explores human trafficking patterns, modern slavery and the beneficiaries among today's elite. Helpless and vulnerable populations remain exposed to coercion and exploitation. Hospitality establishments continue to be indirectly implicated as they unknowingly are the venue for sexual exploitation or employ slave labour through subcontractors or outsourced services.

Chapter three, co-written by Roseane Barcellos Marques and Conrad Lashley, reflects the historical background of modern slavery in Brazil. Chapter four, co-written by Erwin van der Graaf and Conrad Lashley, details experiences concerning sex trafficking in hospitality establishments in the Netherlands and elaborates on the steps taken to sensitise hoteliers to detect potential exploitation. As human trafficking across Europe is on

the rise, chapter five examines the nature of human trafficking and details actions taken by the hotels to oppose all forms of human trafficking and modern slavery. Chapters six and seven establish a link between neoliberalism and the "cancer of inequality" (Lashley, 2020, p. 87) as the rich hoard their extra wealth while exploiting the poor. The author also demonstrates a clear link between neoliberalism's policies and the slave-like conditions many workers endure.

Driven by the concern for improving working conditions, hospitality managers use employee empowerment initiatives to create a liberating experience. Nevertheless, Lashley argues in chapter eight that while some benefits are offered to employees, these initiatives remain management inspired and aimed at service improvement and operational profitability. Ultimately, employee empowerment initiatives are judged by how employees will experience these changes and influence the organisational culture. Despite the low wages and neo-slave-like state of so many front-line employees in the hospitality industry, membership in trade unions remains below average. The author finds this fact striking and discusses the many external and internal reasons. The low membership rate remains paradoxical as these low-paid employees continue to be the weakest because their bargaining power is weak. The author suggests that hospitality employers' opposition has actively discouraged trade union membership.

Chapters nine and ten explore worker cooperatives, their formation and operation, and provides international examples. Worker cooperatives can boost economic activity and lead to job creation as long as they get the necessary cultural and political support. "Divide and rule" has always been a well-used strategy that the rich few use to oppress and dominate the many. The author concludes chapter eleven by describing how the oppressed can resist injustice via trade unions and political parties with ethical objections to all forms of exploitation.

On the other hand, pro-rich political parties continue to push policies at the expense of vulnerable populations. As a result, inequality is more significant than ever; the rich are becoming richer, while the poor are becoming poorer. Lashley argues all is not lost; there is still hope to resist and push change as long as stakeholders clearly understand "the forces at work and the mechanism employed to keep things the way they are" (Lashley, 2020, p. 186).

Throughout his book, Lashley remains eloquent in using a transdisciplinary approach; he combines historical journalism with socio-economic and political research to present a full review of slavery, neo-slavery and liberation in the hospitality industry. The book exposes what has been primarily unspoken and a taboo in the employment aspect of the hospitality

industry. It presents a broad economic, cultural and sociopolitical backdrop for practices that have haunted and still haunt the industry. The book does not exaggerate the details of the state of neo-slavery in the hospitality industry. The ordeal that the authors describe is, if anything, understated but loudly speaks for itself.

For this reviewer, the book is fascinating and informative, co-written by four authors who are experts in hospitality and tourism, economics, sociology, governance, and management. The book appeals to academics (with more than 161 references in the bibliography) and critical practitioners (with concrete and specific examples and practical advice and recommendations for the hospitality industry). Models, figures and tables throughout the text help the reader understand and visualise the concepts being presented.

Overall, this is a thought-provoking book that students, academics and practitioners will appreciate and value worldwide, even though some readers might feel the text is written from a culturally "European" perspective. Reading the book is very instructive; students will see that working in hotels, restaurants, and bars is not as rosy as the industry and their schools sometimes portray. Behind the employees' hospitableness and bright smile sometimes lies a lot of sadness, misery and oppression. The editor is to be commended on shedding light on important issues that concern us all.

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