



SLAVERY IN THE FISHING INDUSTRY

LEARNING GOALS

- To learn about human rights abuses - including human trafficking and slavery - in the international fishing industry.
- To understand more about how the fish we eat in Hawaii is linked to human rights abuses in the fishing industry.
- To practice drawing connections between global issues and local communities in Hawaii.

ASSIGNMENT

Estimated Time: ~17 min

- Watch: "[US Supply Chain Tainted by Slave-Caught Fish](#)" (5:03)
- Read: "[Hawaiian Seafood caught by foreign crews confined on boats](#)" (~12 min.)

TERMINOLOGY

- **Pier 17 and Pier 38:** Two Honolulu piers at which boats dock with foreign workers from countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Kiribati. These foreign workers are paid poor wages, are subject to human trafficking, and cannot legally come onto the island of Oahu due to their lack of work visas.
- **Human Trafficking:** According to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, actions using "force, fraud, or coercion" to obtain labor. Foreign workers on fishing boats are often victims of human trafficking and are forced to work long hours and perform dangerous work for very low wages.
- **Modern Slavery:** According to the UN, modern slavery is an "umbrella term" which includes forced labor, debt bondage, forced marriage, and human trafficking. Modern slavery essentially refers to the exploitation of people who cannot leave due to threats, violence, coercion, deception, or abuse of power.

KAHOOT QUIZ

- Go to [Kahoot.it](https://kahoot.it) or use the Kahoot mobile app and enter the pin 01896717
- Or, use [this link](#)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What surprised you most in learning about the issue of slavery in the fishing industry?
- According to the AP video, in what ways were the fishermen in Indonesia mistreated and tricked into working on boats? How is this a violation of their human rights?



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (continued)

- What does the process of bringing slave-caught fish to the United States entail? What abuses may happen along this lengthy supply chain, and which countries are involved?
- Why is it difficult for American companies to determine the sources from which their fish come?
- How might American companies hold their foreign subcontractors accountable for treating and paying fishermen ethically? Why might boycotts against foreign companies supplying fish be ineffective?
- How does the experience of the fishermen on the boats that dock in Hawaii differ from the experience of the fishermen in the Indonesian and Thai fishing industry (as highlighted in the AP video)? What do you think are the reasons for this difference?
- Why do foreign workers have to go through such lengthy journeys to come to Honolulu? What loopholes allow these workers to work on boats without permits or visas?
- Why are foreign fishermen not allowed to come beyond the pier once their boats are docked in Honolulu? Why is their inability to come onto shore problematic for their health and well-being?
- Why is the exploitation of foreign workers in boats docked in Honolulu often overlooked by government officials?
- What are some misconceptions about "locally" caught fish in Hawaii? What realities about the mistreatment of foreign fishermen do these misconceptions hide?
- In what ways are the foreign workers on fishing boats in Hawaii victims of human trafficking? What are some ways that employers keep foreign workers committed to fulfilling the entirety of their contracts?
- What does this mean for the poke we like to eat in Hawaii? How does this impact the way you purchase or consume seafood?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [AP Investigation: Slaves May Have Caught The Fish You Bought](#) (~12 min.)
The AP video you watched is based on this article. It is part of a [series of articles by the Associated Press called "Seafood from Slaves,"](#) which won the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service. The articles delve into slavery in the fishing industry in several countries, the rescue of the enslaved fishermen, which companies sell seafood caught by slaves, and more. Highly recommended reading.
- [Slavery at sea: Thai fishing industry turns to trafficking](#) (14:14)
A video by The Guardian that focuses how Rohingya people - already suffering from persecution in Myanmar - are exploited, enslaved, and trafficked in the Thai fishing industry.
- [Is the fishing industry tricking people into slave labor?](#) (6:28)
Slavery in the fishing industry is not limited to Thailand. This video focuses on Indonesian workers trafficked to Somalia then forced to work on Chinese vessels.
- [How slavery and murder goes unpunished on the high seas](#) (6:11)
This interview on PBS highlights human rights issues and environmental degradation that occurs due to lawlessness at sea.



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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (continued)

- [Hidden Chains: Rights Abuses and Forced Labor in Thailand's Fishing Industry](#)
A report by Human Rights Watch - an international non-governmental organization that conducts research and advocacy on human rights - documenting forced labor and other human rights abuses in the Thai fishing industry.
- [Was Your Seafood Caught With Slave Labor? New Database Helps Retailers Combat Abuse](#)
An article from NPR explaining the Seafood Slavery Risk Tool, a database providing corporations with information on the potential risk of slave labor and human rights abuses behind certain seafood purchases.

IDEAS FOR ACTION

Easier

- According to the AP article, authorities in Hawaii are aware that foreign fishermen are prone to human trafficking and thus have put up signs around Pier 17 informing workers of human trafficking hotlines that can help them. Brainstorm other ways authorities can help exploited workers and prevent human trafficking or human rights abuses on boats, short of changing employment laws in Hawaii.
- Learn more: read more of the resources listed in the Additional Resources section, in particular the articles by the Associated Press.
- Read the Associated Press Based on the AP article "[Hawaiian seafood caught by foreign crews confined on boats](#)," trace the journey which foreign workers might take to come to Oahu (assume they are not given visas to come onto U.S. soil and cannot legally fly into Honolulu). Present your map to your class.
 - You can also do this activity with the AP article "[Slaves May Have Caught The Fish You Bought](#)." Starting from Indonesia and the Arafura Sea and ending in the United States, use a map and trace one of the paths fish may take before ending up in American markets.

Medium

- Create a presentation, poster, or PSA to raise consumer awareness about the exploited labor that may be behind consumers' seafood purchases. Present to your classmates and school community to raise awareness about the issue.
- Interview owners at local fish markets and poke shops. Ask them about the ways in which they try to ensure that their fish was caught ethically and locally. Also ask them to explain the challenges to transparency that arise in this process.
- The film *Buoyancy*, directed by Rodd Rathjen, follows the experience of a 14-year-old Cambodian boy who is tricked into working on a Thai fishing boat and becomes a victim of human trafficking. Watch the movie with your class, and discuss its importance in raising awareness of the human trafficking used in the fishing industry today.
 - Learn more about the film in this article by the Guardian, "[Such brutality: tricked into slavery in the Thai fishing industry](#)."



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IDEAS FOR ACTION (continued)

Difficult

- Policy advocacy: research bills in the state legislature on measures to provide greater support to foreign fishermen and prevent human trafficking on fishing boats in Hawaii. Write to your elected officials or submit testimony.

HAWAII CORE STANDARDS FOR SOCIAL STUDIES (HCSSS) LINKS

- Content Standard [SS.WH.8.12.1](#)
- Content Standard [SS.WH.8.7.2](#)
- Content Standard [SS.US.12.16.2](#)
- Content Standard [SS.PID.4.16.3](#)
- Action Projects link to [SS.PID.5.7.1](#)

This lesson was developed by Megan Tagami.