

# Visible but Invisible: Discourses of Slavery in Discussions of Diverse Forms of Exploitation

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## Abstract

The aim of this research is to explore the benefits and limitations of evoking the language of slavery when discussing diverse forms of exploitation. This research questions the effectiveness of homogenizing these exploitations as forms of slavery, as a method of gaining greater understanding of these exploitations. This research argues through the lens of the *'Invisible: Slavery Today'* force of slavery discourse not only conceals an in-depth understanding of these issues but additionally limits the means in which we can address them

## Methodology

Museum Theory  
“Cultural Barometer”  
provides a window into culture  
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spatial and aesthetic analysis

## Research Design

Survey of Existing Scholarship  
Case Study of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center Museum  
*'Invisible: Slavery Today'* exhibit,  
located in Cincinnati, Ohio

## Question

What are the benefits and limitations of the language of slavery when discussing diverse forms of exploitations?



*Interestingly, many of the cases presented in 'Invisible' do not provide a definition of the forms of exploitation they explore, leaving visitors to use their pre-existing knowledge of those issues to reach understanding of what constitutes as that form of slavery.*



## Background of *'Invisible: Slavery Today'* Exhibit

This exhibition is the world's first permanent exhibition on 'modern day slavery'. The design and “feel” of the exhibition is metal and plastic containers - - shipping cartons of human beings. *Invisible* most common forms of exploitation”: forced labor, bonded through various media techniques.

## How We Were Changed

(visitors' responses from the exhibit)  
“buy only fair trade chocolates”  
“learn to LOVE each other”  
“telling all my friends to always go with a safety buddy”

## Conclusion

By discussing the listed exploitations as forms of slavery, it conceals the multi-layered socio-economic causes that are at the root of these exploitations, restricting the way in which the public can engage.