

# Stories of Modern Day Slavery

Contributed by [Religious Action Center](#)

Source: The Story of Modern Day Slavery Haggadah

## Stories of Modern Day Slavery

For two years, twelve Mexican and Guatemalan field workers in south Florida were enslaved by the Navarretes, a family of traffickers. The family beat them, chained them to a pole, and at night, locked them in boxes and truck trailers, with little food and no plumbing, while keeping them in ever-increasing debt. During the day, they were taken to work in the tomato fields of two of the state's biggest growers- Six Ls and Pacific, both members of the Socially Accountable Farm Employers program, SAFE for short, which was created to prevent worker abuse. When their day's work was done, they were taken back to their prison. Finally, one of the workers pounded a hole through the trailer and crawled out; he got a ladder, and helped the others to escape. The Navarretes were arrested and indicted on trafficking charges. They pled guilty, and were sentenced to jail, and ordered to pay their victims \$ 240,000 in restitution. Officials at Six Ls and Pacific could not be reached for comment. The chief Assistant U.S. Attorney on the case, Doug Molloy, called it one of southwest Florida's "ugliest slavery cases ever," and added, "we have a number of similar-and ongoing investigations." And yet, despite the successful prosecution of seven slavery cases involving 1,000 workers, and despite the successful pressure from organizations as Amnesty International USA, until recently,

Governor Crist refused to acknowledge the presence of slavery in Florida's fields.

- Ron Soodalter, *The Slave Next Door*

A group of Thai women were brought to the U.S. and enslaved initially in a series of brothels and massage joints. The customers often didn't realize that the women were enslaved, for they weren't chained and spent much of their time smiling...They may have been promised a job in a restaurant, but they arrive without knowing the language, without any legal status...While you are in this state—dizzy, disoriented—your boss takes you to a place that isn't a restaurant or a factory and tells you to unpack your few belongings in a dingy back room. He tells you that this is where you will work to pay off your debt. You will be a prostitute, he explains, and by the way, you will be charged for room and board while you are paying off that \$30,000. When you protest, he beats you, starves you, or keeps you awake for days on end. Then, just to make himself clear, he holds up a picture of your son or your parents or your sister and tears it in half. Or maybe he just says, "We hear your father has a bad heart."

- Nicholas Kristof, *A Window Into Human Trafficking in Texas*

For more information on human trafficking, please visit [rac.org/human-trafficking](http://rac.org/human-trafficking) .

For all Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism resources, please visit [rac.org/Passover](http://rac.org/Passover).