

Understanding Human Trafficking is Easy as 1, 2, 3

One.

Walk down the street of your neighborhood strip mall and notice the glowing fluorescent lights in the upper windows of the supermarket.

It's open. You go in.

Parade the aisles, full of childhood snacks and lost dreams, nostalgia that elicits *deja vu*.

Wonder when the last time you bought yourself a treat was.

Your favorite snack on the shelf, packaged cleanly in a plastic red wrapping: the infamous KitKat. You had never forgotten the sweet taste of the chocolate and wafers melting in your mouth. Reach for one. But your arm stops, falling limp.

Notice that KitKat has the trademark logo hidden in the upper corner.

Notice Nestle. Notice slavery.

You had heard of that brand in the news recently. Imagery of Cote d'Ivoire farms filled with children picking cocoa beans, their hands raw and faces malnourished, eyes longing for a normal childhood. Imagery of *they never wanted to be there*. Imagery of *they were forced*. You should have known better.

Feel horrified and ashamed that you had forgotten how deep human trafficking roots were. Look with disgust at the product you once ignorantly loved. Understand the origins. Open your eyes to the hidden slavery.

Two.

Go out shopping with your friends at the local mall. Bright advertisements and large sale signs cover the windows of your favorite stores.

Find yourself wandering into H&M, the affordable fast fashion shop. As your friends browse through the thousands of versatile styles, you admire the slim mannequins decked out in bold outfits. Look at the pieces placed neatly next to the models. Trendy blouses and fashionable pants line the walls. Run your hands through one for fun.

Stare at the perfect stitches that hold the piece in its shape. Stare at the work of a Cambodian girl who sews for an unlivable wage in order to support her family, a girl forced to labor overtime illegally in the unsanitary conditions of a dim-lit factory, a girl who had lost her childhood to the corporations. Stare at the sewing of a girl, your own age of 16, and know that it could have been you who was trafficked, the one who was a slave to the factory. Wonder why you had even gone into the H&M.

Guilt. Think of your closet back home and wonder how many of the clothes you have were made by children in enslaved labor who work like that in order to live. Feel disgusted. Grab your friends to leave; understand the repercussions of supporting a brand that uses child labor in unsafe conditions. Instead, shop only at stores that guarantee fair-trade sweatshop-free labor. Research and educate yourself. Open your eyes to the hidden slavery.

Three.

It's a choice to be ignorant. Open your eyes to the hidden slavery.