

Other Dreams of Freedom: Religion, Sex, and Human Trafficking (AAR ACADEMY SER)

Yvonne C. Zimmerman

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Human trafficking has captured worldwide attention as a crucial moral and political issue, but perhaps nowhere more than in the United States. Since they were signed into law in 2000, U.S. federal laws and policies on human trafficking have been understood as concrete expressions of the civic values of personal and political freedom. Yet these policies have also been characterized by a marked preoccupation with regulation, and especially sexual regulation.

Yvonne C. Zimmerman offers a groundbreaking exploration of the relationship between freedom and sexual regulation in American anti-human trafficking law and policies. . She argues that the religious values of American Protestantism have indelibly shaped the federal government's approach to engaging human trafficking, and that the trajectory of the U.S.'s anti-trafficking efforts cannot be fully grasped without understanding the unique ways in which sex, morality, and freedom are connected in Protestant Christian configurations of morality. Zimmerman shows that particularly under the George W. Bush administration, the U.S.'s anti-trafficking project expressed a vision of freedom whose structure and logic is thoroughly Protestant. . Her analysis challenges the assumption that combating human trafficking necessarily entails sexual regulation, and reveals the extent to which the preoccupation with sexual regulation has functioned to discourage alternative understandings and practices of freedom, particularly for women.

Other Dreams of Freedom demonstrates that if opposition to human trafficking takes the promotion of freedom as the point of departure, then freedom must not be identified strictly with religiously and culturally Protestant understandings, but ought also permit other understandings of how freedom is constituted, practiced, and maintained.



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