

ROTARY ACTION GROUP AGAINST SLAVERY

RAGAS NEWSLETTER

<https://ragas.online/>

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LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to the December newsletter! This Rotary year is off to a fantastic start, highlighted by our presence at Zone Institutes, District Conferences, and the remarkable achievements of the world's first RAGAS Interact Club in Quito Ecuador, which will serve as a global model for other Interact clubs.

We are also excited about Rotary International's Convention in Calgary. Our Canadian team is working diligently on several events, including the House of Friendship, breakout sessions, and a special dinner. We expect a significant presence from RAGAS members, and more details will be coming soon.

If you plan to attend the RI Convention, please email kagan1228@gmail.com. Find out more Information about the RI Convention at - <https://convention.rotary.org/en-us/>

Exciting news RAGAS has three articles In Rotary Magazines in December, [Rotary Magazine Ecuador & Peru P.32](#), Naresh bike ride across US to raise awareness and funds [A Bike named Kindness](#) and Rotary magazine in Canada.

Thank you for your support as we work together to end modern slavery.

In Rotary Service,
Chair Dave McCleary

“YOUTH FIGHTING MODERN SLAVERY: THE INSPIRING STORY OF INTERACT QUITO RAGAS”

On October 10, 2019, in the vibrant city of Quito, Ecuador, a groundbreaking initiative was born. The Interact Quito Against Slavery RAGAS Club was founded through a unique partnership between the Rotary Club of Quito and the Rotary Action Group Against Slavery (RAGAS). This visionary alliance marked the establishment of the world’s first pilot cause-based Interact Club, aimed at addressing modern slavery and empowering youth to champion critical global issues.

Operating from the Tomás Moro International School, the club boasts an impressive 50 members. Its mission aligns with Rotary’s seven areas of focus, with a special emphasis on peacebuilding and conflict resolution. By engaging young leaders in raising awareness about modern slavery, the club not only educates but also inspires a new generation of change makers to act against this grave human rights violation.

The Interact Quito RAGAS members have delved deeply into the realities of modern slavery, working closely with foundations that assist child survivors of human trafficking. These eye-opening interactions have given them firsthand exposure to the harsh truths many face daily, igniting a passion to make a difference.

For four consecutive years, the club has proudly participated in CNN’s “My Freedom Day Project,” a global initiative amplifying the fight against slavery. Their impactful efforts have earned recognition from Rotary International, with the club being honored as a “Vibrant Club – Making an Impact Through Service” in the Rotary Learning Center. Additionally, they have received multiple Presidential Citations for their exceptional service work and dedication.

The Interact Quito RAGAS Club is more than just a youth organization; it is a movement. It exemplifies how young people, united by a cause, can drive meaningful change, challenge injustice, and foster a culture of peace. With each initiative, they prove that the fight against modern slavery is not just an adult responsibility—it is a global mission where every voice matters.

This is the story of youth breaking chains, one step at a time, inspiring hope, and building a better future for all.

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=ZFncAwfZPOE&d=n>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1AzTx4vje/?mibextid=UaIRPS>

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=bu63nj7fYjs&>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/v/19h8q8AUny/?mibextid=UaIRPS>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1Q9FHhSDyA/?mibextid=UaIRPS>

“YOUTH FIGHTING MODERN SLAVERY: THE INSPIRING STORY OF INTERACT QUITO RAGAS”



**Cinthia Chediak
Past President
Rotary Club of Quito
RAGAS Board Director
Latin America Coordinator**

“BUILDINGS BRIDGES IN ROTARY” ZONE 33/34

What an inspiring Zone 33/34 Institute in Pittsburgh! Thank you for your leadership, RI President Stephanie, RI Past President John Germ and Berry, and Director Patrick and Past Director John Smarge. It was wonderful to reconnect with old friends and meet new ones. Celebrating World Polio Day with Rotary was truly special. Seeing all the impactful projects and sharing the work of The Rotary Action Group against Slavery was a highlight.

What an inspiring presentation on a human trafficking project in Florida by seven Rotary Districts! Thank you DG Sonya LaBosco, Tomas Lares, and Brittany. The highlight was Brittany sharing her story of courage and faith she truly inspired the audience. We are already making plans to scale this program. I love witnessing the impact of Rotary in action! Find out more about participating with their global grants contact – governorsonya@gmail.com

The Shark Tank idea was fantastic, and all three presentations were incredible!

After an inspiring week of Building Bridges in Pittsburgh at our Zone 33/34 Summit, RI President invited members of our district to her home for a PBR meeting and it was great! She showed off her basement where she cheers on the Steelers and treated us to some local beer & pizza. She reminded us that Rotary doesn't have to be expensive or complicated to join and it should absolutely be fun.

Chair Dave McCleary



“BUILDINGS BRIDGES IN ROTARY” ZONE 33/34



RAGAS REPRESENTED AT DISTRICTS 7610 & 7620 JOINT DISTRICT CONFERENCE IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

RAGAS members iPDG René Laws and DG Amelia Stansell from District 7610, along with RAGAS member DG Nomie Hamid from District 7620 held their first joint District Conference in Washington, D.C. October 4 –6 and RAGAS was well represented.

RAGAS Chairman Dave McCleary from D6900 and board member Cinthia Chediak from D4400 attended to support fellow board member DG Amelia and shared information about RAGAS with the nearly 300 attendees at the RAGAS booth, which was placed near the D7610 District Action Group Against Slavery booth in the House of Friendship. Many productive conversations and meaningful connections were made – more than 30 people signed up for more information on RAGAS and some have already joined us in our efforts!

The opening keynote speaker was former U.S. Ambassador on Human Trafficking, John Cotton Richmond. John's keynote shared an overview of human trafficking/modern slavery from a global and U.S. perspective in an entertaining and educational way. One very haunting slide was a picture of two American buffalo fighting with their heads down and digging in for the next butt in a battle of wills. Over their heads were two sets of words. Environmental Sustainability vs. Human Trafficking. It was an unsettling reality check for Rotarians. We just added the 7th Area of Focus of Environmental Sustainability and he reminded us that many of the resources (lithium, silica, cobalt and more) are sourced from conflict zones and by children and trafficking victims. We are being forced to choose between Environmental Sustainability and Human Rights. Perhaps we need to shift our focus from being the battle of the two buffalo to two mighty rivers joining forces and working together to both save our planet for future generations while maintaining and protecting the lives of our current generation with fair labor practices. The image and message continues to stick with many of us who were in attendance as we wrestle with what RAGAS and ESRAG can do to work together to find common ground and partner with other RAGS such as the new one for Girls Empowerment, Refugees.

Written by: Amelia Stansell

RAGAS REPRESENTED AT DISTRICTS 7610 & 7620 JOINT DISTRICT CONFERENCE IN WASHINGTON, D.C.



DOING OUR PART TO RAISE AWARENESS AND PROVIDE SUPPORT



PROFILE

A bike named Kindness

A shocking encounter gives a wider purpose to a Rotarian's tandem bike treks

Naresh Kumar
Rotary Club of
Guindy, India

Naresh Kumar dismounted his red tandem bike, name Kindness, at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. Thirty-five days earlier, he left Oregon to bike across America, inviting friends and strangers he met along the way to pedal with him for short distances.

The ride was the latest of Kumar's "human-powered adventures." Craving a simpler existence, the ultra distance runner quit his job with a technology company in 2014 and traveled to Nepal to train to hike the length of New Zealand- in sandals.

An encounter while in Nepal changed his life. A man offered to provide him with girls, bragging that his were the youngest. "Almost like a product is being sold, but that product was a vulnerable child," he says. It broke his heart.

Since then, Kummat has embarked on grueling tandem trips, including a more than 5,000 mile ride from India to Germany, to raise awareness and money to fight human trafficking. "In a weird way, the more you suffer, the more people donate," he says. By inviting others to join him on his tandem bike, he can encourage them to advocate as well. He tells them, "Tell me your story, and let's join hands in fighting trafficking together."

His most recent trip, which ended in June, raised about 25,000 for the Rotary Action Group Against Slavery and another organization. Kindness the bike will be auctioned at the 2025 Rotary International Convention in Calgary as a fundraiser.

Kumar keeps in touch with friends he's made on his journeys. "The number of people I had an opportunity to meet, whom otherwise I would have never met, is always my biggest takeaway from all these adventures," he says

Maggie Gigandet



A DELICATE BALANCE WRITTEN BY: MATT FRIEDMAN

It is too sad

Some individuals struggle to confront sad and distressing news, as well as the pressing social issues of our time, including human trafficking. After a talk I gave in Canada, one woman approached me and said: "I didn't like your talk. It made me feel sad and depressed. I wish I hadn't come. The information you shared completely ruined my day. I don't want to feel this way."

Her sentiment is something I've frequently encountered in my talks over the years. Here are two other comments: "When I think about all of the many problems faced by the world, it makes me cringe. I really don't like to face them." "I change the channel whenever I see those kids on the TV in those poor countries. It breaks my heart to witness their suffering."

To avoid dealing with these feelings, many people choose to ignore difficult social issues entirely. I realized that this would be one of my biggest challenges after receiving feedback from dozens of people who read my yet-to-be-published book on the horrors of forced prostitution, "Captive Daughters". Many who started reading it found it difficult to continue past page 67, where a sex trafficking initiation scene unfolds.

Why? They get to this section and the content puts them off. They told me, "It's too sad and depresses me. I don't want to expose myself to something like this."

So here you have someone who is sitting in their living room, on their couch, with the air conditioning on, a cup of coffee in hand, and they can't even face words on a page. Imagine if one of us were on the receiving end of this problem. Shouldn't such a horrific reality spur us to act?

I agree that the topic of human slavery is difficult. It showcases the worst aspects of humanity: rape, torture, abuse, pain, suffering, oppression, despair, and early death. There really is no way to soften this reality. The same applies to all other global issues. Poverty, hunger, disease, and inequality are all harsh and challenging topics to confront.

To address these issues, we must understand, empathize, and act. We must be motivated to take action despite our discomfort. We must understand the disturbing facts and take action. More than 50 million slaves around the world are crying out: "Where are you?" We must respond to them.

Reflecting on the past, I've come to realize that those of us fighting against slavery may have inadvertently contributed to the problem. Our graphic information and messages may have alienated some individuals. A closed mind cannot help those who are suffering, leading to missed opportunities. We should consider offering a more subtle approach to raising awareness for those who would appreciate it.

We need to strike a delicate balance between informing people about the horrors of injustice while at the same time suggesting things they can do to help.

RAGAS SOCIAL MEDIA

RAGAS communication

You can receive the information by following us on social media!

- [RAGAS Facebook](#)
- [RAGAS LinkedIn](#)
- [RAGAS Twitter](#)
- [RAGAS Instagram](#)
- [RAGAS YouTube](#)

TAKE ACTION

We are not defined by who we are, but by our actions. To contribute to ending modern slavery, you can:

- Become a RAGAS member from [here](#).
- Donate to RAGAS, or organisations working on ending modern slavery.
- [Contact your local Coordinator](#) to volunteer for RAGAS.
- Invite a RAGAS speaker to your local club meeting to talk about modern slavery.
- Initiate a Global Grant project to fight against modern slavery.

Engage with Rotary District and clubs that are dedicated to ending modern slavery, including:

- District 5950 [Rotary eClub to End Human Trafficking](#),
- District 5710 [Rotary eClub of Community Action Against Human Trafficking](#),
- District 5280 [Rotarians Fighting Human Trafficking](#)
- District 5810 [Rotary Satellite Club of Greenville to End Human Trafficking](#)
- District 1260 [Ware Rotary Satellite Club Rotary for Slave Free Communities](#)
- District 5030 [The Pacific Northwest Ending Sex Trafficking](#)
- District 5840 [To Combat Human Trafficking](#).
- District 5710 [Ending Forced Organ Harvesting RSC of CAAHT](#)
- District 6000 [Prevent Human Trafficking Action Team](#)
- District 6420 [Task Force Against Human Trafficking](#).
- District 5170 [Rotary Vietnam Project](#)

**To submit a potential article for for an upcoming newsletter.
Please email the editor Ashley Aiken at:
ashley.rotarytoendht@gmail.com**



LOOKING FOR A WAY OUT?
帮助您的方法 ¿ESTÁS BUSCANDO UNA SALIDA? ¿NECESITAS AYUDA?
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or Text "Help" to 233733 (BeFree)
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IT HAPPENS HERE IN IOWA or Text "iowahelp" to 20121
Iowa Network Against Human Trafficking & Slavery
www.iowanah.org Rotary

This is a sticker created by the Rotary District 6000 Prevent Human Trafficking Action Team. For more information or questions, contact RAGAS Board member Dr. George Belitsos at gbelitsos55@gmail.com

Merry Christmas & Happy Holidays