

## **Student Testimonies**

*"A summer UTRA supported research for my honor's senior thesis, which explored the inherent racial bias in the policing of Latinx migrants in the of combatting human trafficking. This work paved the way for my first job out of college as the Investigative Analyst on Human Trafficking at the Manhattan District Attorney's Office,"*

**Dayana Tvarez**

Ethnic Studies Concentrator '2018

*"I first connected with the HTRC as a sophomore and helped with data collection and analysis for the collaborative research surveys with COYOTE RI. My thesis discussed the impacts of policing on sex worker access to health resources.. Currently, as a second year medical student at Brown, I have led efforts within the HTRC to create the state's first licensed continuing medical education certificate around human trafficking and sex worker's rights for RI doctors."*

**Julianna Brown**

Health and Human Biology Concentrator  
'2018; Warren Alpert Medical School '2022

# **HUMAN TRAFFICKING RESEARCH CLUSTER**



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**SLAVERY  
& JUSTICE**

# ABOUT THE HTRC

Directed by Manning Assistant Professor of American Studies and Ethnic Studies, Dr. Elena Shih, the Human Trafficking Research Cluster (HTRC) was established at the Center for the Study of Slavery & Justice in 2015. HTRC aims to foster collaborative critical inquiry into the study of human trafficking, as well as to cultivate an intersectional framework that acknowledges the ways in which race, class, gender, nation, and sexual forms of power and inequality govern contemporary anti-trafficking efforts. Since its inception the HTRC has supported undergraduate and graduate research while simultaneously maintaining community partnerships with Providence-based and global migrant and sex worker rights organizations. These relationships have produced research and policy documents, and have elevated public discussions on the ethics of human trafficking studies, the role of local and international governmental policy, and have explored innovative solutions to reporting and stopping labor abuse. Dr. Shih is the recipient of the 2020 Howard R. Swearer Engaged Faculty Award for Research.



## RESEARCH PROJECTS

### *Policing Modern Day Slavery in Rhode Island: Sex Trafficking and Sex Workers Rights*

Since 2015, the HTRC has prioritized engaged scholarship with COYOTE (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics) RI, the state's only sex worker rights organization. Together, they co-led a community based research team that has investigated sex workers rights amidst a changing climate of sexual labor politics. In 2019, COYOTE RI and HTRC were successful in introducing a historic Rhode Island House Bill to study the impact of the 2009 decriminalization of indoor prostitution in the state.

### *Worker Voice and Worker Organizing in Global Supply Chains*

In 2017, the HTRC was awarded a research grant from the British Academy's funding scheme on Tackling Slavery, Human Trafficking, and Forced Labour in Modern Business. With the Issara Institute, a Thailand-based non profit organization, the HTRC conducted research on the impacts of new mobile phone applications that hope to enable better monitoring and evaluation of labor abuse in factories across Asia and Latin America. The research findings suggest that tech-driven approaches to supply chain management must partner with a suite of worker-centred organizations so that new streams of funding do not displace 'traditional' labor organizing as they work with the private sector to combat labor abuse.



### *Whitewashing Abolition: Race, Displacement and Combating Human Trafficking*

Whitewashing Abolition questions the effortless ubiquity of the "Modern Day Slavery" metaphor as a scholarly and political agenda that has co-opted and erased histories of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and contemporary organizing against racialized state violence. Since 2017, the HTRC has invited a wide range of activists, scholars, survivors, workers, and organizers to campus to speak with students and the local community. These diverse voices--including student essays--have resulted in an edited volume, *The Racism and Coloniality of Anti-Trafficking*, co-edited by Elena Shih and Kamala Kempadoo, to be published by Routledge in 2021.