

# The New Gendered Plundering of Africa



# The New Gendered Plundering of Africa:

*Nigerian Prostitution in Italy*

By

Carmela Grillone

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*To Ninni Cassarà, my beloved uncle.*

*We walk the path of your ideas, which are much  
more powerful than guns*



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Who Represents Women in Prostitution? .....	xv
Acknowledgements .....	xvii
List of Acronyms and Abbreviations.....	xix
Preface .....	xx
Introduction and Main Argument .....	xxi
Background.....	xxii
Materials and Methods.....	xxvi
Terminology and Ideology.....	xxviii
Book Structure: The Road to Freedom .....	xxxii
Foreword .....	xxxiii
Chapter One.....	1
The Girls' Voices: Fact-finding	
Nigerian Girls' Autobiographies	
About the stories: sex workers or prostituted? .....	1
1.1 Life story of Ifunanya: how music saved my life.....	2
1.2 Life story of Abigail: my client-saviour.....	6
1.3 Life story of Blessing: Italy is only prostitution .....	8
1.4 Life story of Favour: a child sold by her own mum.....	10
1.5 Life story of Annabelle: from skid row to university.....	12
1.6 Life story of Grace: deceived by Reception Centre's manager.....	14
1.7 Life story of Mary: saved by Facebook .....	15
1.8 Life story of Jessica: the anchors of the police and the mobile unit..	18
1.9 Life story of Olabisi: what is asylum???	21
1.10 Cynthia: my baby saved me .....	24
1.11 Mimi: innocence on the road .....	24
1.12 Sonia: social isolation from Turin to Copenhagen.....	25
1.13 Ruth: from the Italian rescue industry to Copenhagen.....	25
1.14 Nigerian human trafficking hubs in Italy .....	26
1.15 Nigerians in Sicily: statistical data.....	28
1.16 Nigerians in Palermo: statistical data .....	31
1.17 Nigerian female UFM's living in Sicily.....	33
1.18 UFM's denied rights.....	35
1.19 Rights of women, children, migrants in international law .....	36

Chapter Two .....	42
Migration	
Introduction.....	42
Migration: a situational vulnerability .....	42
A. Legal Framework on Migration .....	45
2.1 International LF .....	45
2.2 European LF: migration and vulnerabilities.....	48
2.3 National LF: Italy - TUI 1998 .....	48
2.4 National LF: Nigeria - IA 2015.....	49
B. Institutional Framework .....	49
2.5 European diplomatic missions to Nigeria: service externalization & trade in European visas .....	49
2.6 EU agreements with transit countries .....	50
C. Exodus to the Promised Land.....	51
Origin country: Nigeria.....	51
2.7 Ethnic groups: what do we mean by Nigeria and Nigerian? .....	51
2.8 Political and economic foundations of Nigeria: Royal Niger Company's firstborn.....	52
2.9 Historical roots of the Edoland .....	53
2.10 Socio-political, demographic and health profile of the Naira land.....	54
2.11 Edo State today .....	55
2.12 Family law in Edo Culture: de facto and de iure.....	57
Recruitment: entry route into prostitution .....	57
2.13 Push Factors .....	57
2.14 Pull Factors .....	61
2.15 Gender comparison: decision power differentials.....	62
2.16 Geographical origin of the girls .....	62
2.17 Families of origin.....	63
2.18 Mothers or stepmothers.....	65
2.19 A family affair: who are the recruiters .....	65
2.20 Main enticement methods: how they recruit .....	66
2.21 Places: where traffickers recruit.....	67
2.22 Migratory pact: the oath.....	70
2.23 Guarantor of oath-taking: Ayelala .....	71
2.24 Juju: a fear-based strategy.....	71
2.25 Legislative and Spiritual Punishment of Witchdoctors.....	72
Journey: the Black Road .....	74
2.26 Trafficking route: transportation and stopovers .....	74
2.27 Nigeria: the kingdom of bribes and counterfeit documents .....	74
2.28 Niger: a migration-based economy .....	75



2.29 Libya: No man's land.....	78
2.30 Death and hazards in the Sahara .....	79
2.31 Connection houses .....	79
2.32 Rape .....	79
2.33 Hawala: untraceable value transfer .....	80
2.34 Mediterranean crossing and SAR.....	80
Arrival: the "Promised Land" .....	83
2.35 Nigerian women arrivals.....	83
2.36 Nigerian teenagers arrivals.....	85
2.37 Port: identification of trafficked girls.....	86
2.38 The port: false relationships .....	89
2.39 Bus transfer: 1 <sup>st</sup> escape.....	89
2.40 The day after. Reception Centres: 2 <sup>nd</sup> escape.....	89
2.41 Mineo Camp: the girls' big warehouse .....	90
2.42 UFM in Palermo: Casa "Il Giardino" .....	92
D. Concerns .....	93
2.43 Denied rights at Fortress Europe: port and Reception Centres ....	93
2.44 UFM: legal guardianship.....	96
2.44.1 Sicily: pioneer in UFM legal guardianship.....	96
2.45 UFM: age determination.....	98
2.46 Reception Centres or prostitution warehouses .....	98
 Chapter Three .....	 100
Prostituted: Best Before Adulthood .....	
Introduction.....	100
A. Legal Framework on Prostitution.....	102
3.1 International LF .....	102
3.2 EU LF: present divergence, future convergence.....	103
3.3 National LF: Nigeria .....	105
3.4 National LF: Italy.....	106
B. Institutional Framework .....	109
3.5 International Institutional Framework.....	109
3.6 Nigerian diplomatic mission to Italy .....	109
C. Nigerian Prostitution in Palermo .....	110
3.7 Arrival at the madam's house .....	110
Criminal Context.....	111
3.8 The Republic of Ballarò or "Little Nigeria".....	111
3.9 "PIZZO": The Sicilian protection money .....	112
3.10 Nigerian/Sicilian mafia and masonry.....	112
3.11 The drugs – prostitution link .....	114
Girls .....	115

3.12 Girls profile or “the Benin City oil” .....	115
3.13 Identity: name and age .....	116
3.14 Facebook profiles.....	119
3.15 Language.....	119
3.16 Wig use .....	119
3.17 Make-up and skin bleaching .....	120
3.18 Housing.....	121
3.19 Contraception.....	121
3.20 Nollywood .....	121
3.21 Music and dance .....	122
3.22 The sea and its magic.....	123
Money .....	123
3.23 Economy of Slavery.....	123
3.24 African Churches or the Gold Mine.....	125
3.25 Mapping Nigerian outdoor prostitution in Palermo: workplaces ..	126
3.26 Working hours .....	131
3.27 Career: from victims to victimizers.....	132
3.28 Mobility .....	132
Health.....	133
3.29 Health.....	133
3.30 Physical health: injuries .....	133
3.31 Physical health: illnesses.....	134
3.32 Abortion: a free choice?.....	134
3.33 Psychological health: ignored traumas.....	136
3.34 Ethno-psychiatry .....	137
3.35 Spiritual or Psychiatric Illnesses .....	138
Documents .....	139
3.36 Documents or how to be legally exploited.....	139
3.37 The business of documents or the role of Italian lawyers in the exploitation business .....	140
3.38 Documents for sale: hospitality.....	141
Control and coercion means.....	142
3.39 Coercion means.....	142
3.40 The telephone or the madam’s <i>longa manus</i> .....	143
3.41 Truth depends on context.....	144
3.42 Punishments .....	145
Final Exploiters.....	145
3.43 The final exploiter: eyes without a face .....	145
3.44 Taxi drivers and “papagiros” .....	147
Outputs of prostitution .....	148
3.45 In Nigeria: remittances and real estate speculation .....	148

3.46 In Italy: money laundering in legal businesses .....	149
D. Concerns .....	149
3.47 Madams: possible indicators .....	149
3.48 Socio-spatial exclusion .....	150
3.49 Second-hand market.....	151
3.50 Women and sex exploitation.....	151
3.51 Prostitution: the oldest profession in the world? a necessary evil? .....	152
3.52 Agency, choice and consent.....	153
3.53 Definition of exploitation.....	156
3.54 Prostitution (of others) .....	158
3.55 Sexual Slavery .....	158
3.56 Dignity: the UN & the EU .....	158
3.57 Gender equality index.....	160
3.58 Gender equality through gender mainstreaming .....	162
Chapter Four.....	164
Prosecution	
Introduction.....	164
A. Legal Framework on Human Trafficking .....	166
4.1 International LF .....	166
4.2 European LF .....	167
4.3 National LF: Italy.....	167
4.4 National LF: Nigeria .....	169
B. Institutional / Policy Framework.....	170
4.5 International Institutional Framework: UNODC .....	170
4.6 National Institutional Framework: the Anti-trafficking National Plan in Italy .....	171
4.7 “Crimmigration”: Nigerian manhunting in Italy.....	172
4.8 NAPTIP: Prosecution Powers.....	173
C. Justice.....	173
Password: Impunity .....	174
4.9 Corruption in Italy and Nigeria.....	174
4.10 Italy: a criminal paradise.....	174
4.11 Palermo: capital of human trafficking or of the human trafficking Protocol? .....	176
Trafficking case law in Italy .....	178
4.12 Case law in Italy.....	178
4.13 Trafficking: an under-reported crime.....	179
4.14 Art. 416-bis: Mafia-Like Associations.....	181
4.15 Statistics of Italian investigations .....	182

4.16 Convictions of Nigerians in Italy .....	182
Trafficking case law in Nigeria.....	185
4.17 Case law in Nigeria.....	185
4.18 Conviction of women in Sub-Saharan Africa .....	186
4.19 Convictions in Nigeria .....	187
Trafficking case law: European Court of Human Rights.....	188
4.20: ECHR: Case L.E. v. Greece.....	188
D. Concerns .....	188
4.21 Trafficking: conviction statistics.....	188
4.22 Trafficking crime: the punitive challenge .....	189
4.23 Underage vs. adult prostitution .....	191
4.24 Waithood.....	192
4.25 Sex crimes.....	192
4.26 Pecuniary sanctions of final exploiters in Italy: the case of Florence.....	193
4.27 Pecuniary sanctions of final exploiters in Italy: the case of Palermo .....	193
Chapter Five .....	195
Protection	
Introduction.....	195
A. Legal Framework: Instruments for Victims .....	196
5.1 International LF: Palermo Protocol.....	196
5.2 European LF: CoE Convention 2005.....	196
5.3 Italy: A pioneering country in short and long-term protection.....	198
5.3.1 Art. 13 .....	198
5.3.2 Art. 18 .....	198
5.4 Nigerian LF.....	199
B. Institutional/Policy Framework.....	200
5.5 International Institutional Framework: UN (in)coherence .....	200
5.6 International Institutional Framework: IOM.....	200
5.7 International: UNODC.....	201
5.8 States' liability: Italy and Nigeria (a peer scenario?).....	201
5.9 Protection Policies in Italy .....	201
5.10 Protection Policies in Nigeria: NAPTIP.....	201
5.11 The institution of asylum .....	202
5.12 Asylum in Italy .....	204
5.13 Asylum in Sweden and Denmark.....	205
C. The Right to Exit Prostitution .....	206
Tools to Exit.....	206
5.14 Outreach Activities .....	206

5.15 The mobile outreach unit in Palermo .....	207
5.16 Toll-free numbers: between theory and reality .....	208
5.17 Reflection period.....	209
Sheltering or rescue industry?.....	210
5.18 Anti-trafficking NGOs in Nigeria .....	210
5.19 Anti-trafficking NGOs in Sicily: between saying and doing .....	210
5.20 Census of main shelters in Sicily .....	211
5.21 Shelters for victims: two opposite views.....	211
5.22 Training provided by shelters .....	213
5.23 Escape from shelters .....	213
Best practices in protection.....	214
5.24 Anti-trafficking institutions in Northern Europe.....	214
Compensation .....	216
5.25 Compensation in Italy .....	216
5.26 Compensation in Nigeria .....	216
5.27 Compensation in Sweden.....	217
Repatriation.....	217
5.28 Repatriation: a comparative analysis .....	217
5.29 Non-refoulement .....	219
D. Concerns .....	220
5.30 Re-integration: a lucky case or best practice?.....	220
5.31 Uncoordinated NGOs' "coordination".....	220
5.32 Anti-trafficking and anti-mafia .....	222
5.33 Harm reduction or harm elimination? .....	223
Chapter Six .....	225
Results: The Human Rights Market	
6.1. The Swedish model.....	225
6.2. Human Illiteracy and The Generalized "OTHER".....	227
6.3. The sex sector is born .....	228
6.4. Universal truths: 50 shades of grey.....	230
6.5. Private property: the commoditization of the human being .....	231
6.6. Buying a Right or Human Rights for Sale .....	233
6.7. Human Monetization .....	233
6.8. Sex workers or pimps trade unions.....	234
6.9. The Mcdonaldization of sex or the fast sex industry.....	235
6.10. NGOization of Human Rights.....	237
6.11 The paradox of a gendered battle .....	241
6.12. Distance creation: crossing mental borders.....	241
6.13 Privatizing suffering.....	242
6.14 Redefining slavery and forced prostitution .....	243

6.15 Nigeria: The Baby Farm Country .....	244
6.16 Outreach: The Proximization Theory.....	245
6.17 Italy And The Sex Market.....	246
6.18 Vulnerability .....	247
6.19 Regulating or Abolishing? .....	247
Conclusions .....	249
Annex I.....	253
Reference to selected fieldwork data	
Annex II.....	258
List of Illustrations	
Bibliography .....	260
Legal Instruments.....	285
Case Law .....	286
Endnotes .....	288

# WHO REPRESENTS WOMEN IN PROSTITUTION?

## **Survivors of Prostitution and Trafficking Manifesto**

Press Conference – European Parliament, Brussels, 17 October 2005

We, the survivors of prostitution and trafficking gathered at this press conference today, declare that prostitution is violence against women.

Women in prostitution do not wake up one day and “choose” to be prostitutes. It is chosen for us by poverty, past sexual abuse, the pimps who take advantage of our vulnerabilities, and the men who buy us for the sex of prostitution.

Prostitution is sexual exploitation, one of the worst forms of women’s inequality, and a violation of any person’s human rights.

Many women in prostitution have been severely injured, some have died, and some have been murdered by their pimps and customers.

Physical violence, rape and degradation are often inflicted on us by customers, pimps, recruiters, police and others who gain from prostitution. The public either judges us as “whores” or thinks we make a lot of money.

The condition of women in prostitution is worsened by laws and policies that treat us as criminals and the scum of society, while customers, pimps, managers and sex business owners are not made accountable. Our condition is also made worse by giving licenses to prostitution enterprises and legal protection to pimps, customers and the sex industry.

Most women are drawn into prostitution at a young age. The average age of entrance into prostitution worldwide is 13. Victims of prostitution and trafficking have almost no resources to help them exit. Programs that provide alternatives for women in prostitution are very few.

Women in prostitution dream of a life free from oppression, a life that is safe, and a life where we can participate as citizens, and where we can exercise our rights as human beings, not as “sex workers”.

We, survivors from Belgium, Denmark, Korea, the UK and the United States declare:

1. Prostitution must be eliminated. Thus, it should not be legalized or promoted.

2. Trafficked and prostituted women need services to help them create a future outside of prostitution, including legal and fiscal amnesty, financial assistance, job training, employment, housing, health services, legal advocacy, residency permits, and cultural mediators and language training for victims of international trafficking.

3. Women in prostitution need governments to punish traffickers, pimps and men who buy women for prostitution and to provide safety and security from those who would harm them.

4. Stop arresting women and arrest the perpetrators of trafficking and prostitution.

5. Stop police harassment of women in prostitution and deportation of trafficked women.

6. Prostitution is not “sex work,” and sex trafficking is not “migration for sex work.” Governments should stop legalizing and decriminalizing the sex industry and giving pimps and buyers legal permission to abuse women in prostitution.

As survivors of prostitution and trafficking, we will continue to strengthen and broaden our unity, help any woman out of prostitution, and work with our allies to promote the human rights of victims of trafficking and prostitution.<sup>1</sup>



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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>APG23</b>	Associazione Papa Giovanni XXIII, Italian NGO
<b>CIE</b>	Centro Identificazione ed Espulsione (Identification and Expulsion Centre)
<b>CARA</b>	Centro di Accoglienza per Richiedenti Asilo (Asylum Seekers Reception Centre)
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
<b>DDA</b>	Direzione Distrettuale Antimafia (District Anti-Mafia Directorate)
<b>DNA</b>	Direzione Nazionale Antimafia (National Anti-Mafia Directorate)
<b>ECHR</b>	European Court of Human Rights
<b>HTSE</b>	Human Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation
<b>ICC</b>	International Criminal Court
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>ISTAT</b>	Istituto Nazionale di Statistica (Italian National Institute for Statistics)
<b>LF</b>	Legal Framework
<b>NAPTIP</b>	National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>PTSD</b>	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
<b>SPA</b>	Sex Purchase Act
<b>UFMs</b>	Unaccompanied Foreign Minors
<b>UNICRI</b>	United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drug and Crime

## PREFACE

The following field research, triggered by an educated guess and then grounded on ethnographic strategies, intends to be an eyewitness account, resulting not only from a participative observation but from four years of full immersion in and somehow social integration into the world of the sexual exploitation of Nigerian girls in Palermo, which started in October 2014 and is still ongoing. During this timespan I have personally met approximately 230 girls in many different places in Palermo: the port upon migrants' disembarkation; on the road as a member of the Mobile Outreach Unit for Nigerian Girls; several short-term emergency centres and long-term Reception Centres for underage and adult migrants; refugee camps; shelters for human trafficking victims; hospitals; lawyers' offices; the premises of NGOs, such as Caritas and Centro Astalli; African churches; Ballarò (the Nigerian ghetto); and Pagliarelli jail, which is Palermo's main prison.

Most fieldwork was undertaken in Sicily using heuristic techniques and qualitative methods. Each interview was conducted in a manner appropriate for its setting. The perspective adopted to describe the data collected follows both the emic (insider's viewpoint) and etic (observer's viewpoint) approaches, hence the researcher's outlook may at times overlap the girls'. Intuitions, at times, paved the road for shortcuts or identified starting points for further research. The overall goal of this work is to offer an innovative emic view on migrants' sexual exploitation, backed by empirical evidence, which will contribute to the epistemological advancement of a long term holistic vision of human rights and recognition of the supremacy of human dignity over any individualistic interpretation of human rights. The significance of this research is also to be appraised in empirical terms, with regard to policy-making and defining lines of action in contrasting human trafficking.

This investigation has already contributed to the creation of the following international and national media reports on Nigerian child and adult sexual exploitation in Italy:

**Redattore Sociale, Italy**

Prostitution And Slavery, The Outreach Mobile Unit Volunteers Facebook Page<sup>2</sup>

Newsagency article published on 24/7/2015

**Avvenire, Italy**

Refoulement Operations: Nigerian Women Alert<sup>3</sup>

Newspaper article published on 27/10/2015

**Financial Times, UK**

The Long And Dangerous Road To Slavery<sup>4</sup>

Videoreport published on 3/12/2015

**Rai News, Italy**

The New Slaves, From Nigeria To Europe<sup>5</sup>

Videoreport published on 14/2/2016

**Sky, Italy**

Drug Trafficking And Sex Trafficking: Nigerian Mafia In Italy<sup>6</sup>

Videoreport published on 9/3/2016

**UNICEF**

The Invisible: Investigative Report On Unaccompanied Foreign Minors In Italy<sup>7</sup>

Videoreport published on 21/12/2016.

## **Introduction and main argument**

Transnational Human Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation (HTSE),<sup>8</sup> the component which makes up the bulk of contemporary prostitution in the Minority World,<sup>9</sup> is a gross violation of non-derogable fundamental human rights and nullifies the person's *status libertatis*.

The coincidence between human trafficking for sexual exploitation and prostitution is not a necessary condition: not all prostitution can be labelled as sex trafficking. However, this research intends to demonstrate that there is a causal and necessary link between HTSE and prostitution. HTSE is not sex trafficking, as sex cannot be trafficked without trafficking the person in his/her entirety. It is, rather, the maximum expression of objectification, gender-based violence, commoditization, discrimination, human monetization, slavery, debasement of sexuality, deprivation of sexual freedom, humiliation and dehumanization, besides shedding a light

on the increasing relational difficulties of men. Most of these features connote prostitution too.

The limited success of international and national efforts in eradicating the profound injustices linked to HTSE registered since 2000, the year in which the UN Trafficking Protocol<sup>10</sup> was adopted, might be due, *inter alia*, to the huge definitory problem of “trafficking”<sup>11</sup> and, as a consequence, to the partial recognition of the direct nexus that links prostitution with trafficking. The failure to recognize prostitution as the leading causal factor of HTSE prevents the authorities from effectively addressing this devastating yet tolerated and normalized contemporary abuse. States proved to be recalcitrant in committing to eradicating human trafficking when the changes proposed were not in their interest.

Putting “sex workers” and “victims of trafficking” at the same level instils the doubt that reality would mirror an equal distribution of women between the two artificially distinguished phenomena. Based on a 90% coincidence between both prostitution and migration (TAMPEP)<sup>12</sup> and prostitution and HTSE (Scelles Foundation)<sup>13</sup> in many countries including Italy, this research discusses the current strong connection between these two phenomena and the disincarnation of human rights, minors, poverty, slavery, criminality, exploitation, violence, private suffering, permanent harm, gender inequality, dignity, integrity and agency erosion. The abuse of those in a position of vulnerability described by the EU in this respect is enlightening:

any situation in which the person involved has no real and acceptable alternative to submitting to the abuse.<sup>14</sup>

The crosscutting element of both prostitution and HTSE is money, which is simultaneously an indispensable tool for survival in our capitalist society and a generating cause of corruption and exploitation.

## Background

This study responds to the request made by the 2014 “Resolution of the European Parliament on sexual exploitation and prostitution and its impact on gender equality” for further studies on patterns of prostitution, human trafficking and sex tourism in the European Union.<sup>15</sup> The gender dimension has a preponderant role in this analysis because

prostitution and forced prostitution are gendered phenomena with a global dimension (...) with the vast majority of prostituted persons being women and under-age females, and almost all buyers being men.<sup>16</sup>

It draws on the conclusions of the Resolution identifying prostitution as a

cause and a consequence of gender inequality, which it aggravates, further.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to literature, this research is based on evidence from both my fieldwork and statistical data from EU institutions, bodies and offices (Parliament, Commission, Europol, Eurostat, Court of Human Rights), UN organizations (IOM, UNODC, UNICRI, UNICEF), Istat (Italian National Statistics Institute), as well as both the Italian and Nigerian Ministries of Justice, Interior, Gender and Social Policies.

The aim is to open a global debate on the current strong link between migration and prostitution<sup>18</sup> on the basis of the reality observed in Palermo in the timespan 2014-2018. The main three elements emerging from the analysis are criminality, poverty and exploitation. The research will elaborate on the way the mafia-like exploitation system works.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century represents our turning point: it is the beginning of the “modern slavery era”.<sup>19</sup> My research demonstrates how the Nigerian and Italian mafia set up a money-making system able to elude the law hitherto by taking advantage firstly of Libya’s instability, secondly of Italian evergreen illegal markets, and thirdly of an upsurge in massive migratory movements of people escaping to Europe from hunger and war in Africa.

The legal framework on prostitution is still incomplete at both the national and international levels and needs to be calibrated in the context of the current reality of crime and migration. The mafia’s great flexibility enables it to take advantage of gaps in national and international law. In order to meet the current needs, Italy could explore the possibility of fully or partially adopting the model proposed by the Swedish Sex Purchase Act, *mutatis mutandis*.

Nigeria, which currently ranks 23<sup>rd</sup> in the world for modern slavery, is at the same time a source, transit and destination country for sexual exploitation, while Italy plays the roles of both transit and especially destination country.<sup>20</sup>

As official UN data suggest, Italy represents the preferred destination of the Nigerian sexual exploitation market;<sup>21</sup> estimates point to 26,500 sexually exploited Nigerian girls in the country in the decade from 2000-2009.<sup>22</sup> According to Caritas, however, the numbers may be even higher. The aid agency, relying also on the work of its mobile outreach units, calculates that the total number of victims of sexual exploitation is 25,000-30,000 per year, i.e. a total of 250,000-300,000 per decade.<sup>23</sup> Nigerians are said to comprise at least 41% of all the sexually exploited.<sup>24</sup>

Sicily plays a major role in the sexual exploitation ring involving Nigerian migrants, and not only because it is the headquarters of both the Italian and the Nigerian mafias. The cooperation between Cosa Nostra (Sicilian mafia) and the two organizations known as Black Axe and Eiye (Nigerian mafia) represents the starting point for the sexual exploitation of Nigerian girls (minors as well as adults). The Nigerian mafia is in charge of deceptively recruiting (mostly illiterate) young girls in the rural areas of Nigeria's Edo State, while the Italian (more specifically, Sicilian) mafia has the task of guaranteeing "protection" to girls in its territory. As in the case of the Nigerian "Oba", King of Benin, who used to own all the land of his kingdom, the Sicilian mafia "owns" and thus rents its territory to the Nigerian criminal network.

Social and cultural degradation, along with the limited institutional presence of the Italian State in many neighbourhoods of the city of Palermo, contributed to the creation of what I call the "Republic of Ballarò", an outlaw area in the heart of the city, ruled as a joint venture by the Nigerian and Sicilian mafias.

It is in this context of broad public tolerance/indifference, intense criminal activity and legal vacuum that the Nigeria-Italy transnational sexual exploitation market flourishes.

My research shows how the new "Slave Coast" (Sicily) is becoming the protagonist of an unprecedented gendered migration wave, resembling the ancient "Slave Coast", where West Africans were traded to work in the New World's American plantations. The Edo land is being largely deprived of its youngest energies for the second time in history, but contrary to the transatlantic slave trade, this 21<sup>st</sup> century slavery is paradoxically characterized and fuelled by the search for freedom. The African view of abundance as a sign of God's blessing and benevolence is being transformed in some cases into the idolatry of Western wealth, to be obtained at all costs, even the loss of life itself.

The recruitment phase of the new sex slaves in Nigeria (in particular in the Edo State) is entrusted to a wide range of pastors, shopkeepers and lawyers. The offer consists of a well-paid job in caregiving or entertainment (never described in detail, *videlicet* prostitution) in Italy. After this vague offer, the girl commits herself to repaying the money for the trip (debt bondage) to the "benefactor/sponsor" (the madam). Colluders of this system are the native doctors (also known as babalawos, witchdoctors or healers) celebrating voodoo rituals – which use the girls' hair and nails – to seal the pact and coerce their will.

After an exploitation period in the Libyan "connection houses" (brothels) and a dangerous journey through the Mediterranean, Nigerian



girls (37-46% of whom are Unaccompanied Foreign Minors)<sup>25</sup> arrive on the Sicilian coasts with a burden of debt ranging from 20,000 to 80,000 euros to be repaid by “working” as prostitutes for a period that ranges from 3 to 7 years.<sup>26</sup> According to the UN, 80% of Nigerian female migrants coming by boat are likely to be trafficked into prostitution.<sup>27</sup>

As Art. 3 (right to integrity) of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (a.k.a. The Nice Charter) asserts, commercializing body parts is strictly forbidden. What about commercializing human beings?

In my view, the semantic shades of expressions such as “sex market”, “client”, “prostitute”, or “sex work” intend to ideologically suggest a detachment of the human being from his/her body. My question is whether it is possible to separate a person from his/her main biological characteristic, which is sex.

I will try to reply to this question throughout my whole study by trying to adopt a holistic approach to the human being. A holistic approach to the human being intends to address the human being through a multidimensional (physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual) lens, which takes into consideration the common aspiration for happiness to be reached through the full enjoyment of all human rights. An analysis of the phenomenon in the light of human rights may help to consider these girls as human beings in their entirety, integrity and therefore dignity.

I believe that the Sicilian micro-reality can mirror the global scenario by showing the unequal wealth distribution, power asymmetries and poverty-perpetuating international policies that disguise themselves as development cooperation programs. The crosscutting belief in “money-theism”, ascribable especially to capitalist countries, seems to have become the only objective and moral standard, to which human rights have to conform and, above all, have to confirm.

I argue that it is too simplistic to say that prostitution is a choice. Can prostitution be considered as a choice whenever it entails an abuse of the rich towards the poor, whites towards blacks, adults towards adolescents, citizens towards immigrants, the socially integrated towards the socially isolated, the free towards the exploited? Does the abusive and exploitative behaviour of the final exploiters result from a mere, simple caprice or from a right? If this behaviour results from a right we must admit that the rich are the only fortunate holders of human rights.

If prostitution were a choice why would it be accompanied by deception, violence, poverty and coercion? Why is prostitution in the hands of criminals in all countries, regardless of legalization or prohibition?

Should we fight for the right of women to do what they want with their body? My belief is that we all have to. There is no doubt. To fight for what women want. Not for what men want from them.

I fully support Clarke's view, outlined below, throughout my research.

Inconvenient statistics, feral facts like the average life expectancy of prostitutes, the average age of induction into prostitution, the average income of prostitutes, and so forth – hard demographics – have never disturbed those who defined the sex business as a force of liberation. The fact that the 'freedom' being realized is mostly the freedom of men to access the bodies of women and children or of G8 nations to access the markets and raw materials of Third World nations – is conveniently overlooked when predation is redefined as progress.<sup>28</sup>

The foundation of my argument is the data gathered from statistical evidence and previous field research, cross-referenced with my own empirical evidence. The confirmation coming from all these sources is strong and very compelling.

## **Materials and Methods**

This study was built using a triangle of different elements: official national and international statistical data, key national and international literature, and ethnographic research. A synopsis of primary and secondary sources has been cross-referenced in an attempt to take multiple perspectives into consideration.

The choice of the ethnographic research method derives from the intention to empirically explore the reality of Nigerian HTSE in Europe from an unfiltered primary source. The first-hand data and material collected during my fieldwork included audio and video recordings, photographs, diaries, letters, handwritten autobiographies, field notes, official documents such as reports of the Territorial Commission for the Recognition of International Protection on individual hearings of asylum seekers, police reports, court judgements, and medical reports. The in-depth individual face-to-face interviews were mostly open-ended and conducted whenever possible in private locations in order to get the highest level of trust and freedom. Nigerian girls were regarded as the most reliable source. Our meetings were extremely enlightening in terms of both verbal and non-verbal communication; silence on certain issues or in certain moments was also very informative. The knowledge acquired was both explicit (data, records) and tacit (experience, thinking).

The personal relationship built with the Nigerian girls was the access key to their world. The interpretative approach adopted was “sympathetic engagement”, entailing the attempt to suspend any judgement and comprehend a significantly different system of thinking. Dissimilarities between the interpreter’s and the alien speaker’s cultural backgrounds were wiped out by the systematic application of the principle of charity (or rational accommodation) put forward by Donald Davidson, which proposes an acceptance and broader understanding of the overall speaker’s view, and goes beyond his/her linguistic utterances to attribute rationality and truth even in case of incompleteness, logical fallacy or incoherence.<sup>29</sup> A “charitable” interpretation creates a favourable environment for an insightful intercultural communication based on trust, common understanding and optimization of agreement between the interpreter and the interpreted.

Participant observation was the main technique chosen in order to collect data on the daily real life of what can be defined as an “urban tribe”<sup>30</sup> whose internal functioning, because of the code of silence characterizing the Nigerian community, could not otherwise be disclosed. This technique is often chosen in the case of socially marginalized groups where there are huge cultural differences between the observed and the observer.<sup>31</sup>

This four-year fieldwork started at the end of 2014 and is still ongoing. It was mainly conducted in Sicily, the first entry door to the European Union for sub-Saharan migrants. Most of the data was collected in the Sicilian capital, Palermo, in the homeplaces and workplaces of Nigerian prostituted girls. The locale selected as the key homeplace area is Ballarò, a neighbourhood in the historical centre of Palermo hosting a Nigerian ghetto comprising more than 400 people, with a widespread presence of indoor Nigerian child prostitution. Along with Ballarò, my fieldwork was conducted in the outdoor Nigerian prostitution workplaces of Palermo, mapped during the research: Favorita Park, Palazzina Cinese, the train station, and the port area. Virtual places on social networks were also objects of investigation.

Part of my fieldwork took place in Verstebro, the red light district of Copenhagen where a second-hand market of older Nigerian girls previously exploited in Italy seems to have been set up.

The number of people interviewed as part of this study is 270. Their nationality is 84% Nigerian, 10% Italian, 1% Ghanaian (whose prostitution methods differ very much from the Nigerians’), 1% Romanian, 1% Moroccan, 1% Spanish, 1% Danish, and 1% Swedish.

The data-gathering work was conducted by categorizing people into three groups: key informants, expert witnesses and participants. The first

two groups are the ones whose information has been regarded as the most significant for the formulation of the conclusions of this study. Participants were consulted to complete and at times confirm or confute the information provided by the first two groups.

*1<sup>st</sup> Group: Key informants* (all of Nigerian origin):

Underage prostituted, adult prostituted, convicted madams, minors living in Reception Centres, prostitution survivors.

*2<sup>nd</sup> Group: Expert Witnesses* (mainly of Italian but also of Danish, Swedish, Spanish and Nigerian origin):

Policemen, judges, doctors, social workers, lawyers, international organization professionals, academics, cultural mediators, community workers, pastors, outreach street team members, members of the Association of Nigerians in Sicily.

*3<sup>rd</sup> Group: Participants* (various nationalities):

“Prostitutes” from Italy as well as of other nationalities living in Palermo, Nigerian drug-dealers, Nigerian adults living in Reception Centres, Nigerian NGO members resident in Palermo (Donne di Benin City, Pellegrino della Terra), Nigerian people resident in Palermo, including a number of shopkeepers, Nigerian migrants upon disembarkation.

## Terminology and Ideology

Before coming to the core of the research, a clarification on the terms that will be used in this book is due. Chimamada Ngozi Adichie is a renowned Nigerian feminist and writer. Her *monito* illustrates the point:

Teach her to question language. Language is the repository of our prejudices, our beliefs, and our assumptions.<sup>32</sup>

The terminology used in this investigation will pay much attention to the link between semantics and ideologies in order to dismantle the social construction of the “sex worker”. If we deepen the issue of word choice in the light of corpus linguistics, including denotation and connotation, we will discover the extent to which any “sex-related discourse” is permeating our language and therefore our minds.

As members of a “capitalist society”, we should be very familiar with all the linguistic manipulations used by powerful lobbies through the media. Namely, whenever any social phenomenon or problem must become invisible so that people ignore it, forget about it, or normalize its existence, all its corpus linguistics change. It is not clear whether it is language that connotes ideas or the other way around.

Words are today the most powerful weapon of mass destruction, for they slowly and silently manipulate our minds, influence our way of thinking and make us jump to conclusions, which might be fudged. That explains the contemporary power of media, able to erode and even destroy any evident truth through linguistic sophisms. We cannot say that ours is a secular society anymore. On the contrary, to my eye, we have become a very dogmatic society. The manipulation of our minds by the dominant power interests has reached the point of control mechanisms to convince us that the most inhuman actions are the unavoidable answer to *ad hoc* constructed problems. By playing on our fear and sufferings, they convey inhuman messages that we lazily accept, often renouncing the tiresome work of questioning what we are taught. As Chomsky says, referring to the media:

This mask of balance and objectivity is a crucial part of the propaganda function. In fact, they actually go beyond that. They try to present themselves as adversarial to power, as subversive, digging away at powerful institutions and undermining them. The academic profession plays along with this game.<sup>33</sup>

Hence, throughout this work, the term prostitute is replaced by “prostituted”. The past participle shows that girls are not choosing to be prostitutes but they are rather prostituted by someone or something else.

For, in calling girls and women prostitutes, we are actually making a specific linguistic operation. We are labelling who they are by what they are forced to do, and this label has an inherently derogative meaning or connotation. Thus, behind the decision to simply call them “girls” in this research lies the idea that these human beings cannot be described by what they are forced to do. Anybody else, before being a professor or an electrician (characterization through a job), a prisoner or a hero (characterization through moral judgement), a friend or a stranger (characterization through relationship), is first of all a human being, worthy of not being connoted by what he/she does whether positively or negatively.

Instead, this book will refer to prostituted girls as being “on the road”, or “doing prostitution” – terms they themselves use to define their situation. The term “work” will be used sparingly, and only to avoid misunderstandings when it is necessary to simplify what is being illustrated.

There is no shortage of pejorative and insulting words for the term “prostitute” in Italian or any other language. Nigerian girls feel very hurt whenever they are referred to by the term “prostitute” or any of its

synonyms. Some even react violently against whoever dares to refer to them in this way. This underscores the rationale made above – a girl is not a “prostitute”, she has been prostituted.

It is interesting to note that they call their vagina “the private part”, because according to their traditions that part of the body is not to be exposed to anyone other than their legitimate husband.

The term “sex work” is ideologically based on the philosophy that sex is an object of shopping, and that exploitation can be considered as a “job”. However, this understanding is not coherent with the results of my research, notably the fact that the girls themselves repeatedly stress that

this is not work<sup>34</sup>.

The prostitution-as-choice literature tackles prostitution as an empowering activity<sup>35</sup> and defines people who are offended by this label as “migrant sex workers”. Hence, in order to show respect to this very special part of the migrant population, their human right to be simply considered as persons will be seriously taken into consideration, above all – but not only – in the simplest dimension of language.

In addition to the term “prostitute”, there are others that are similarly problematic, to say the least. The capitalist business-centred terminology gives the name of “client” to a sex buyer, who is also widely called a “john”, or “sex addict”. In the context of my research the use of the term “client” might induce one to believe that it is ethically acceptable to buy another person’s body, or use it for the satisfaction of personal sexual desire or pleasure.<sup>36</sup> I believe that buying sexual performances from a considerably younger woman who is a foreigner and has been entrapped into “selling” this sexual performance entails degrading the human body to a piece of merchandise. For this reason, a “client” is referred to here by a more accurate label: final exploiter. Because that individual *de facto* behaves as such.

It must be acknowledged that the terms “victim” and “slavery” are deemed problematic by some authors. The use of the word “victim” is considered by part of the current literature to be demeaning and detrimental to the dignity of the person and of her “agency”, while the exploitation to which a girl surrenders due to coercion or for poverty reasons is not considered equally demeaning. In parallel, the term “slavery” has also been recently banned because it is detrimental to the “agency” too. Without victims and slaves there are no oppressors or slave owners: a smart and cultured rhetorical construction bearing catastrophic consequences to the concrete lives of the prostituted.