

BEATRICE FERNANDO

founder of Nivasa Foundation

“If you want the world to hear you, listen to your own heart, if you want to change the world, the change needs to begin with you.”

Beatrice Fernando is a survivor of slavery.



The youngest of thirteen children, Beatrice Fernando was born and raised in Sri Lanka. At age 23 she found herself divorced and living at home with her parents while raising her 3 year old son. Desperate to support her son on her own, Beatrice answered an ad for a local agency looking to employ housemaids overseas and she took a job in Lebanon. Her only goal was to make enough money to provide for her young son back home in Sri Lanka.

“I needed the job badly, though taking it meant leaving behind my 3-year old son. An unbearable sense of loneliness consumed me,” she recalls. Yet, Ms. Fernando was never able to send any money home. Unbeknownst to her at the time, the employment agency was running a corrupt scheme to lure young people in Sri Lanka into slavery far from their home and families.

Enslaved

When Beatrice arrived in Lebanon, she was forced to surrender her passport and soon the woman of the house began to viciously beat her. She regularly abused her and refused her anything to eat but the scraps leftover from the children’s plates. Beatrice was compelled to work 20 hour days by her wealthy slaveholder and she was never paid. Forbidden to leave the house where she worked or speak to other people, Beatrice knew that the apartment complex guards were ordered to shoot her if she was found outside the apartment. Trapped, cut off from the world, and desperate to escape her captors, Beatrice made a decision she thought might mean the end of her life. **She jumped off a fourth floor balcony** to try to save herself from the torture she was enduring.

She lived, was taken to a hospital, and soon realized that she was *paralyzed*.

Today, after a harrowing journey of recovery and further obstacles back home in Sri Lanka, Beatrice now lives in Massachusetts and is able to walk and function normally. But Beatrice realized her story is not unique. Women just like her, struggling to raise their children in her impoverished homeland, were continuously being lured into human trafficking situations.

Finally able to tell her life's story, Beatrice tells everyone she can about Sri Lanka and modern day slavery. She has spoken many times at Harvard University and colleges across the country and she has appeared on local television and radio shows and in many newspapers.





Beatrice presents Congressman Christopher Smith with her autobiography, *In Contempt of Fate*.

Most notably, Beatrice published her memoir in a book entitled, *In Contempt of Fate* and also published a chapter in an anthology of contemporary slave narratives entitled *Enslaved*.

Ms. Fernando speaks regularly to school groups, churches, writing groups and has even testified before the **House Committee on International Relations in Washington, D.C.** on her experiences and the existence of worldwide human trafficking.

Beatrice has realized that speaking out is not enough. She has founded the **Nivasa Foundation** as a means to helping the many victims like herself who were enslaved in human trafficking schemes overseas and survived, returning to their impoverished homes in Sri Lanka. These women, Beatrice realized, need help, support, and financial assistance to prevent them from returning to seek overseas domestic work. Beatrice works tirelessly as an activist, raising awareness about the estimated 27 million people around the world who are enslaved as she once was.

Won't you join Beatrice in her fight to break the crushing cycle slavery?

Beatrice is an inspiration to us all, and an empowering speaker, giving voice to those who cannot speak for themselves.

“The world is not out there, it is right here, with you and me. When we take a step against slavery, the world will take another step. If you want the world to hear you, listen to your own heart, if you want to change the world, the change needs to begin with you.” Beatrice Fernando
