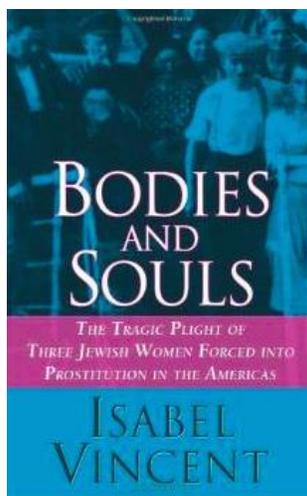


BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION: BODIES AND SOULS

Books can offer a good basis for discussion and further understanding of important subjects, and book clubs can be a great method for NCJW members and supporters to get more involved and active. Reading a book about sex trafficking with a group is an excellent way to raise awareness about the issue of sex trafficking.

Looking for a book recommendation? Look no further...



Bodies and Souls, by Isabel Vincent: In the second half of the nineteenth century, several thousand impoverished young Jewish women from Eastern Europe were forced into prostitution in the frontier colonies of Latin America, South Africa, India, and parts of the United States by the Zwi Migdal, a notorious criminal gang of Jewish mobsters. Isabel Vincent tells the remarkable true story of three such women —Sophia Chamys, Rachel Liberman, and Rebecca Freedman — who, like so many others, were desperate to escape a hopeless future in Europe's teeming urban ghettos and rural shtetls.

Invite Isabel Vincent to Speak! To invite Isabel to speak to your section or at a community anti-trafficking event, contact Jody Rabhan in NCJW's Washington Office (Jody@ncjwdc.org).

Preparation for the Book Club Gathering:

- ▶ Remind participants to be prepared to discuss how the book relates to NCJW's mission.
- ▶ Encourage participants to bring statistics and information about sex trafficking in your community.
- ▶ Confirm location and decide who is bringing snacks and beverages.

Discussion Questions to Consider:

- ▶ The environment that existed in the shtetls — extreme poverty, and a lack of opportunities and education — exists today and continues to allow trafficking to flourish. What can we do to address the root causes of disadvantaged communities so trafficking isn't a viable job option or opportunity?

- ▶ In the book, the author highlights Jewish ritual performed by some of the women living in the brothels despite the fact they aren't welcome in the local, established synagogues. Why do you think the women embrace a religion — Judaism — that turns its back on them? Why is Jewish ritual (Shabbat services, the cleansing of the dead) so important to the women?
- ▶ Much as they did throughout South America, traffickers today act with impunity. How can we crack down in our community, and also nationally, on this hidden crime that continues to thrive?
- ▶ For many of us, this may be the first introduction to the shameful truth of Jewish traffickers prostituting Jewish girls in the nineteenth century. Why does this harrowing story, and long chapter in our history, continue to remain hidden?
- ▶ The issue of “stille chuppah” (silent wedding with no legal protections for women) utilized in the shtetls could seem analogous to a “get” (divorce initiated and signed by a husband) in Jewish law needed today. Do you find these issues similar? Why or why not?
- ▶ How can you use the knowledge of our Jewish history with trafficking, and NCJW's work at the turn of the century meeting women at the ports, to inform your current or future anti-trafficking work in your community? *For ideas and information visit my.ncjw.org/trafficking.*

Looking for more book club ideas? Visit <https://www.ncjw.org/act/action-resources/basics-sex-trafficking/>.

Questions? Contact Jody Rabhan in NCJW's Washington Office (Jody@ncjwdc.org).