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From Crop to Cup: The Bitter Origins of Brazil's Coffee

Text is displayed on one long infographic with a cream-colored background. Text is all in capital letters, and underlined text appears to have originally been linked. This description begins at the top and moves downward.

Title reads in blocky, black letters: "From Crop to Cup: The Bitter Origins of Brazil's Coffee." To the left of the title is a drawing of two coffee beans, to the right is a coffee carafe with a leaf filter.

An illustration of someone harvesting crops. To the right, text reads: "The coffee crisis brews strongly in Brazil as forced labor continues to work on plantations, widening the gap between the haves and have-nots. In 2018, Brazilian labor assessors discovered forced labor on farms that were authorized to Starbucks' ethical production criteria. In 2016, two of the world's largest coffee companies, Nestlé and Jacobs Douwe Egberts, conceded that forced labor was a potential prospect in their coffee supply. Nestlé acknowledged they bought coffee from two plantations with known forced labor and cannot "fully guarantee that it has completely removed forced labor practices or human rights abuses" from their supply chain."

Section heading reads, in white text on a brown background: "The Coffee Crisis Brews in Brazil Due to."

“Debt Peonage: Debt peonage refers to forced labor to compensate for debts. Expected to pay inflated prices at the owners’ shop out of their pockets, laborers have little remaining of their below minimum-wage salary, offering no incentives for their hours of physical labor – they become indebted to the plantation, compelling families to reimburse their debts by working for extended periods.” To the right is a drawing of a debt bill.

An image of someone sleeping next to a cardboard box. To the right, text reads: “Unfavorable Working Conditions: Workers have been found in conditions like sleeping on coffee sacks on the floor and being threatened with lower wages, no food, and unemployment. Without a legally binding document, nearly half of Brazil’s farmers are paid illegally low wages with no benefits like unemployment insurance, overtime pay, and health coverage.”

“Child Labor: Parents urge their children to work on plantations to fulfill debt obligations, provoking child labor. IBGE (The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) suggested that “997,000 children worked on coffee plantations between the ages of 5 and 17 in 2013, of which 464,000 were under 14.” To the right, a drawing of a crying child.

An image of two people placing bags on a scale. One bag is being placed on to the heavier side of the scale. The lighter side of the scale reads “Debt.” To the right of the image, text reads: “Fair Trade Coffee: Fair trade is a private program that certifies that coffee growers are paid a minimum price for coffee. The supplemental payment offered is however redirected to disbursing debts and shouldering increasing costs, worsening the living circumstances of coffee-producing households.”

Section heading reads, in white text on a brown background: “Chaotic Blends and Unequal Benefits.”

“The growth of the transnational coffee trade nurtured the good’s global reach and

scale. Yet, scale and distance anonymized the farmers as the expansion of the global supply chain led to an upsurge in the number of intermediaries who redistributed the produce, creating a blend of chaos in the supply-side due to an increase in agents. Farmers are shrunk to a trivial component in an international agribusiness system. Less than 2% of the market price goes to the coffee picker: about 80% of the price at which coffee is sold in stores goes to coffee roasters and retail chains.” To the right, a pie chart: Manufacturing Units/Middlemen 18%; Coffee Picker 2%; Retail and Roasters 80%.

Section heading reads, in white text on a brown background: “How Can We Help?” (**bold** text in this section means the text in the infographic is brown instead of black)

“Acquire knowledge about the growing concerns of labor exploitation. The first vital step is **understanding, recognizing, and listening to those who speak of their experiences** concerning the issue of forced labor in coffee supply chains.” Below, a drawing of two people at a table drinking coffee and an arrow pointing to the text.

“Influence cooperate policy by utilizing the nudge theory approach and advocating for greater transparency and fair pay for workers, as corporations essentially survive on consumer trends and demands.” To the right, a drawing of a coffee counter with one arrow pointing to the text and another arrow pointing to this text: “Stem our support of companies that turn a blind eye to coffee beans produced by forced labor and instead **switch to beans from roasters that are transparent about compensating farmers and paying fair, livable prices.**”

“Works Cited:

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