

# Stop Trafficking !

Anti-Human Trafficking Newsletter



Awareness

Advocacy

Action

June 2008 Vol. 6 No. 6

This issue highlights concerns by aboriginal groups, who are the subject of abuses, including trafficking.

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## Aboriginal Women’s Action Network Speaks Out on the 2010 Olympics

As Aboriginal women on occupied Coast Salish Territory, we, the *Aboriginal Women’s Action Network* (AWAN) implore you to pay attention to the voices of Aboriginal women and women’s groups who are speaking out in the interest of our sisters, our daughters, our friends and all women whose voices have not been heard in the recent media discussion on prostitution and legalized brothels for the 2010 Olympics.

We, the *Aboriginal Women’s Action Network*, speak especially in the interests of the most vulnerable women - street prostitutes, of which a significant number are young Aboriginal women and girls. We have a long, multi-generational history of colonization, marginalization, and displacement from our Homelands, and rampant abuses that has forced many of our sisters into prostitution. Aboriginal women are often either forced into prostitution, trafficked into prostitution or are facing that possibility. Given that the average age at which girls enter prostitution is fourteen, the majority with a history of unspeakable abuses,



we are also speaking out for the Aboriginal children who are targeted by johns and pimps. Aboriginal girls are hunted down and prostituted, and the perpetrators go uncharged with child sexual assault and child rape. These predators, pervasive in our society, roam with impunity in our streets and take advantage of those Aboriginal children with the least protection. While we are speaking out for the women in the downtown eastside of Vancouver, we include women from *First Nations Reserves*, and other Aboriginal communities, most of whom have few resources and limited choices. We include them because AWAN members also originate from those communities, and AWAN members interact regularly with Native women from these communities.

The *Aboriginal Women’s Action Network* opposes the legalization of prostitution, and any state regulation of prostitution that entrenches Aboriginal women and children in the so-called “sex trade.” It is not the street *per se* or the laws for that matter, which are

“Let Vancouver enter into the 2010 Olympics without wearing the black-eye of decriminalized prostitution and legalized brothels that drive Aboriginal women further down the human rights ladder of Canadian and Vancouver society.” AWAN



## Awareness

### AWAN Statement

*cont. from pg. 1*

the source of the problem, but prostitution itself which depends on a subclass of women or a degraded caste to be exploited. We hold that legalizing prostitution in Vancouver will not make it safer for those prostituted, but will merely increase their numbers. Contrary to current media coverage of the issue, the available evidence suggests that it would in fact be harmful, would expand prostitution and would promote trafficking, and would only serve to make prostitution safer and more profitable for the men who exploit and harm prostituted women and children. Although many well-meaning people think that decriminalization simply means protecting prostituted women from arrest, it also refers, dangerously, to the decriminalization of johns and pimps. In this way prostitution is normalized, johns multiply, and pimps and traffickers become legitimated entrepreneurs.

Say "No" to this lack of concern for marginalized women and children, who in this industry are expected to serve simply as objects of consumption! *The Aboriginal Women's Action Network* opposes the legalization of brothels for the 2010 Olympics. We refuse to be commodities in the so-called "sex industry" or offer up our sisters and daughters to be used as disposable objects for sex tourists. ([http://sisyphe.org/article.php3?id\\_article=2823](http://sisyphe.org/article.php3?id_article=2823))

## Aboriginal Women Face More Risk

According to the *Canadian Department of Justice* and other witnesses, Aboriginal girls and women are at greater risk of becoming victims of trafficking within and outside Canada.

Erin Wolski from the *Native Women's Association of Canada* (NWAC) supported that conclusion, noting that "as more Aboriginal women go missing and a huge majority of the cases are not being investigated...trafficking must be looked at as a possible source for information."

Chantal Tie, a lawyer with the *National Association of Women and the Law*, noted: "Aboriginal women and girls are driven into trafficking by poverty and conditions on the reserve, sometimes by conditions of abuse. They are then sold throughout Canada. Basically their handlers start them in Vancouver. They work for them there for awhile, then they're sold to someone in Winnipeg and then to someone in Toronto, and so on down the line as they get moved around the country. This is an extremely vulnerable population of women--extremely vulnerable--and these are Canadian women." (pg. 9-10)

Human trafficking is one of the consequences of the prostitution system. Institutionalization — in other words, legalizing sex markets — boosts procuring activity and organized crime, but most importantly, it legitimizes gender inequality. Consequently, if Canada wants to stop trafficking in human beings and to protect trafficking victims, it seems urgent that we examine those who motivate it: Canadian prostituting clients. It also seems important to understand and to analyze prostitution and trafficking as related phenomena and forms of violence against women. Trafficking and the prostitution industry exist because men want to buy the bodies of women and young girls. Prostitution is a form of sexual slavery that allows trafficking to flourish and to grow. (pg. 13-14)

Excerpted from: "*Turning Outrage into Action to Address Trafficking for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation in Canada*" Report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, Yasmin Ratansi, MP, Chair. February 2007, 39th Canadian Parliament, 1st Session ([cmte.parl.gc.ca/Content/HOC/committee/391/fewo/reports/rp2738918/feworp12/feworp12-e.pdf](http://cmte.parl.gc.ca/Content/HOC/committee/391/fewo/reports/rp2738918/feworp12/feworp12-e.pdf))

## Aboriginal Women and Children Targeted

A study, commissioned in 2005 by the Department of Justice Canada, conducted telephone interviews with 40 frontline workers throughout Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto and Montreal, destinations or transit points for most people trafficked into or within Canada. The workers represented a broad range of service providers: victim services, immigrant and refugee settlement services, community social rights groups, religious organizations, women's organizations, Aboriginal and ethnic organizations.

Respondents across the country noted that the conditions for trafficking are created by socio-structural factors both in Canada and in developing countries,

Study *cont. pg. 4*



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### 3 Plight of Indigenous Women

Socially constructed misconceptions about indigenous women from non-indigenous people play a significant role to this end. The *Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child pornography and child prostitution*, Mr. Petit, described in 2006, for example, how indigenous girls from the interior jungle region of Peru, are perceived by non-indigenous populations to be more sexualized and to reach sexual maturity at a younger age. They are perceived as being more desirable as sexual partners. He further claimed that sexual exploiters often choose to exploit a child whose racial ethnic or class identity is 'other' than his own. Such misconceptions and prejudices, which are found in many other countries throughout the Americas and in the rest of the world, further increase the demand for indigenous women and girls to being trafficked and to be used in prostitution "to make prostitution more exotic".

The deteriorating human rights situation of indigenous communities further pushes indigenous women to out-migrate, both to urban centers within the same countries or across borders, to find a means of survival for themselves and their families. As pointed out by the *Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples* in his last annual report, indigenous women are generally more susceptible to abuses when they migrate. They often lack specific linguistic and educational skills required for the new contexts in which they are in, they are deprived from their communal ties and sup-

port structures, and in this context are more likely to be unaware of their rights. In this light, it has been reported that indigenous women are particularly easy prey to being deceived and trafficked in the migration process. This is, for instance, the case for various indigenous women in various Asian countries, like Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Nepal, and the Philippines. The effects of conflict also have their special toll on indigenous women.

Indeed, conflicts have been reported to be a major push factor for the trafficking of indigenous peoples generally, but particularly of indigenous women and girls for prostitution, sexual exploitation, forced marriages, forced concubinage, forced labor and even forced military recruitment. The cases of Myanmar, Colombia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo come to mind. In my work as Special Rapporteur I have witnessed how violence against women is another key factor in pushing women into being trafficked. It is therefore of concern to me that this may be happening within indigenous communities. As pointed out by the *Special Rapporteur on violence against women*, indigenous women are often victim of human rights violations as a result of harmful cultural practices practiced within their own communities, including female genital mutilation, forced marriages, or discriminatory customary norms, particularly with regards to land and inheritance rights. Such harmful practices may certainly play a role in pushing indigenous women to leave their own communities in circumstances that could end in trafficking.

The different root causes I have just described confirm the Forum's concern that the issue of trafficking of indigenous women must be urgently addressed. Indigenous women are being trafficked because of their being women and because of their being indigenous.

However, information on the trafficking of indigenous women is lacking. Since I was appointed *Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons* in 2004, I have indeed received very little information about the trafficking of indigenous women. Only recently, a number of reports have started to pay more attention to the trafficking of indigenous peoples, particularly of women for prostitution, sexual exploitation and also for forced labor, but we are still very far from having a full picture of the situation. It needs to be better documented and this is where I hope to be able to assist.

I am a strong believer, Ms. Chairperson, in the success that may be gained from working in collaboration and in coordination with all relevant partners in order to protect the human rights of indigenous women, and particularly those being trafficked. The mandate of the *Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons* has the capacity to address these serious concerns, and I invite you to use the different mechanisms provided by the mandate in this regard. I look forward, therefore to exploring with the Forum, as well as with the many indigenous peoples and organizations represented here today, the different ways of bringing the issue of trafficking of indigenous women more prominently on the international agenda.

Excerpted from the speech of Sigma Huda, Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, to the *Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues*, 6th session, New York, May 18, 2007 ([http://wunrn.com/news/2007/05\\_07/05\\_28\\_07/060307\\_trafficking2.htm](http://wunrn.com/news/2007/05_07/05_28_07/060307_trafficking2.htm))



## Awareness

# Trafficking in Men: an Exploration of an Overlooked Phenomenon

(Study at the Université de Montréal by

Jacqueline Oxman-Martinez, Ph.D., Estibaliz Jimenez, Ph.D. and Jill Hanley, Ph.D.)

In Canada male trafficking victims are most likely to be directed to sweatshops, supermarkets and restaurants. They are often smuggled into the country by small or mid-sized organized crime rings, usually gangs involved in drug importation, which have diversified into human smuggling in response to market opportunity. East Asian crime rings operating in Vancouver are the most frequently cited.

Interviews from the study of Bruckert and Parent (*“Organized crime and human trafficking in Canada: Tracing perceptions and discourses,”* Ottawa: Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2004) revealed that, even if Chinese migrants are prepared for hardship for several years in their new country, once they arrive in Canada the conditions are far worse than promised, as employers take advantage of their vulnerability and lack of alternatives. Victims may undergo physical restrictions on freedom of movement, confiscation of papers, late payment of wages or no payment, cyclical indebtedness, and be kept in these conditions through the ever-present threat of denunciation to the authorities followed by deportation.

It is important to note that sectors of the Canadian economy that seek cheap labor are possible destinations for human trafficking victims. For example, Canadian newspaper articles have reported the poor housing conditions and extreme control exercised over seasonal agricultural employees. Farm labor is difficult, long, tedious, low paying, seasonal and dangerous because agricultural work is an accident-prone sector. According to the United Food & Commercial Workers Canada, employers often confiscate workers' passports upon their arrival in Canada. The employers can have workers deported at any time and have them permanently excluded from the program without needing a serious reason. Many workers have testified that they live in fear and that they feel obliged to submit to their boss. These workers are paid minimum wage and often speak neither French nor English. The overwhelming majority of such migrants do not know how to file a complaint and most have no idea who to contact when something goes wrong. As any worker, they have to pay 'employment guarantee' deductions, but cannot receive basic unemployment benefits.

The main areas of asylum-seeker exploitation are: office and school cleaning, window cleaning, school janitors, tourist industry and restaurants (mainly in the food preparation, food delivery or drivers), manufacturing and, finally, harvest of fruit and vegetables.

## Study *cont. from pg. 2*

including poverty, the feminization of poverty, and lack of economic opportunities. Agencies also tended to agree that the most significant obstacles to service provision included a lack of funding for community groups, a lack of immigration status for the victims, language and cultural barriers, the marginalization and isolation of trafficking victims, victims' fear of deportation or retaliation by the traffickers, and the secrecy and silence surrounding the issue of trafficking in persons.

Particularly striking among the findings was the young age of many trafficking victims and the prevalence of trafficking of Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. The extent of the trafficking networks operating in Canada was startling in terms of both the high level of organization and the magnitude of trafficking. Respondents described networks which cross the continent and include major metropolitan centers in both Canada and the US, but also extend north into smaller Canadian towns in British Columbia and the Prairie provinces.

Another disturbing finding was that children constitute the most vulnerable population, and that they are the ones most difficult to reach since they are usually confined within homes or other closed environments.

([http://www.canada.justice.gc.ca/eng/pi/rs/rep-rap/2006/rr06\\_3/po.html](http://www.canada.justice.gc.ca/eng/pi/rs/rep-rap/2006/rr06_3/po.html))



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## Advocacy

### Minnesota: Site of Trafficking

“The Native American women in Minnesota (and elsewhere) have been victims of trafficking but get little recognition in literature because the national focus has been on immigrant women.

Young girls from the reservation are sold to men on international cargo ships in the harbor at Duluth or brought to the *Mall of America* and are never heard from again. Others are forced to prostitute in Minneapolis. Even more painful is that seemingly no one cares.

*Amnesty International* reported on the plight of indigenous women in North America and literature published by those within the Indian community have reported on the problem.

We think everyone should be aware. The definition of trafficking should include domestic slaves, too.”

Mary Eileen Welsh SSND



## Rights to Survival & Mobility

The *National Asian Pacific American Women’s Forum* (NAPAWF) released “*Rights to Survival & Mobility: An Anti-Trafficking Activist’s Agenda*.” The report highlights the disproportionate impact of human trafficking on *Asian and Pacific Islander* women and girls. *Rights to Survival & Mobility* broadens the discourse on human trafficking to include root causes, such as poverty, gender-based discrimination, globalization and militarism, and links human trafficking with race, class, gender and other social justice issues. It also discusses the importance of having a national and organized voice to address the implications of human trafficking on Asian and Pacific Islander (API) communities.



NAPAWF is the only national, multi-issue Asian and Pacific Islander women’s advocacy organization in the country. NAPAWF’s mission is to build a movement to advance social justice and human rights for API women and girls.

*Rights to Survival & Mobility* is available at [www.napawf.org](http://www.napawf.org) since April 2008. To order a copy, contact Liezl Tomas Rebugio at 206-685-9900 or e-mail [lrebugio@napawf.org](mailto:lrebugio@napawf.org) ([http://www.napawf.org/file/events/AT\\_Agenda.pdf](http://www.napawf.org/file/events/AT_Agenda.pdf))

### International Report: U.S. Fails to Meet Racial Equality Norms

The Geneva-based *U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination* (CERD) said the U.S. is failing to meet its obligations and international standards on racial equality. CERD is responsible for monitoring global compliance with the 1969 *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*, an international treaty that the U.S. ratified. The March 2008 CERD Report found “*stark racial disparities*” in the criminal justice system and “*wide racial disparities*” in the areas of human rights violations, environmental racism, health care, housing and education.

The committee is “*deeply concerned*” about the high incidence of rape and sexual violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women and urged the U.S. to increase its efforts to prevent and punish violence and abuse against women belonging to racial, ethnic and national minorities. (<http://www.indian-country.com/content.cfm?id=1096416886>)

### ‘Women Are Sacred’ Arizona Conference

The Conference, held May 5-7, 2008 in Phoenix, AZ, included ‘trafficking of native women’ as one of the 30+ workshops. (<http://www.sacred-circle.com/>)



## Action

# Conference on Issues Affecting Refugees, Immigrants

The *Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC)* and the *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Migration and Refugee Services (USCCB/MRS)* are co-sponsoring a conference, entitled, *Renewing Hope, Seeking Justice*, scheduled for July 28 – 31 in Washington D.C.

The conference will focus on the challenges and abuses faced by refugees, immigrants, migrants, trafficking victims, and other persons on the move in the U.S. and throughout the world. The conference's goal is to increase public awareness on migration questions and to educate public policy makers and those interested in related public policy issues. The conference also aims to develop and strengthen dioceses' and parishes' capacity to welcome and provide hospitality to newcomers and their families.

More information can be found on *The National Migration Conference* website (<http://nationalmigrationconference.org/>) or by contacting Izzy Menchero of CLINIC at 202-635-5825 or [imenchero@cliniclegal.org](mailto:imenchero@cliniclegal.org), and Jim Kuh of MRS at 202-541-3220 or [jkuh@uscbb.org](mailto:jkuh@uscbb.org).



## 'One Border, One Body'

'*One Border, One Body*' is the title of a new 30-minute English documentary with Spanish subtitles. It shows the annual Eucharistic celebration that takes place within the dry, rugged, and sun-scorched terrain where many immigrants lose their lives. Despite a sixteen-foot iron fence dividing them, bishops, priests and laity come together each year along the border of Mexico and the U.S. in order to witness to their unified belief in God's universal, undivided, and unrestricted love for all people.

Amidst a desert of death and a culture of fear, the film testifies to a growing globalization of solidarity and their journey of hope. The film was produced by award winning filmmaker John Carlos Frey and Fr. Daniel Groody, CSC of the University of Notre Dame.

Price: \$25.00 with free shipping. (<http://oneborderonebody.nd.edu/>)

**Toll-Free 24/7 Hotline**  
**National Human Trafficking**  
**Resource Center**  
**1.888.3737.888**

## Informative Web Sites:

(Each contains information related to human trafficking)

**Amnesty International**  
**"Maze of Injustice: The Failure to Protect Indigent Women from Sexual Violence in the USA"**

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/askamnesty/live/cat2.php?topic=82>  
<http://www.amnestyusa.org/violence-against-women/maze-of-injustice/page.do?id=1021163&n1=3&n2=39&n3=1410>

**Assembly of First Nations**  
<http://www.afn.ca/>

## Indigenous Peoples Speak Out

Representatives of Canada's indigenous peoples say they are considering using the *2010 Winter Olympics* to inform the global community of their '*desperate conditions*'.

(<http://www.nationalia.info/en/news/122>)

### *Stop Trafficking!*

is dedicated exclusively to fostering an exchange of information among religious congregations, their friends and collaborating organizations, working to eliminate all forms of trafficking of human beings.

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<http://homepage.mac.com/srjeanschafer/sds/stoptraffic/index.html>

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