Idaho officials reported that wives of a religious group in British Columbia were coming from Canada into Idaho to apply for public assistance. The group was believed to be polygamous and associated with a similar group in Utah. There was concern the two groups may be trading child brides. Reports suggested men were bringing wives in from other countries, including Canada and Mexico, and then exploiting them for prostitution or slave labor.

A 17-year-old girl took lewd photos of a 14-year-old and posted them on Craigslist. The dozen men who visited these teens daily in motel rooms west of Toronto did not know that both girls were enslaved by their pimp.

In 2008 the older girl escaped her confinement and went to police, prompting the younger girl’s rescue and the first human trafficking conviction in Canadian history.

A 56-year-old international Canadian art dealer was tried as a sex tourist who allegedly had sex with 17 underage girls in Cambodia, Colombia and the Philippines between 1998 and 2004. He had tried to bring DVDs into Canada hidden in quilts. In a subsequent search of his home police seized a video camera and 21 DVDs allegedly containing video clips of the suspect having sex with 92 girls, ages nine to eighteen, in three countries. He faces a maximum of 10 years in prison if convicted.

“I feel unworthy, dirty, tainted, like nothing. I feel I am only good for one thing — sex.” — the distressing words of an 18 year old Canadian in an Ontario courtroom. A 25 year old man had forced her into prostitution at age 15, threatening to kidnap her brother if she did not obey. She saw a dozen men a day for 26 months. He earned more than $350,000 off her.

Finally, after being held at gunpoint by a client, she escaped.

Polish nationals smuggled through Toronto to Chicago, many destined to work in vehicle “chop shops” for gangs dealing in stolen cars.

Asians brought illegally to Canada’s west coast; then moved to New York, Los Angeles and other American destinations to work in sweat shops or criminal networks.

Hondurans smuggled in to work as drug couriers on Vancouver streets.

“Mail-order brides” brought by Eastern European crime groups into Canada and exploited.

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This issue highlights issues that Canada faces regarding human trafficking.
Canada Responds to Human Trafficking

In 1999 four dilapidated boats, carrying about 590 Chinese migrants including 134 children without parents or legal guardians, arrived off the coast of British Columbia. They were sent to earn money in Canada and the US to send back home to China. It was Canada’s first alert to human trafficking.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) estimate 600 foreign women and girls a year are coerced into the sex trade in Canada. The number of people trafficked annually into the country rises to 800 if other kinds of forced labor are taken into account. Most of the illicit activity occurred in Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver and Winnipeg. The 17,000 seasonal agricultural workers from abroad who tend Canadian farms and orchards each year may also be open to exploitation. In addition, case figures indicate that roughly between 1,500 and 2,200 people are trafficked from Canada into the U.S. annually.

The impact of trafficking on Canada is estimated at between $120 million to $400 million per year. In Canada a girl can be sold for $15,000 and earn her owner over $40,000 a year.

In 2002 section 118 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) was enacted, stating that no person shall knowingly organize the coming into Canada of one or more persons by means of abduction, fraud, deception or use or threat of force or coercion. Since then there have been 25 convictions.

In 2004, the Federal Government passed Bill C-49, which officially recognized human trafficking as a crime within Canada. Someone convicted is liable to imprisonment for up to 14 years, or life in prison if the accused kidnaps, commits an aggravated assault or sexual assault against, or causes death to the victim during the commission of a trafficking offense. A system to provide foreign victims with Temporary Resident Permits (TRP) was set up in May 2006. In May 2008 the first person was charged with human trafficking.

University of British Columbia research showed that between May 2006 and September 2008 immigration officials flagged 31 foreign individuals as potential victims of human trafficking. Only one of these came forward voluntarily and four were minors. Immigration officials issued 17 TRPs to foreign victims.

Domestic Trafficking

According to the Aboriginal Women’s Action Network (AWAN) in Canada the primary victims of domestic trafficking are women of aboriginal descent. About 75% of aboriginal girls under 18 have been sexually abused. Of those, half are under 14 and nearly a quarter are younger than seven. 90% of the teenedaged, urban prostitutes in Canada are aboriginal. “Their handlers start them in Vancouver,” said a lawyer with the National Association of Women. “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.”

Need for Public Awareness

Corporal Massie of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Border Integrity Program explained that talking to the public and raising awareness of the issue is crucial. “Exposure at the border is very quick. It is difficult to detect a human trafficking victim, because a victim coming into Canada doesn’t even know that they are going to be exploited yet. They have different expectations. It’s not until they’ve gone [through] that port of entry that they find out.

“Our success is almost entirely reliant on detection. That’s the police and everybody else. That’s the health care workers. That’s the lady next door who hears screaming and someone being assaulted on a regular basis. That’s how we need to surface what could be human trafficking.”

The public, in a sense, becomes the police. “I don’t know what’s going on in the house next door to where you live unless if you tell me,” Massie continued. “In the interest of keeping our communities safe, we need to be more willing to provide information to the police.” This is especially important in light of the fact that there may be many more people being trafficked from within Canada than coming across its borders.
‘Live-In Caregiver Program’

Under the program, a person is to work 40 hours per week at minimum wage, providing live-in elderly care. The woman must have a specific employer to obtain the visa to come to Canada. In order to obtain permanent residence status, she must provide 24 months of live-in care over a period of 36 months. If fired the woman faces deportation if she can’t find a new live-in care job to fulfill the terms of the program. While employed, live-in caregivers are not allowed to look for a second employer, to upgrade their education (unless specifically authorized), or to move out.

Maria came to Vancouver under the Live-in Caregiver Program, leaving three children behind in the Philippines. She hoped to attain permanent residency and earn a good wage so she could send money back to her family.

When Maria arrived, she was supposed to work a forty-hour week, but was also forced to scrub the outside of her employer’s house, clean all the windows, tend to the garden, clean her employer’s sister’s house, and work overtime without pay. She could not take days off and when she was sick her employer refused to let her visit the doctor.

Maria left the family she was working for, unsure of whether she would be able to stay in Canada and support her family with much needed income. Fortunately, with the support of the Philippine Women’s Center, Maria was able to acquire a permit to stay in Canada. She sponsored her family, who followed a few years later.

Caregiver cont. from first col.

Panis went on, “Sometimes I think I’ve heard really, really awful stories and I hear something worse. In one case, for example, a woman was forced to live in a room that could only be locked from the outside. Her employers kept the key and let her out, or kept her in, as they pleased.”

Panis explained that not all care-givers are exploited, but that Canadians have to be alert for those who are.

‘Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program’

The Canadian Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP) takes in Mexican and Caribbean agricultural workers on temporary work visas. “We, at Justicia for Migrant Workers, say the program is trafficking by the government,” said spokesperson Erika del Carmen Fuchs. Before coming to Canada, the workers are shown videos that show great working conditions and beautiful Canadian fields. When they arrive in Canada, they often live in terrible conditions and find their rights are negated. While the government guarantees standards for health insurance and living conditions, a lack of oversight makes it possible for employers to neglect these standards.

Workers under the SAWP program, who had pesticide spilled on them, were unable to get immediate medical attention and eventually died. In another case, a Mexican worker was going to be deported because he was unable to pay for the medical expenses related to concussions and a stroke caused as a result of a head injury on the job.

A government official explained that workers with complaints are referred to the appropriate provincial ministry responsible for employment and labor standards. However migrant workers often face a language barrier and fear of being deported if they complain. Because of conditions in Mexico and other Latin American countries, the farmers have no other economically feasible option once they arrive in Canada. This, Fuchs argued, qualifies the situation as forced labor and, therefore, trafficking rather than simply exploitation.
‘Craigslist’ Not Regulated in Canada

Craigslist has introduced two measures to crack down on human trafficking in the U.S. • phone number is required by the website, and • those posting in the erotic services section of the website have to pay a $5 fee with a credit card. This not only validates businesses that use Craigslist, but makes it easier for police to track the postings back to the users, should they be subject of human trafficking investigations.

But neither of these regulations apply to any of the nearly 50 Canadian Craigslist sites. Craigslist CEO, Jim Buckmaster, admitted his company could implement the phone and credit card regulations, but has not done so.

While the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) have www.cybertip.ca, where Internet users can report instances of online sexual exploitation, there is a growing problem around online bulletin boards being used to advertise trafficking victims.

Benjamin Perrin, law professor at the University of British Columbia, said “The measures put in place in the U.S. to protect individuals from being sexually exploited through Craigslist need to be adapted in Canada. We’re kind of late to the game here. There needs to be a lot more work done. We have documented cases, convictions in court where Craigslist was used to sell Canadian girls.”

“Because the Internet is a relatively unregulated industry, responsibility weighs on the shoulders of companies like Craigslist to ensure children aren’t being exploited,” said a member of the RCMP’s National Child Exploitation Co-ordination Center. “It comes down to the value and integrity of Craigslist as an organization. If they want to supply a service where a child is potentially at risk, exposed, that’s an organizational issue.”


Corporate Stand
Sisters of St. Joseph

We, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Boston, whose mission of unity and reconciliation impels us to promote right relationships, denounce the slavery of human trafficking in all its forms in every place where it exists.

We commit:
• to educate ourselves and others about the causes, consequences and magnitude of human trafficking;
• to work to eliminate the root causes of human trafficking;
• to minister to victims of human trafficking in collaboration with others;
• to use our strength as consumers and investors to promote a just society that eliminates the incentives for human trafficking.

Internet Porn Addiction

An extensive Internet survey found that more than 8 million North Americans are pursuing sex online at least 11 hours a week, with 70% of Internet porn traffic occuring on weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. According to o.com, employees at Apple, IBM and AT&T spent the equivalent of 1,631 work days on the Penthouse site in just one month.

The National Council of Sexual Addiction Compulsivity estimates that 6 to 8% of Americans are sex addicts. “I think you would see similar numbers in Canada,” a psychotherapist stated. “I think it’s a very widespread problem on both sides.”

(http://www.canoe.ca/NewsStand/Columnists/Toronto/Michele_Mandel/2005/01/16/900138-sun.html)
Canadian Parliament Considers Stronger Legislation

The first man convicted of trafficking a minor only received three years for the offense, with credit for the 13 months he already served. Essentially he will spend less time in jail than he did exploiting his victim.

A Montreal resident received a two-year sentence for a similar crime. But with double credit for the year served before his trial the man, who horrifically victimized a 17-year-old girl over two years, spent only a week in jail after his conviction.

Since these are Canada’s first human trafficking convictions involving minors, they create a dangerous precedent for all future court decisions. Currently there are almost a dozen similar cases before Canadian courts involving the trafficking of minors and the judges in these cases will likely follow the current precedent. Therefore, it is important for Parliament to send a clear message that the trafficking of minors will not be tolerated.

Current proposed legislation, Bill C-268, provides five-year mandatory minimum sentences for child trafficking. It received a positive majority vote in the Canadian Parliament in April 2009 and was sent to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. The bill has received support across Canada, including from law enforcement, victims’ services, First Nations, and religious and secular non-governmental organizations.

Since the protection of children should not be a partisan issue, it is important for Canadians to contact their MP and urge them to support Bill C-268.

Importance of Legislative Power

As public awareness of human trafficking grows, people are demanding that action be taken to end it. As agenda-setters and voices of the people, legislators have significant power and influence in developing anti-human trafficking laws and policies.

In April 2009 the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the United Nation’s Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the UN Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking (UN.GIFT) released ‘Combating Trafficking in Persons: A Handbook for Parliamentarians.’

The Handbook contains a compilation of international laws and good practices developed to combat human trafficking. It offers guidance on how national legislation can be brought in line with international standards by defining trafficking in persons and criminalizing all its forms, as well as through measures to prevent the crime, prosecute offenders and protect victims. (http://www.ungift.org/)

In their recent ‘Pastoral Letter on Human Trafficking’ the Bishops of British Columbia and Vancouver challenged those in advertising and social communication, stating, “…We invite you to foster the common good, to report responsibly on the ongoing exploitation of people and its root causes, and to respect them in accordance with their full human dignity. We implore you to cease the humiliating portrayals of women in advertising, the trivialization of sexuality and the family, and the promotion of destructive patterns of consumption. Because of the media’s educational potential, you bear a special responsibility for promoting the God-given dignity of every person.”

For the full text, go to: http://www.rcav.org/ht/
Advocacy

UN Database on Violence Against Women Launched

On March 5, 2009 the United Nations announced a new online database. This publicly accessible and searchable database is expected to:

- Ensure easy access to comprehensive and up-to-date information on all forms of violence against women, as well as actions taken to address such violence;
- Encourage further collection, use and dissemination of data on violence against women, as well as analysis of such data;
- Increase opportunities for exchange of experiences and promising practices in addressing violence against women;
- Improve tracking of trends in addressing violence against women;
- Strengthen the knowledge base for effective policy responses to prevent and address violence against women.

The database provides information on all aspects of Member States’ work to address violence against women, including their:

- Legal framework;
- Policies, strategies and programs;
- Institutional mechanisms;
- Preventive measures;
- Training;
- Research and statistical data; and
- Other measures undertaken, such as engagement in international/regional initiatives, and the creation of specialized police, prosecutors, and courts. (http://endviolence.un.org/)

NY-Based Coalition Efforts

After attending a 2005 conference on human trafficking sponsored by the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops Migrant and Refugee Services (USCCB MRS), representatives from five religious congregations of women formed the New York Coalition of Religious Congregations-Stop Trafficking of Persons (NY-CRC-STOP).

The Coalition now numbers 27 congregations, representing 7000 members and associates. The Coalition, co-chaired by Mary Heyser RSHM and Joan Daber SC of Halifax, collaborates with other coalitions and social service agencies throughout New York State.

NY-CRC-STOP members send out alerts to their members, sponsor several workshops annually and work actively through three main committees. The Legislative Committee was actively involved in getting anti-trafficking legislation passed in NY State in 2007, which penalizes the trafficker and assists the victim. The law focuses on the “demand” side of the sex trade. The Safe Housing Committee has done research and several congregations have offered Emergency Space for trafficked victims. The members of these houses as well as volunteers have received training for this work by the agency that is providing the services. Further steps are in process. The Education Committee prepared a brochure for distribution, and with several members of the Coalition, has given presentations on human trafficking to various audiences.

NY-CRC-STOP intend to see that the NY law is adequately funded to meet the law’s provisions and will monitor that the Bill is enforced. Recently the Safe Harbor Act was passed in New York State to decriminalize prostituted children and provide services for them. The Coalition is also working to stop the DEMAND for human trafficking, whether for sex or labor. In November 2008 NY-CRC-STOP sponsored a workshop to address the issue of DEMAND and to plan ways to take action that will stop the demand for human trafficking.

One of the Coalition members, Letizia Pappalardo RSHM, works with trafficked Nigerian women, assisting them in obtaining identity so they are able to get passports to return to Nigeria.

Mary Heyser RSHM

Silent Vigil

A group of women religious connected to the Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center in Seattle, WA started a monthly silent vigil to raise awareness about modern day slavery. The vigil is held on the first Sunday of each month.

Susan Francois, CSJP
Anti-Human Trafficking Newsletter

Ask Congress to Pass the ‘DREAM Act’

On March 26, 2009, Sen.s Richard Durbin (D-IL) and Richard Lugar (R-IN) introduced the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM Act), S.729. A nearly identical bill (H.R. 1751) was introduced in the House by Reps. Howard Berman (D-CA), Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-FL), and Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA).

The DREAM Act would permit immigrant youth, who have graduated high school, are at least fifteen years of age, and have lived in the U.S. five years, to apply for permanent residence, provided they complete two years of college or serve two years in the military. It also would permit states to offer these youth in-state tuition without restriction. This bill applies to students in public and private schools.

These young persons came to the U.S. as children with their parents, so did not enter the U.S. illegally of their own accord. They know no other homeland than the U.S. and want the opportunity to offer their skills and leadership to our nation. We would be foolhardy not to give them that opportunity. DREAM seeks to provide these students a fair chance to earn citizenship and to contribute to the country they call home.

Efforts have been made to pass this important legislation since 2001. DREAM failed in 2007 by only a few Senate votes. DREAM has support from members of both parties and is backed by President Obama. Yet, grassroots momentum is needed to overcome opposition and ensure that DREAM becomes law. For more information: www.justiceforimmigrants.org

CALL and/or WRITE your representative or senator. Ask them to co-sponsor or support the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act (DREAM, S. 729, H.R. 1751). Tell them, as a co-sponsor of this legislation, they would help 65,000 students per year come out of the shadows and pursue their future goals. Capitol Hill Switchboard: (202) 224-3121; TTY: (202) 225-1904

Corporate Stand: Daughters of the Holy Spirit

Their 2007 Provincial Chapter called the Congregation of the Daughters of the Holy Spirit to “make efforts to see life through the eyes of others, and then dare to take small ingenious steps to stand with them to make a difference”.

In response to that call, they stated, “We collaborate and stand with our Church, with other religious congregations and their affiliates, with inter-faith groups and human rights organizations. We denounce the evil of human trafficking and we stand in love with the persons, who are victims of this evil. We promise to take action whenever we can to eliminate this sin from our world. We seek to hear and to heed the words, the plea and promise of Jesus Christ as he says: ‘Whatever you do to the least of my sisters and brothers, that you do unto me.’

We propose the following Corporate Stance: We, the Daughters of the Holy Spirit of the USA Province, strongly oppose human trafficking in all its forms and in every place where it exists.”

Accepted March 2009.

Two Requests

- Many organizations use the term ‘forced prostitution’ in the context of human trafficking. What does that actually mean? How is it forced? Does this imply another kind of ‘unforced prostitution’? I would like to invite responses and comments. I am suggesting it might be time to clarify the words we use to describe sex slavery and exploitation. We have certainly discussed the word ‘work’in connection with human trafficking and prostitution.

- Our Temple Committee has a goal of creating the Swedish law (criminalizing the ‘demand’) as a Canadian and American Federal law. Our shared borders make this logical, so we have a U.S. Outreach Initiative to network with American counterparts. We would like to contact U.S. groups that focus on law and expand this long term goal across both our countries. We are in the process of creating a Jewish Abolitionist Network, which we hope joins with Christian abolitionists organizations. Imagine a new Underground Railroad of many faiths, men and women standing united and stating unequivocally that prostitution is a form of violence against women and children and we must end it. We hope to follow Sweden’s (and Norway’s) lead. To respond, contact: peggles@sympatico.ca

Peggy Sakow, Co-Chair and US Outreach Coordinator, Temple Committee Against Human Trafficking, Temple Emanu-El-Beth Sholom, Montreal.
2010 Vancouver Olympics: ‘Stop the Demand’

Resist Exploitation Embrace Dignity (REED) is preparing a “Buying Sex is not a Sport” campaign in Vancouver, BC to begin in May 2009 and continue throughout the months prior the hosting of the Olympics in 2010. The campaign organizers are well aware that during large sporting events such as Olympics, there is an increase in the demand for paid sex. Unfortunately there will probably be an increase in human trafficking to meet the increased demand for sexual access to the bodies of women and children during this event. The campaign, “Buying Sex is not a Sport” is one way to increase public awareness of the way ‘demand for paid sex’ drives human trafficking.

Public forums are being organized across Vancouver to raise awareness. Posters, postcards, buttons and t-shirts on this theme will be available for circulation at these events. May 22, 2009 will be the first forum and the launch of the campaign with the showing of the film “Holly” on child trafficking in Cambodia.

Nancy Brown, SC

For more information:
www.embracedignity.org

Sporting Events: “Unlikely Increase in Human Trafficking”

The Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW) issued a briefing paper suggesting there is no increase in trafficking of women forced into prostitution in connection with large sporting events.

GAATW reasons:
• To traffic women is costly and the short sporting event period cannot generate enough profit.
• Large sporting events tend to have a larger police presence, which elevates the risk for the traffickers.
• Visitors’ priority is to attend the sporting events, not to visit brothels.


More Governments ‘Criminalize the Demand’

After years of work by a remarkable group of women in the face of not only governmental setbacks but outright threats from the sex industry in Iceland, the Icelandic Parliament has passed legislation that criminalizes the purchase of sexual services. “Any person who pays, or promises to pay or render consideration of another type, for prostitution shall be fined or imprisoned for up to 1 year.” [and if...] “involving a child under the age of 18 ...up to 2 years.”

Demand cont. from previous col.

“Criminalizing the demand for prostitution, (as has been done in Sweden, South Korea, Nepal, Norway, and now Iceland) is the most effective way to address the problem of sex trafficking.” (www.glow-boell.de/media/en/txt_rubrik_5/Vienna_Forum_Trafficking_Joint_NGO_Statement_140208.pdf)