

Work of  
Network for Peace through Dialogue

# Human Trafficking

**April 25, 2004:** “Women and Children in the Congo”

**November 29, 2006:** “NGO's Response to the Migration of Children from the Philippines Sold as Slaves for Work and Sex”

**March 13, 2007:** “Changes in the Global System Negatively Affect Sexual Exploitation of Girls in NYC”

**May 17, 2007:** “What Legislation is Needed to Stop Human Trafficking in New York?”

**May 15, 2008:** “Prostitution: Is it Really a Choice?”

**October 27, 2010:** “Two Views on the Sex Industry”



240 E. 93rd Street #14B  
New York, New York, 10128  
Phone: (212) 426-5818  
Fax: (212) 987-3575  
info@networkforpeace.com  
www.networkforpeace.com

Compiled by Juli Kalaj 2011

## Who are we?

*Network for Peace through Dialogue* is a non-profit organization which creates opportunities for individuals and groups to engage in constructive conversation in an atmosphere of openness and mutual respect.

## Principles of High Quality Dialogue (as developed by the Network for Peace through Dialogue)

### **Express opinions honestly in response to what others have said:**

- Participants acknowledge that they are expressing their own opinion, rather than expressing an opinion that is true for everyone.
- Participants are able to relate a feeling or story to what has been said.
- Participants express their opinions in a positive and constructive way.

### **Listen attentively to what others have said and respond empathetically:**

- Participants state in their own words the point of view of those who have a different opinion.
- Participants ask questions to get clarity about another point of view.
- Participants make statements that recognize how other people feel.

### **Respond in ways that show an effort to understand others:**

- Participants respond to their insights of others with questions, agreements or respectful disagreement.
- Participants do not try to convince others to change their point of view.

### **Respond in ways that show openness and a willingness to learn:**

- Participants identify and recognize their own assumptions.
- Participants acknowledge any changes in their own points of view.
- Participants state what they have learned from others.

### **What is human trafficking?**

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes states: “Human trafficking is a crime against humanity. It involves an act of recruiting, transporting, transferring, harboring or receiving a person through use of force, coercion or other means, for the purpose of exploiting them.”

### **A summary of the work of the Network for Peace on human trafficking**

The Network for Peace has been documenting its work on its website for many years and for this reason it is a valuable resource for information about topics on which we have focused. Each of our sessions is documented, usually by Peggy Ray who edits our newsletter.

The Network for Peace has promoted conversations on the topic of human trafficking since 2004. Here are excerpts of different living room dialogues and blog entries focusing on the issue of human trafficking found on our website. Also on our website are links to the whole article. Following these summaries are the session write-ups.

### **“Women and Children in the Congo”**

Living Room Dialogue with Mary Rose Beya-Mukeni

April 25, 2004

[http://www.networkforpeace.com/web20/programs\\_lrd\\_congo.html](http://www.networkforpeace.com/web20/programs_lrd_congo.html)

*“Women don't feel entitled to say no to sex or demand the man use a condom. At the same time men hold women responsible for the spread of HIV/AIDS. There are now more deaths from AIDS than from malaria. Yet, this situation is beginning to change, she said, and the key to improving women's lives and the lives of children is education. In terms of health, many women can't read a medical prescription, or understand family planning. Given contraceptive pills, they ask their men to take them, believing that they don't need them and that it is up to men to decide how many children to have.”*

**Summaries**

## **“NGO's Response to the Migration of Children from the Philippines Sold as Slaves for Work and Sex”**

Living Room Dialogue with Sharon Ira L. Tiongco  
November 29, 2006

[http://networkforpeace.com/web20/programs\\_lrd\\_phillippines2.htm](http://networkforpeace.com/web20/programs_lrd_phillippines2.htm)

*“Although trafficking of persons is against the law in many countries, 250,000 women and children from Southeast Asia were abused in this way in 2003, according to a U.S. report. Under Philippine law, three elements define trafficking:*

- *There must be a geographical transfer of the person.*
- *The means used to ensnare the person must involve coercion, such as threats, use of force, abduction, fraud, abuse of power or position, or taking advantage of the vulnerability of the person. Sometimes the parents of a young woman will accept money or other benefits that persuade her to go in order to help the family.*
- *The purpose of the transfer is exploitative or abusive.”*

## **“Changes in the Global System Negatively Affect Sexual Exploitation**

Living Room Dialogue with Carol Smolenski of ECPAT-USA –  
End Child prostitution in Asian Tourism.

March 13, 2007

[http://www.networkforpeace.com/web20/programs\\_lrd\\_smolenski.htm](http://www.networkforpeace.com/web20/programs_lrd_smolenski.htm)

*“The global sex market has been facilitated by globalization, which outside of China and India has increased poverty worldwide. Around 40% of people in the world are living in poverty*

## **“What Legislation is Needed to Stop Human Trafficking in New York?”**

Living Room Dialogue with Taina Bien-Aime, Executive Director of  
Equality Now.

May 17, 2007

[http://networkforpeace.com/web20/programs\\_lrd\\_trafficking.html](http://networkforpeace.com/web20/programs_lrd_trafficking.html)

This was the same day the NYS legislature passed its first bill against trafficking and Taina had just come from leading this action in Albany.

*“The new bill makes human trafficking for sexual servitude a class B felony and for labor servitude a D felony. The law also focuses on the "demand" side by raising the penalties for patronizing prostitutes from a B to an A misdemeanor. It also provides for social services for victims who are immi-*

### **“Prostitution: Is it Really a Choice?”**

Living Room Dialogue with Rachel Lloyd of the Girls Educational & Mentoring Services (GEMS)

May 15 , 2008

[http://networkforpeace.com/web20/programs\\_lrd\\_lloyd-rachel-gems.htm](http://networkforpeace.com/web20/programs_lrd_lloyd-rachel-gems.htm)

*“One bizarre feature of our justice system is that if a girl under 16 has sex with an older man, he can be charged with statutory rape, but if a man pays that same girl for sex, she can be arrested for prostitution.”*

### **“Two Views on the Sex Industry”**

October 27th, 2010 Blog

<http://networkforpeace.com/wordpress/blog.php>

*“Kristen Davis, running for governor on the Anti-Prohibition line, was a business school graduate and vice president in a billion-dollar hedge fund before going into the sex industry. For her this was a business decision. She wanted to change her job and after doing a market analysis of the economics of sex, she founded a hugely successful escort service. When one of her clients, then New York Governor Elliot Spitzer, was exposed, she went to jail for promoting prostitution. Although it was her first offence and a victimless crime, the prosecuting attorney asked for \$10 million bail; she accepted a plea bargain. Meanwhile, Elliot Spitzer, who apparently violated federal money laundering laws and the Mann act, was never charged with a crime.”*

**November 29, 2006**

**Living Room Dialogue with Sharon Ira L. Tiongco  
“Women and Children in the Congo”**

To Mary Rose Beya-Mukeni, a Congolese psychologist, many of the traditions of her country are precious and should be honored by all who would help her people. But there is one tradition that she believes should be challenged: Male domination.

In a Living Room Dialogue presentation on Women in the Congo, she outlined some of the struggles of women in her country. Traditionally, they have not been permitted to talk in groups, not encouraged to obtain higher education, and are legally regarded as children. In some places women can still be killed for adultery while men are expected to have sexual relations with many women.

Women don't feel entitled to say no to sex or demand the man use a condom. At the same time men hold women responsible for the spread of HIV/AIDS. There are now more deaths from AIDS than from malaria. Yet, this situation is beginning to change, she said, and the key to improving women's lives and the lives of children is education. In terms of health, many women can't read a medical prescription, or understand family planning. Given contraceptive pills, they ask their men to take them, believing that they don't need them and that it is up to men to decide how many children to have.



Women don't have the skills to obtain better-paying jobs and yet, with so many men being killed by war, must provide income for their families alone. The sex trade is often the only work they can find. Young women need opportunities for income outside of becoming sex objects. Older men solicit sex from schoolgirls because they regard having sex with youth as a kind of therapy. As a result, many girls are becoming pregnant very young and the rate they are becoming infected with HIV is high and rising.

Men resist having women become educated because they fear women will "take over," and well-educated women sometimes have a hard time socially. For example, many accept being a third or fifth wife in a polygamous marriage because it seems the only kind of marriage they can make.

Ms. Beya-Mukeni's description of the situation of women in her country gave rise to a discussion in the group about the workings of patriarchy in the U.S. The mother of a 17-year-old daughter expressed great concern about the ways youngsters are sexualized at a very early age here and about the images of women as sex objects conveyed by media outlets like MTV and by advertising. She proposed that people should go into schools and educate boys about the difference between pornography and a loving sexual relationship.

Another woman said she felt men generally needed opportunities to learn about emotional intelligence. A third portrayed her son as a gentle and caring stay-at-home dad whose wife became bitter and resentful at the stresses of trying to be a breadwinner and mother at the same time. She argued that the organization of paid employment must become more flexible to allow parents to share the responsibilities of jobs and childcare more equitably.

After her mother spoke, Therese Beya-Mukeni, 13, told the group a little about her experience growing up in Kinshasa. As the child of a faculty member in a university town, she enjoyed great privilege compared to the destitute people who also lived in the community.

Her family felt a responsibility to help in this situation. Her mother, alone among faculty members, permitted some children to obtain water from their house, where it was piped in. Otherwise, they would

have had to walk miles to get water. Children also had to take jobs washing dishes and clothes for less than \$1 a day to help out their families.

She and her friends went into the poor community to teach the children there to read because they had no chance to go to school and spent a lot of time just standing around on the streets. She passed on her outgrown clothes to some children, but that was often difficult because others would feel left out, and then parents would sell the donated clothes anyway.

**November 29, 2006**

**Living Room Dialogue with Sharon Ira L. Tiongco  
“NGO's Response to the Migration of Children  
from the Philippines Sold as Slaves for Work and  
Sex”**

(Presenter: Sharon Ira L. Tiongco, Economic Development Coordinator of the Philippine Agency for Community and Family)

What is “trafficking in persons?” Who are the women and children of the Philippines trafficked for sex and work? How are they ensnared? Who are the traffickers? What can be done to stop this trade? Can this activity rightly be called “slavery?”

These were questions that surfaced in Sharon Tiongco’s presentation and the following discussion during this Living Room Dialogue.



Courtney (left), coordinator of web program, and Virginia, invite Sharon and her Philippine colleagues to join our forum.



Although trafficking of persons is against the law in many countries, 250,000 women and children from Southeast Asia were abused in this way in 2003, according to a U.S. report. Under Philippine law, three elements define trafficking:

- There must be a geographical transfer of the person.
- The means used to ensnare the person must involve coercion, such as threats, use of force, abduction, fraud, abuse of power or position, or taking advantage of the vulnerability of the person. Sometimes the parents of a young woman will accept money or other benefits that persuade her to go in order to help the family.
- The purpose of the transfer is exploitative or abusive.

Although usually this activity is thought of as trafficking women and girls for sex, other forms of exploitative labor can be involved. Victims of trafficking come from poor families, frequently in rural areas. There is a general lack of job opportunities. Young people, particularly girls, find it hard to continue schooling. To help us understand how this works, Sharon gave us the example of Girlie, a 17-year-old girl from Davao, a city in the southern island of Mindanao. Girlie's mother was thought to be in Manila, and Girlie wanted to find her.

As she had no money for passage, to get to Manila, she signed up with a recruiter. Recruiters in general seem to be supported by large, shadowy, criminal



Sharon begins her power point presentation on young people sold into slavery in the southern Philippines



The group listens to what Sharon is saying



The group responds with their own reflections



Sharon, Muriel, and Kathleen pose for the picture

organizations that are hard to track down. However, they can and do advertise openly in the Philippines in newspapers and elsewhere. Sometimes a recruiter can be a person in a village who is trusted by the people in the village, even a woman who was once recruited herself and returns with a display of luxury and comfort.

Girlie traveled for eight days by land and sea inside a jeepney that she was not allowed to leave. Forty other people were squeezed into a vehicle that was designed to hold no more than 20. A tarpaulin covered it, so that its contents could be passed off as cargo such as chickens. The passengers were given noodles and dried fish to eat.

In Manila, Girlie could not find her mother, but was now obliged to work off the 7,500 pesos owed the recruiter. Her first job was as a domestic worker in a household where she was expected to be familiar with appliances that she had never seen or heard of before. Because of her clumsiness with these, she was constantly berated by the people in the household. She also was not allowed to leave the house.

As she proved unsatisfactory in this job, she was sent to another household where she was expected to work as a babysitter. Girlie was not good at this either, so she was sent back to the recruiter's hostel – a single room shared by 25 men and women.



Sharon, Kathleen, and Virginia look forward to further collaboration



Group photo of the Living Room Dialogue Participants

Next, Girlie was sent to work as a waitress in a bar where she was upset by the way men touched her, which made her feel cheap. She did not work out in this job either and was once again sent back to the hostel where she was reminded she had pay 7,500 pesos before she could leave.

Finally, one recruit escaped and went to the police. The hostel was raided and Girlie released. She was lucky to be assisted by the Vasayan Forum, an NGO that works primarily with victims of trafficking. However, most victims, even when “saved,”

have no place to go.

Sharon said it was difficult to obtain passage of the law against trafficking in the Philippines because legislators tended to think of this as ordinary economic activity rather than as a crime. They ask “what’s wrong with it?” Workers who leave the Philippines to work are frequently seen as heroes because they send huge amounts of money back home. The victims frequently “agree” to their contracts, often not fully realizing what they (or the parents who are encouraging them to go with recruiters) are getting into.

NGOs trying to stop the trafficking mostly depend on educating people about the consequences of signing up with recruiters. It is difficult to figure out how the recruiters are organized, although trade amounts to billions of dollars. Although there are thick files with the names of victims, information on recruiters can be listed on a single sheet of paper. Prosecutors rely on the testimony of victims who agree to talk but otherwise they have no case, and victims are usually too frightened to talk. In one case, a safe house housing a witness had to move three times although they didn’t know who the persons were who were threatening them.

In the dialogue following Sharon’s presentation, there was an attempt to identify the social structures or systems within which trafficking of persons takes place. One participant identified the system as “patriarchy” and called for a “paradigm shift,” which would be indicated by a change of language. For one thing, a person paying for sex should be called a perpetrator and treated as a rapist, she argued. Another participant identified population growth as a factor and asked about family planning in the Philippines. Sharon said “machismo” is a problem, in that men expect the consolations of sex after a hard day of work. She also described an ad for rum using the slogan “Do you like a 15-year-old?” that revealed an underlying attitude toward the use of girls that age.

The economic system also needed to be examined. There are not enough jobs in the Philippines. What is the role of the globalized economy in this? The Philippines is rich in natural resources but even if these are exported, the people of the country do not usually benefit. And do we call the system of trafficking workers “slavery?”

“Indentured servitude?”

One successful project sponsored by Sharon’s NGO involved partnering with local businesses to train 20 workers. The workers were supported by the NGO while they received their training, but 15 of the 20 eventually were employed by the businesses.

There are things that we can do in this country to stop trafficking by pressuring our own government and international organizations like the UN to get serious about enforcing anti-trafficking laws. Authorities tend to look the other way, Sharon said.

At the end of the discussion, participants acknowledged that we do not have to look all the way to the Philippines to find examples of sexual exploitation. Here in New York, just under our noses, young women disappear into a net of sexual predation.

To conclude, Jinny Dorgan asked for an evaluation of the discussion – could we call it “dialogue?” And if so, in what way? We agreed that it was not dialogue in the sense that opposing views were represented – we were all basically on the same wave length. However, people listened well to one another and the discussion built on the contributions each participant made.

## **LET’S SHIFT OUR FOCUS....\***

**GLOBAL**



**LOCAL**

\*Think globally, act locally.

**March 13, 2007**

**Living Room Dialogue with Carol Smolenski  
“Changes in the Global System Negatively Affect  
Sexual Exploitation of Girls in NYC”**

Last November, Sharon Tiongco, a visitor from the Philippines, talked to us about human trafficking of young women in her country for sex and domestic labor. At the closing of her talk, she urged us not to think of this problem as something that is happening “over there,” but to find out what is going on in New York and possibly take some action.

Following up on that, the Network invited Carol Smolenski of ECPAT-USA to talk to us about the trafficking of children for commercial sexual exploitation. At the end of these notes, you will find her suggestions for taking action.

ECPAT, which stands for End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism, was created in 1991 by people horrified at the way children were being exploited sexually in places like Bangkok. ECPAT-USA was formed in 1996 and has expanded its mission to ending sexual exploitation of children in the U.S.

Some things we learned from Carol: According to a CIA report issued in 2000, New York is a main port of entry and a transit area for traffickers either depositing victims in the metropolitan area or circulating them to other cities across the



Carol makes her opening remarks.



The group is moved by the terrible statistics of trafficking.



Some discussion on trafficking in



Don Rigoni, the host, (and the only man present) offers a new perspective.

country. Sometimes the victims enter legally, sometimes only after being drugged, kidnapped, or physically restrained in some way. Sometimes they don't know they are being trafficked until they get here, having been told they would be given employment here.

Some 600-800,000 people every year are trafficked across the globe, 80% women and 50% under 18, 14,000-18,000 ending up in the U.S. Often they are afraid to seek help. Traffickers tell them the U.S. authorities are in on the deal and will be no help or they threaten to harm the victims' families at home.

The global sex market has been facilitated by the poverty created by globalization. Around 40% of people in the world are living in poverty and making them ripe for this sort of exploitation.

The growth of the internet has been also a factor in the exploding sex industry. Child pornography available on-line increasingly uses younger and younger children, many under six, and even three-year-olds. People are being sold on eBay (escort section).

Child sex tours used to be freely promoted but now are underground because of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act passed in the U.S. in 2000.

In 1996, 120 countries came to the World Congress against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children,



Carol seeks support to implement a Code of Conduct for airlines and hotels so that they may stop trafficking



Bev and Leslyn, two Network Board Members, talk after the dialogue session ends.

co-sponsored by ECPAT, UNICEF and the United Nations World Tourism Organization. Although the airlines and hotels are not directly involved in the sex industry, their infrastructure is employed by travelers in pursuit of sex with children. A Code of Conduct was developed which has now been signed by 300 companies. For more information on this code, go to [www.ecpatusa.org](http://www.ecpatusa.org) or [www.thecode.org](http://www.thecode.org).

Some suggestions for action:

- Write letters to airlines and hotel chains urging them to sign on to the Code of Conduct. A sample letter along with the names and addresses of airline and hotel executives follows these notes along with a list of organizations which already have signed the code.
- Talk to men about prostitution. Twenty-five percent of the men engaging in sex tourism come from the U.S. Most others come from Germany, Australia, Sweden and Japan. Often they think they are doing children a favor because they are poor and can use the money. Or they think that the use of children is permissible in the countries they are visiting. Tip: Commercial exploitation is illegal in all countries.
- Write letters to legislators. Young people forced into prostitution are frequently treated as criminals rather than victims in need of help. The NYPD arrests 12-year-olds as prostitutes but leaves pimps and johns alone.
- Publicize guidelines for identifying trafficking victims. Sometimes not even police are able to do this. ECPAT can help with this.

Some of the thoughts that came up in the discussion after Carol's presentation:

- Sex is treated as a commodity in this country in all kinds of ways. Sexuality is used to sell almost everything. This creates an atmosphere where sex tourism can be seen as acceptable. Also children are being sexualized at younger and younger ages. One person mentioned seeing "pimp and ho" costumes for eight-year-olds. The American Psychological Association has published a 2007 report of the Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls discussing this.
- Hundreds of youngsters in New York are resorting to prostitution for survival or are exploited by pimps. One participant reported that children in foster care in the city are frequently used as domestic slaves or are sexually exploited. She plans to push the city's Agency for Children's Services to prevent this.
- A devil's advocate in the room asked whether cultural attitudes in other countries toward prostitution and sex with children should be respected. There was some heated discussion about whether it would make sense to accept prostitution as inevitable, legalize and regulate it. This would de-criminalize it on the one hand, but on the other

hand, regulation would not likely protect the most vulnerable.

## **May 17, 2007 - Living Room Dialogue with Taina Bien-Aime “What Legislation is Needed to Stop Human Trafficking in New York?”**

When she spoke at a Living Room Dialogue last May, Taina Bien-Aime, Executive Director of Equality Now, had something to celebrate. New York Gov. Eliot Spitzer and legislative leaders had just come to an agreement on a strong bill against human trafficking, stronger even than the women who had been campaigning for the bill had hoped for.

New York State has not had a law against trafficking. Equality Now, an international human rights organization, and other members of the New York State Anti-Trafficking Coalition\* worked to get a strong law that criminalized human trafficking for labor and sexual servitude. While many individuals are trafficked for labor servitude, the majority who are trafficked are women and children, most of whom wind up in the commercial sex trade. In addition to working toward the passage of an anti-trafficking law, Equality Now and the Coalition wanted to challenge the perception that prostitution is somehow a “normal” activity and to work against the multi-billion-dollar sex-trafficking industry. Despite arguments that the women or girls “consent” to enter the sex trade, bringing women and girls into prostitution, most often through deception and fraud, always involves exploiting their vulnerability. Commercial sex treats human beings as commodities to be bought and sold, a clear human rights violation.

The Coalition wanted to put the legislative spotlight on the “demand” side of the sex trade, the men who exploit women and buy sexual ser-

sexual services. In order to focus on demand, Equality Now has worked on trying to shut down sex tour operators.

The new bill makes human trafficking for sexual servitude a class B felony and for labor servitude a D felony. The law also focuses on the "demand" side by raising the penalties for patronizing prostitutes from a B to an A misdemeanor. It also provides for social services for victims who are immigrants or foreign nationals.

Bien-Aime was very appreciative of the intervention of the Governor, who got involved in the anti-trafficking issue while Attorney General when he successfully shut down Big Apple Oriental Tours, a sex tour operator. He began investigating the sex tour company apparently after he received a compelling letter from Gloria Steinem asking him to do so. Equality Now had been trying for years without success to get the DA in Queens to go after Big Apple Oriental Tours, an agency that promised its male clients "the best time of your life" with "as many women as you like."

Equality Now's method of advocacy is to urge members of its Women's Action Network to contact public officials about specific cases of abuse. Bien-Aime cited Gloria Steinem's letter to Attorney General Spitzer as an example of the difference a single letter can make. The Attorney General first obtained a temporary restraining order against Big Apple Oriental Tours, the first of its kind, and later an indictment against its owner and operator. The case is scheduled to go to trial in June.

All but two of the participants in this Living Room Dialogue were women. There wasn't anyone who argued for a view of prostitutes as independent contractors making this a career choice or "happy hookers." No one tried to make the case that "boys will be boys," or that men "need" sex and must have it available in this way, or that men buying sexual services were helping out women by providing them with income. Such attitudes were cited as views that needed to be countered.

Participants asked such questions as: Couldn't we find another name besides "john" for the client of a prostitute? It makes the purchase

sound so innocent – John could be the name of your father or brother. A paradigm shift was thought to be necessary so that this “innocent” and “ordinary” transaction is recognized as an issue of gender inequality.

There was some questioning of what happens to boys so that they learn to look to women either as the embodiment of sexual fantasies or as household madonnas. How can they be educated differently? How are all our children being affected by the sexualization of so many aspects of our culture? One of the men present was a Boy Scout leader who said boys asked him what to do when girls “come on fast” to them. A woman spoke of having a hard time finding a simple dress her young daughter could wear to church because the clothing on sale for girls was so sexually provocative.

Participants appreciated Bien-Aime’s account of the elements of this success story. A final observation, though, was that the ideal of “equality” for women is still a profoundly radical notion.

*\*Members of the New York State Anti-Trafficking Coalition include, in addition to Equality Now, Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, Girls Education and Monitoring Services (GEMS), inMotion, My Sisters’ Place, NOW NY State and City chapters, and Sanctuary for Families.*

## **May 15 , 2008**

### **Living Room Dialogue with Rachel Lloyd, Girls Educational & Mentoring Services**

#### **“Prostitution: Is it Really a Choice?”**

“Prostitute,” “sex worker,” “prostituted woman,” “commercially exploited child or youth.” What words do we choose when we discuss the sex industry and the people caught in it? The language we use affects how we think about the industry and policy decisions about it.



“Prostituted woman” and “commercially exploited child or youth” were the terms favored by Rachel Lloyd, Executive Director of Girls Educational and Mentoring Services (GEMS) when she spoke at a Living Room Dialogue on May 15. The topic for the evening was “Prostitution: Is It Really a Choice?” Her answer to the question was a resounding “No.” The issue is not about choice, but lack of choice, she said.

GEMS provides services for young women who are at risk for or are involved in sexual exploitation and violence. When talking to the teenagers and young women who come into her program, she refers to them as “commercially exploited” and stresses that “this happened TO you,” “adults did this to you.” The average age for entering the sex trade is 12 to 14 years old.

“Is a 12- or 14-year-old likely to decide on her own to go into the street at Hunts Point and solicit sex?” Rachel asked. For sure there’s going to be a predatory male behind her telling her what to do. In the case of adult women involved in the sex trade, she pointed out that most (70-90%) were abused as children and only a tiny minority enter the business as adults.

To her the term “prostitute” suggests level of choice that does not exist. It implies that you freely decided to engage in commercial sex and did so because you are a flawed person, a slut. Maybe in a



utopian society where everybody feels equal to everybody else, everybody has the food, shelter, education and opportunities they need, and nobody is sexually abused as a child, a person might freely choose to enter this occupation. But that isn’t the case so far.

A dialogue participant suggested that using the term “sex worker” might help to take away the stigma attached to being prostituted because it points to the need for economic survival that keeps many people “in the life.” It also speaks to the lack of choice she mentioned.

Rachel was adamantly against using this language. She believes using the term “worker” lends legitimacy to exploitation. Commercial sex is quite different in important ways from what we usually consider to be work. The work she does at GEMS gives her a sense of accomplishment that a person has just sexually serviced 10 men is not likely to feel, she said. Moreover, a worker usually doesn’t have to worry about whether her boss or customers are going to beat or kill her.

That a few women in the high-paying end of the industry have claimed that their trade is empowering doesn’t persuade her. “You have to stay in some form of denial to do it,” she said, “turn yourself off.” Many times the victims don’t recognize themselves as exploited in the beginning. Furthermore, if you probe deeper into their lives and thinking, you are likely to find that they were brought into the trade at 12- or 14-years old.

Girls are recruited at an age when they are most vulnerable. Often they have come from such a dysfunctional home and/or have experienced sexual abuse that they already feel that they and their bodies are worth nothing. They can be easily lured by an older man who treats them nicely in any way. One girl told Rachel how exciting it was to be taken out for dinner to “a fancy place,” Red Lobster. What works is a combination of coercion and what might seem to be love.

One bizarre feature of our justice system is that if a girl under 16 has sex with an older man, he can be charged with statutory rape, but if a man pays that same girl for sex, she can be arrested for prostitution. Another is that the treatment of young people of color is different than that accorded young whites. People of color are more likely than whites to be incarcerated even though the offence is the same.

Another word that should be reconsidered is “john” used in reference

to men who buy sex. John has a very innocent sound, whereas actual “johns” can be predators who drug children or who menace or beat the commercially exploited person.

One dialogue participant asked about the market for sex. Demand is what fuels it and the demand is huge. It’s a billion-dollar industry, very profitable, and just keeps growing. For example, in Amsterdam, the Dutch tried legalizing it and found that for every legalized brothel, five illegal ones popped up. Rates of trafficking of girls and women from other countries skyrocketed.

Rachel suggested that for a look at the demand in this country, all that is needed is to check out the exotic services section of Craig’s List, where an 11-year-old was recently sold. Girls are being sold up and down the East Coast, she said.

**Some other questions participants asked Rachel:**

- “What can we do?” First, she advised, change the language we are using. That will help to change public perceptions of the problem. Talk to people you know. See what you can figure out what you can do in your community, maybe have a clothing or fund drive.
- “Where do “johns” come from?” Some of the reasons: The ways men are socialized to see woman as madams or whores – the wives at home with the children vs. the bad girls. We know that rape is about power and control and so is this. Sex without any responsibility for the other person can be attractive to some. The easy availability of pornography on the internet – it’s been shown that pornography desensitizes you to thinking that the other you are using sexually is not anybody like you or your family and that it’s OK to do anything you want with her.
- “How do people come to you?” Through street outreach, juvenile detention centers, group homes, guidance counselors, social workers, but mostly by court mandate (about 60%). At GEMS, they learn there are resources for them and that the pimp can be replaced by a new community. There is some transitional housing.
- “What is the effect of the child welfare system?” A lot of the youngsters have been in foster care (about 70%). They have never formed meaningful relationships, often have been made to “feel like dirt.” They age out of the system at 18 and are turned out into the

street with no resources.

- “Do you try to get in touch with their parents?” The teen-agers very much want family and often want to return to family, but mostly their families are part of the problem. It’s very disappointing to go home to substance-abusing family members, for instance. At GEMS they are helped to enter a new community.
- “What nurtures you?” Her faith and the work give a sense of purpose to Rachel’s life. She belongs to a non-denominational church community in the Bronx. Also, she has fun with the teenagers, who “have learned to find humor and beauty in dark places,” as she put it. She enjoys their successes: three GEMS girls are in college this semester.

In the final go-round of participants, several mentioned that the reality of the sex industry was new to them and that the young ages at which girls were recruited was news to them. One said a new insight was how the victims could feel like “a piece of cattle.”

There was some discussion about our culture in general. The glamorization of violence in the media, for one example, the hypersexualization of youth for another. It’s even hard to buy clothing for children that’s not sexually provocative, and some parents think this is “cute.”

A few participants mentioned concern for men. One thought there needed to be some sort of program for men who felt the need to fill their sexual needs by buying sex. Another speculated that men might disrespect the bodies of women because they are expected to disregard the integrity and value of their own bodies – heroes are the guys on the football field or in the boxing ring being knocked around physically while millions watch and the men who risk their bodies and lives in warfare.

Finally, there was huge appreciation for Rachel herself and the work that she does and thanks for sharing her knowledge and experience with the group.

Rachel Lloyd, is the founder of GEMS (Girls Educational and Mentoring Services). What Kristen Davis saw as a business opportunity, Rachel Lloyd regards as the commercial exploitation of young girls and women. Herself sexually exploited as a teenager, she knows the emotional scars this experience can leave. Her passion is to assist others to gain the knowledge, skills and emotional support they need in order to exit “the life.”

Starting in 1989 with \$30 and a computer, Lloyd has built GEMS into a nationally recognized organization aiming to empower girls and young women 12-21 who have experienced sexual exploitation. She has been cited by Ms. Magazine as one of “50 Women Who Change the World.” The NY Daily News nominated her one of 100 Women Who Shape New York. Her advocacy is the subject of the documentary “Very Young Girls,” which can be downloaded from Netflix.



**Now, reflect on these questions yourself.**



Where do we see trafficking of women?

Is it in our neighborhood?

What is being done about it?

What can we do to help?



## **Two Views on the Sex Industry**

Network for Peace BLOG by: Peggy Ray  
Wednesday, October 27th, 2010 Blog  
<http://networkforpeace.com/wordpress/blog.php>

With election day coming up, I have been intrigued by the candidacy of Kristen Davis, the former madam who is running for governor of New York State. From what I can tell from her TV image, she is personable and intelligent. Her views on the sex industry, however, differ radically from those of a different personable and intelligent woman I have met, Rachel Lloyd, the founder of an organization that aims to rescue young women from the sex trade.

Kristen Davis, running for governor on the Anti-Prohibition line, was a business school graduate and vice president in a billion-dollar hedge fund before going into the sex industry. For her this was a business decision. She wanted to change her job and after doing a market analysis of the economics of sex, she founded a hugely successful escort service.

When one of her clients, then New York Governor Elliot Spitzer, was exposed, she went to jail for promoting prostitution. Although it was her first offence and a victimless crime, the prosecuting attorney asked for \$10 million bail; she accepted a plea bargain. Meanwhile, Elliot Spitzer, who apparently violated federal money laundering laws and the Mann act, was never charged with a crime.

Davis says she wants to challenge a criminal justice system which favors “wealthy, white, and politically connected men and mistreats women, poor people and minorities.” She also wants to legalize prostitution, creating a system which would provide protection for unwary women who can be beaten or killed in the practice of their trade.

For more information on how you can get involved and how we can work together to eradicate the issue of human trafficking, please refer to the following list of organizations:

**ECPAT-USA**

157 Montague Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Carol Smolenski, Executive Director  
Phone: 718-935-9192  
E-mail: [ecpat@ecpatusa.org](mailto:ecpat@ecpatusa.org)  
Website: <http://expatusa.org/>

**Equality Now**

P.O. Box 20646  
Columbus Circle Station  
New York, NY 10023

Taina Bien-Aime  
Fax: 212-586-1611  
E-mail: [info@equalitynow.org](mailto:info@equalitynow.org)  
Website: <http://www.equalitynow.org/>

**GEMS - Girls Educational & Mentoring Services**

201 West 148<sup>th</sup> St.  
New York, NY 10039

Rachel Lloyd  
Phone: 212-926-8089  
E-mail: [janice@gems-girls.org](mailto:janice@gems-girls.org)  
Website: <http://www.gems-girls.org/>

### **Media for Humanity**

780 Madison Avenue, Suite 5D  
New York, NY 10065

Melanie Siben  
Phone: 212-888-KIDS  
E-mail: [info@media4humanity.org](mailto:info@media4humanity.org)  
Website: <http://www.mediaforhumanity.org>

### **Restore NYC**

Bowling Green Station  
P.O. Box 1003  
New York, NY 10274-1003

Faith Huckel, Executive Director and Co-Founder  
E-mail: [info@restorenyc.org](mailto:info@restorenyc.org)  
Website: <http://restorenyc.org/>

### **Sanctuary for Families**

P.O. Box 1406  
Wall Street Station  
New York, NY 10268

Dorchen Leidholdt, Esq.  
Phone: 212-349-6009 (x. 252)  
E-mail: [dorchen@ssfny.org](mailto:dorchen@ssfny.org)  
Website: <http://www.sanctuaryforfamilies.org/>