



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **Rally Today! 12:30pm Foley Square**

### **Stop Trafficking of Latin American People to US**

#### *NY Figures Prominently in Global Human Trafficking*

New York, NY—Joined by Hispanic organizations and community leaders, NOW-NYC will be on the steps of Foley Square today to protest New York State's lack of a law that criminalizes trafficking in people in New York.

“Over the last few years, nearly half of all states in our country have taken up the issue of trafficking by passing laws criminalizing it,” said Sonia Ossorio, president of the National Organization for Women in New York City. “Yet New York lags behind. There are few states that have as compelling and immediate a need for tough anti-trafficking laws. It is happening throughout our community, in our neighborhoods.”

New York City is consistently named as one of the top cities that traffickers use as both a point of entry into the U.S., transit location, and as a final destination point for their victims. The largest trafficking case in the country prosecuted by the federal government was a 10-year operation that brought young, poor, uneducated women from Tenancingo, Mexico to Queens where they were beaten, raped and then forced to work in prostitution seven days a week.

“The Latino community of New York is disproportionately affected by the global organized crime industry of trafficking in people,” Ossorio said. “Under current New York State law traffickers operate in a felony-free zone. The National Organization for Women wants to see a top count trafficking charge be nothing less than a C violent felony with mandatory jail time.”

Human trafficking is a devastating human rights violation occurring right here in our own neighborhoods. The United States is the second highest destination in the world for trafficked women, bringing in an estimated 17,500 women every year.

This year, NOW-NYC launched one of its most critical campaigns to date: ***Ending the Business of Human Trafficking in New York City***. Working in collaboration with city, state, and federal officials, as well as non-governmental organizations, NOW-NYC is combating this pervasive problem by raising community awareness of human trafficking throughout New York State; advocating on behalf of exploited victims by lobbying for comprehensive and effective legislation; and educating local businesses about their role in this illegal industry while suggesting economic alternatives aimed at breaking the cycle of enslavement.

“The motive that drives traffickers is the enormous profits to be made fueled by demand” Ossorio said. “While poverty and inequality are factors in making certain populations vulnerable, the primary factor driving is the ability to make huge profits due to high demand and the negligible-to-low risk of prosecution.”

Beyond NOW-NYC, the New York State Anti-Trafficking Coalition includes the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, Equality Now, GEMS, inMotion, My Sisters' Place, National Organization for Women-NY State, and Sanctuary for Families. The Coalition is a group of organizations that have joined forces to advocate for an effective New York State law to criminalize traffickers and to protect and help victims of this abuse.

“The booming international trade in women and children for sexual and labor servitude is the dark side globalization. People tend to view trafficking as an international problem, but it is happening in our

neighborhoods,” Ossorio said. “There’s no silver bullet to stop trafficking today, but we need to start gathering the intelligence, looking at our government agencies to see how victims can be better served, that’s the harder part. The easier party is getting a good strong law that lets the people of New York know we care about human rights. We need to let traffickers know it’s a new day and their free reign on our streets is over.”

The National Organization for Women is the nation’s largest organization working to advance women’s rights and improve women’s lives. The New York City Chapter of NOW, founded in 1966, is the largest chapter in the country with 7,000 members locally and 35,000 statewide. NOW-NYC works to protect women’s reproductive choices, end violence against women and eliminate sex discrimination in our schools, workplaces, and the justice system in New York.