



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 22, 2007  
Sonia Ossorio  
President, NOW-NYC  
212.627.9895

## **Where's New York's Apology to Sex Slaves?** *Trafficking of Women is thriving in NYC in 2007*

New York, NY—As the US House of Representatives debates a non-binding resolution demanding the Japanese government apologize for its nation's enslavement of some 200,000 foreign women in army brothels during World War II, New York continues to ignore its own role in the global sex trafficking industry, according to Sonia Ossorio, President of the National Organization for Women in NYC.

The United States is the second biggest destination in the world for trafficked women, bringing in an estimated 17,500 women every year. New York City is consistently named as one of the top cities that traffickers use as a point of entry into the U.S., a transit location, and as a final destination for victims.

“Brothels disguised as massage parlors exist in every neighborhood of this city, and are shamelessly advertised in local newspapers and online. Women every day are trafficked to New York for sexual exploitation and yet the crime goes unpunished,” Ossorio said. “Traffickers openly and brazenly supply the local sex market by taking advantage of vulnerable, powerless women who think they are coming to the US to find the American dream. A nightmare often awaits them at the hands of traffickers.”

New York State has yet to pass legislation outlawing human trafficking, allocate needed funds to provide services to rescued victims, incorporate the tracking of the crime of trafficking in its criminal justice system, focus on local prosecution of traffickers and train our state and local police departments on identification and rescue.

“There are few states in our country with as compelling a need as New York to be tough on the crime of trafficking,” Ossorio said. “New York should be on the forefront of this issue. But the uncomfortable truth is that we are behind the ball. While other states have put the resources into figuring out this problem, New York has done little.”

NOW-NYC understands that combating this pervasive problem will take more than a long-awaited apology. This year, NOW-NYC launched its campaign *Ending the Business of Human Trafficking in New York City* by raising community awareness of sex and labor human trafficking throughout New York State; advocating on behalf of exploited victims by lobbying for comprehensive and effective legislation that appropriately penalizes traffickers; tracking traffickers and educating local businesses about their role in this illegal industry in an effort to break the cycle of enslavement.

“While poverty and inequality are factors in making certain populations vulnerable, the primary factor driving this business is the ability to make huge profits due to high demand and the negligible-to-low risk of prosecution.” Ossorio said. “A strong law lets the people of New York know we care about human rights and it lets traffickers know it's a new day in our great state 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.