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## **Major NYC Sex Trafficking Ring Case Ends**

### ***Women Forced to Work in Prostitution 12 Hours a Day***

#### **NOW-NYC Asks Governor Paterson to Sign Law Protecting Children Lured into Prostitution**

New York, NY- For 13 years, poor women from rural Mexico were brought to New York City where they were beaten, raped and forced to work 12 hours a day in prostitution. The last defendant in this case, Consuelo Carreto Valencia, plead guilty in federal court in Brooklyn on Tuesday. This federal case is the latest indictment that indicates New York City is a hotbed for the trafficking of women and girls for commercial sexual exploitation.

“New York is a bonanza for traffickers,” said Sonia Ossorio, President of NOW-NYC. “This brutal trafficking ring operated freely for 13 years. This was a larger operation the feds went after. There are many more small-time traffickers who can fly under the radar of federal prosecutors and find New York City to be a great market to sell women and girls.”

After smuggling them into the US, the women were housed in apartments on Roosevelt Avenue in Corona, Queens and forced to work in various brothels throughout New York City. Every aspect of their lives was controlled, including how many men they had to have sex with for money. They had no ability to refuse individual men or any type of sex act. They worked 12 hours a day, often in unsanitary surroundings. Their earnings were split between the brothel owner and the Carreto trafficking ring.

“It is hard to live in New York City knowing there are women and girls locked in brothels, being used sexually by anyone who will pay \$25. This is slavery in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and much needs to be done to combat it,” Ossorio said. “The New York State legislature needs to devote funds for Public Service Announcements, education and training of police, prosecutors, and judges, and services for the victims.”

New York has only begun to tackle the epidemic of trafficking that exists throughout our community with the passage in 2007 of the first anti-trafficking law, which makes sex trafficking a B felony. However, the state legislature allocated only \$450,000 to the effort, less than what it costs to clean NYC streets after one snowfall.

“If we decide to make this a priority, local law enforcement can rescue women, arrest the men who create the demand and send a strong message to traffickers that New York no longer wants their business,” Ossorio said.

The trafficking of American minors is also at epidemic proportions. A study conducted by WESTAT for the Office of Children and Family Services, found more than 2,200 children being commercially sexually exploited in NYC alone. The Safe Harbor Act, a bill that would provide services rather than detention for these children, has passed in the Assembly and the Senate.

“NOW-NYC is urging Governor Paterson to sign this bill into law,” Ossorio said. “These kids deserve protection.”

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.