



PRESS ADVISORY

Date: May 27, 2008
CONTACT: Sonia Ossorio
President, NOW-NYC
212.627.9895

New York Teens Caught in the Sex Trade *NOW-NYC Sponsors Community Forum to Find Solutions*

EVENT: Mean Streets: NY Teens Caught in the Sex Trade

DATE & TIME: Wednesday, May 28, 2008, 6:30 PM -8:45 PM

LOCATION: LGBT Community Center, 208 W. 13th Street

EVENT SUMMARY: Documentary Film: 6:45-7:45 PM; *Teen Prostitution: Sex Workers or Victims?* Part of the Oxygen Network's original documentary series, *Who Cares About Girls?* (<http://www.oxygen.com/icare/>) Panel Discussion: 7:45 PM-8:45 PM; **Patti Binder, Deputy Director of Girls Educational & Mentoring Services (GEMS), **Lori B. Iskowitz**, Senior Trial Counsel, Assistant Deputy Borough Chief in the Family Court Division of the NYC Law Department, **Katherine Mullen**, Attorney, Legal Aid Society, Juvenile Rights Division, **Jo Rees**, Deputy Executive Director of Friends of Island Academy, **Lise Zumwalt**, Producer of the film. The discussion will be moderated by NOW-NYC President, **Sonia Ossorio**.**

New York, NY – May 27, 2008 Advertised in places like Craigslist, sex with children is a thriving part of the NYC sex trade. Every year, kids as young as 12 are sexually exploited by pimps and johns, and they face a system ill-equipped to provide the services needed to help them reclaim their young lives. This problem disproportionately affects African-American girls, as well as gay and transgender youth runaways. NOW-NYC and the NY Anti-Trafficking Coalition are hosting this film screening and community forum to move advocates and key players forward on changing laws, policies, and attitudes about teen sexual exploitation.

- ❖ **Every year, thousands of kids, 85% of which are girls and 67% of which are African American, end up as the victims of sexual exploitation in New York City.** A majority of these kids have already run away from abusive situations or homes and have a history of sexual abuse. But instead of finding a better place, they are trafficked by pimps and coerced and manipulated into a life of prostitution.
- ❖ **Selling sex is a harsh reality for girls as young as 13 and 14, which is the average age of entry into prostitution in the United States.** In New York City, the standard is that these girls are bought and sold by eight men per night. Advertised on Craigslist or in the back pages of local newspapers, sex with children is rampantly marketed and readily available throughout New York.
- ❖ **Studies have demonstrated that the longer a child is kept in detention, the more resistant they are to services that can help them** and the harder it is to engage them effectively. The reality is that there are currently very few alternatives for these kids. Eighty to ninety percent of exploited children have previously been sexually abused and two-thirds to three quarters experience mental health problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder. These children are in clear need of help, but there are currently no state programs that can specifically address their needs.

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 gender discrimination in our schools, workplaces, and the justice system in New York.

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