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Contact: Diana Lee, 646-200-5322, diana@berlinrosen.com

New Research Shows Human Trafficking Pipeline From Mexico to NYC

Cross-Cultural Panel of Experts Discuss Role of Poverty and Factors that Increase Likelihood of Trafficking

Experts Recommend Strategies for Prevention and Resources to Help Survivors

New York, NY: At a panel discussion hosted by the New York Anti-Trafficking Network on Thursday, Mexican and American experts discussed new research from the [Sex Workers Project at the Urban Justice Center](#), which analyses the phenomenon of human trafficking from Mexico to New York City.

For generations, women have been trafficked from the small town of San Miguel Tenancingo, Tlaxcala in Mexico, and hundreds of them end up forced into prostitution in New York City. The panel discussed the findings of a new report, [The Road North: The Role of Gender, Poverty and Violence in Trafficking from Mexico to the U.S.](#), which highlights the experiences of 37 individuals who were trafficked from Mexico to the U.S. The panel discussed the root causes of this trafficking pipeline, alongside first-hand accounts that illustrate the findings:

- **Poverty is likely to contribute to trafficking.** 75% of victims describe serious fiscal hardship during their childhood, and almost all victims had limited schooling due to financial reasons. Poverty in Mexico, the report claims, has been exacerbated by U.S. policy.
- **Experiences with violence prior to trafficking increase likelihood of trafficking.** 54% of affiants described a violent experience prior to trafficking, including witnessing domestic violence, being a victim of physical or sexual abuse, or witnessing a murder. For many victims, violence in their homes influenced their desire to leave and go with the trafficker. Transgender victims experienced the highest rates of violence.
- **Victims are most often introduced to their trafficker through a family member or friend.** A minority of victims were trafficked by strangers, despite popular belief – in fact, nearly 70% of victims met the person who trafficked them through a family member, friend or neighbor, contributing to their initial trust of the trafficker.

“After working with Mexican survivors for so many years, we are hopeful that this report will have a real impact,” said **Sienna Baskin, Co-Director of the Sex Workers Project at the Urban Justice Center**. “While there is now more public awareness of the horrors of trafficking, there is less information out there about how to prevent and end trafficking. We focused on early social conditions that may increase the likelihood of being trafficked, what resources help survivors get out of trafficking situations, and what survivors themselves recommend. We hope this information strengthens collaborative efforts between the U.S. and Mexico.”

The event also featured researchers from the Observatory Against Trafficking in Persons for Sexual Exploitation, based in Mexico. These sociologists explained how this form of trafficking evolved as a social, cultural and historical phenomenon, and their research to understand victims and perpetrators, and build prevention models.

The panel urged bi-national efforts to combat the trafficking epidemic and discussed the report's specific policy recommendations for the Mexican and U.S. governments:

- **The U.S. government should discontinue the requirement that survivors of trafficking cooperate with law enforcement in order to lawfully remain in the United States.**
- **The U.S. government should offer accessible routes to immigration status for survivors of human trafficking.**
- **The Mexican government should take action to address violence, including violence against women, and to investigate human trafficking.**
- **The Mexican government should support organizations to provide services for trafficked persons in Mexico**, including women and children who are alienated from their marital families and families of origin.
- **NGOs in Mexico should provide counseling and safety services for people who have suffered violence**, which may help individuals recover from trauma, and become more resistant to future trafficking situations.

“The Road North benefits from the expertise of Mexican survivors of trafficking and of service providers in New York who have worked with these survivors for more than 10 years,” said **Florrie Burke of the New York Anti Trafficking Network**. “By listening these voices, this report collects vital information and suggests useful interventions to prevent future trafficking.”

ABOUT THE SEX WORKERS PROJECT:

The Sex Workers Project at the Urban Justice Center provides client-centered legal and social services to individuals who engage in sex work, regardless of whether they do so by choice, circumstance, or coercion. One of the first programs in the nation to assist survivors of human trafficking, the Sex Workers Project has pioneered an approach to service grounded in human rights, harm reduction and in the real life experiences of our clients. Their professional service providers are multi-lingual, non-judgmental and bring more than ten years of experience.

As the only US organization meeting the needs of both sex workers and trafficking victims, the Sex Workers Project serves a marginalized community that few others reach. SWP engages in [policy](#) and [media advocacy](#), community education and [human rights documentation](#), working to create a world that is safe for sex workers and where human trafficking does not exist.

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