

## Sex-Trafficking Conference Organized by Young Unificationist Makes News in Reno

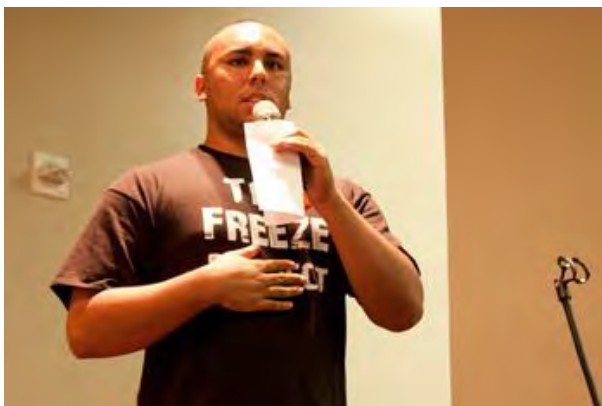
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*Panelists Beni Hernandez (left) and Kari Ramos (right) take questions from the audience.*

Approximately 100 students at the University of Nevada at Reno (UNR) learned about the scourge of human sex-trafficking on Sept. 28, 2011 at a panel discussion organized by Ms. Sarah Canak, a second-generation Unificationist. “Coincidentally,” on the same day, 58-year-old Kemp Shiffer, a retired professor at UNR, was charged with pimping an 18-year old prostitute from California and was handed an indictment for two counts of prostitution-related crimes. Channel 4 News was on the scene and scooped the competition because it was the only TV station to cover both the indictment and the trafficking conference.

Canak, representing the campus club for Women’s Federation for World Peace, and the members of the Unity Commission on campus months ago had decided to take a stand to combat human trafficking and to educate their fellow students and community members about this shocking problem.



*Student Activist RJ Lopez introduces the speakers.*

Canak is a second-generation Unificationist from Reno and is majoring in Human Development and Family Studies in her junior year at the University of Nevada, Reno. She spent two years on the Special Task Force from 2007-2009 and is matched to Chris Brown from California. Last year, Sarah started a Women’s Federation for World Peace chapter on her university campus to inspire young women to

understand their own value and to pursue healthy relationships.

On Sept. 26, 2011, Women's Federation for World Peace-Reno and the Unity Commission recruited close to one hundred students to assist the "Freeze Project," a New-York based group dedicated to bring attention to the issue of human trafficking. The group is a creative-improv team originated by Charles Lee. Reno students "froze" in time on the steps in front of the largest library on campus. Their black T-shirts and stern expressions conveyed their dedication to end human trafficking.



*John Hambrick, Las Vegas assemblyman, who passed a bill against human trafficking.*

The September 26th victory was only leading up to a speaker's series on Wednesday, Sept. 28, 2011, in which a group of four experts spoke on the topic: Tiffany Short, Victims Specialist for the FBI, Kari Ramos, board member of Nevada Coalition Against Sexual Violence, Beni Hernandez, Shelter Program Coordinator for CAST LA (Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking), and John Hambrick, Las Vegas assemblyman. Mr. Hambrick is the author of a bill passed in 2009 which makes Nevada's penalties for traffickers some of the strictest in the country.

Thankfully, Nevada's students seem to be eager to educate themselves about human trafficking, so they can take action against this form of modern day slavery.

"What most people don't realize is that human trafficking is happening all around us," said Canak, president of the campus club, Women's Federation for World Peace, Reno. "Our hope is that this event will inform our student body that this is not just a Third-World issue, and there are opportunities for everyone to get involved and do their part to stop human trafficking."

The speakers affirmed that human trafficking should be a real issue of concern for Americans, and especially Nevadans.

Tiffany Short reported that, through her many years working with law enforcement to bring justice to victims, she has seen that trafficking is a very American problem, rooted in the way that we view trafficking victims: "For us, it's something that we really need to combat and look into, because these are the same people that sit on juries. And if I have a victim of trafficking, and people are looking at it like it's consensual, how do you think it is for us to have that kid up in front of the jury? It's kind of an uphill battle."



*Tiffany Short, Victims Specialist for the FBI, speaks about human trafficking from the perspective of the law.*

Kari Ramos explained that trafficking is rooted in our warped perspective on sexuality. She described our society as a “rape culture,” where “violence is seen as sexy, and sexuality is violent.” She encouraged the audience to make a stand against rape culture, because “People do change. They do start to change the way that they talk, the way that they act, the things that they say because of the way that we stand up.”

Beni Hernandez spoke about the larger issues that are involved with human trafficking, and how CAST-LA has stood up to create an effective approach to combating trafficking and assisting victims. In a specific trafficking case that was busted in 1992, Hernandez described the effect that years of enslavement can have on people, even after being liberated: “You don't see elation...they're terrified, and they have had no contact with the outside world, so you can imagine their feelings.”

Hambrick stirred the feelings of many in the audience when he spoke about how young girls as young as eleven have been trafficked to his hometown of Las Vegas. He said that, “Sex trafficking is now second only to the drug trade for money involved. In the next two and a half years, it's estimated that human trafficking will exceed the drug trade in illicit money.” It's no secret that Las Vegas is a major destination for sex tourism, but he encouraged the audience to be collectively responsible to not only know about, but to do something about the problem: “We as a society must address this issue,” he stated.

It seems that that fight is already underway in the biggest little city in the world. Canak and the members of the Unity Commission hatched up the plan to bring awareness to the issue of human trafficking months ago, during the summer.

“Personally, I was inspired by Nevada Sen. Harry Reid's comments several months ago,” says Canak, who helped to advertise and coordinate the event. “I truly believe that he was speaking on behalf of God.” Canak refers to a comment made by Reid in February, where he spoke about the issue, saying that it blocked outside businesses from wanting to establish new businesses here.

While Reid got heat for his denouncement of prostitution, it seems that he may have more supporters than he realizes. Canak and her band of Women's Federation for World Peace members plan to bring more awareness to the issue, and the Unity Commission and students at UNR have begun to realize that they can make a difference.



*Approximately 100 students from the University of Nevada at Reno attended the panel discussion organized by Unificationist-member Sarah Canak.*

What can you do to combat human trafficking? The panelists featured in the Freeze Project Speakers' Series have several suggestions:

- -Educate yourself and others about the problem.
- -Volunteer at an organization that is assisting this population.
- -Organize community members.
- -Write to your legislators.
- -The Trafficking Victims Protection Act is reauthorized every two years. Tell your legislators you want them to support this bill.
- -Report any suspicious activity.
- -Post information about trafficking on your blogs and facebook pages.
- -Confront the "rape culture" when you see it: Don't tolerate media that is supportive of sexual violence or objectification of women.