

## MEDIA ADVISORY

[free-them]

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Anti-Human Trafficking Organization [free-them] and With Walk With Me Victim Services Canada to Protest Against Ontario Court of Appeal's Recent Ruling**

Toronto, April 9, 2012 - Today, anti-human trafficking organization [free-them] and Walk With Me Victim Services Canada has announced their decision to protest against Ontario Court of Appeal's recent ruling that sex-trade workers should be allowed to conduct business in homes, brothels and hire security, as well as live off the avails of prostitution. Both organizations maintain that this decision will increase human trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation and that it will be the start of the destruction in Ontario.

[free-them] together with Walk With Me Victim Services Canada and concerned citizens, plans to protest at Queen's Park to advocate for the government to draft new legislation that can stand a constitutional challenge. Take a stand for freedom by joining the protest:

**What:** Join the Voice for Freedom Protest

**When:** Apr. 14, 2012 at 12 noon – 3 p.m.

**Where:** Queen's Park, Toronto, ON

Interview opportunities with [free-them] founder, Shae Invidiata will be made available by contacting Randy Phipps. Email: [Randy@free-them.net](mailto:Randy@free-them.net), Phone: (416) 953-9949.

“What many people do not realize is that the majority of prostitution is forced. Human trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation is happening right here in Ontario. The Ontario Court of Appeal's recent decision that sex-trade workers be allowed to conduct business indoors will only fuel human trafficking. By legalizing brothels and living off the avails of prostitution, the Ontario courts have just handed pimps and traffickers the ability to legally exploit women and children, while making warrants and arrests by the police extremely difficult and challenging to obtain. Even though it was stated and acknowledged by the court that human trafficking will increase with the passing of these laws, the Ontario Court of Appeal still decided to pass them. Further, the Ontario Court of Appeal should have looked to the notorious red light district of Amsterdam, which has successfully shut down one third of its red light district by adopting the Nordic Model (Swedish Model), as they have evidently seen that the arguments to legalize (as been presented to the Ontario Court) proved to be false. The average age of entry into Canada is 13-years-old, which means our Courts, the Government of Ontario, and the Government of Canada, must do better to protect our young girls and not aid in the process of sexually exploit them,” says **Shae Invidiata, Founder, [free-them]**.

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The Ontario Court of Appeal's ruling also caused an outcry from a variety of organizations, advocates and political figures. Below are their reactions to the ruling.

"The Ontario Court of Appeal ruling to strike down the ban on brothels and living off the avails of prostitution is alarming. Legalizing brothels and the move towards the outright legalization of prostitution in Canada will inevitably lead to increased sex trafficking and child exploitation. This decision provides organized crime, pimps, and human traffickers with the legal means to exploit women and youth. Canadians must recognize that prostitution is a form of violence against women and vulnerable people," says **Joy Smith, Member of Parliament**.

"I am hoping this decision is appealed by my government and reversed by the Superior Court of Canada. Prostitutes are vulnerable people, worthy of help, not being shoved into brothels, licensed, unionized and taxed. If unchallenged, this decision would see prostitution legalized by the federal government as a viable career choice in the eyes of thousands of young Canadian girls and boys, boosted by the Hollywood depiction of prostitution as being a well paid, respected and glamorous business, like in the movie *Pretty Woman*. The reality is the opposite. If not challenged, this ruling will expand the dreadful practice of sex trafficking," says **Terence Young, Member of Parliament**.

"MAST - Men Against Sexual Trafficking believes that the legalizing of brothels is a huge mistake by the Ontario Court of Justice because it will not effectively protect those who are being forced to work in the sex trade by traffickers and pimps. Other jurisdictions who have followed this path are finding that it is not working effectively. We need to de-criminalize sex trade workers and criminalize 'Johns', pimps and traffickers. This would enable law enforcement to investigate and charge those who are supplying the demand," says **Stan Burditt, Founder, MAST - Men Against Sexual Trafficking**.

"I am absolutely stunned. I had faith in our justice system and now I feel totally betrayed. I will not give up. What no one seems to understand is that the women who are mature and independent and are doing this because they 'want' to, have been doing it for 20 to 30 years, and obviously they are safe if they managed to do it for this long. How many times have you heard of a police raid in a 'clean' escort agency, or a 'clean' massage place? None! If you keep it low, if you don't have underage girls and if you don't torture girls, no one will bother you! That is a fact! This law will make pimps and traffickers business owners, and the victims will be employees on paper. We will not allow this. Not this year, not next year, not ever," says **Timea E Nagy, human trafficking survivor and Program Director, Walk With Me Victim Services Canada**.

"I am saddened by the recent court ruling. I believe that this decision leaves less hope for the voiceless. It is disturbing that in today's world this kind of exploitation is tolerated and made to be normalized. Your daughters will have a choice now to become a doctor, a lawyer or a prostitute, because it will be part of our society. Think about it," says **Katarina Macloud, Walk With Me Victim Services Canada**.

"Prostitution is the sexual exploitation of vulnerable women and girls. Violence against sex workers is usually indoor and unreported. Legalization of brothels and living off the avails of prostitution legitimizes such abuses, and it fuels human trafficking thus results in greater exploitation of women in poverty stricken countries," says **Joanna Yee, Community Pastor, Rahab Ministry - Partnership of CARE Inc. and Youth Unlimited/YFC**.

"The court's decision is a call to action for Canadians who believe in an exploitation free country. We are petitioning parliament to create new laws that hold the buyer of sexual services accountable for their actions," says **Tara Teng, Miss Canada 2011**.

“Women who have been recruited, exploited and coerced into the sex trade do not have the luxury of hiring body guards or drivers. They are living under horrific conditions and require legislation that protects them and prosecutes their offenders. This legislation does nothing to assist these women or law enforcement to address these needs,” says **Shelley Gilbert, Coordinator of Social Work Services, University of Windsor.**



### **About Shae Invidiata and [free-them]**

Shae Invidiata moved to the United States at 18 to pursue a degree in Advertising at Hawaii Pacific University, which is where her journey began in her fight against human trafficking. Seven years later, with an associates in Marketing from HPU and a BA in Religious Studies from The University of British Columbia, Invidiata works full-time as a Sales Representative at The Invidiata Team - #1 REMAX Team in Canada for ten years, and #2 RE/MAX Team Worldwide 2010 and 2011. In January 2010, Invidiata officially founded [free-them], an initiative dedicated to raising awareness and funds to abolish human trafficking in Canada and abroad by partnering with people, organizations and businesses to fight human trafficking - slavery today. Invidiata regularly speaks at different high schools, professional groups and events to educate and bring awareness and action to fighting human trafficking. [free-them] has led and organized different events all over Toronto and the GTA, such as the panel Buying Sex Is Not A Sport at the University of Toronto, premiering and bringing the film Call+Response to Toronto and hosting the 2nd Annual Freedom Walk in Toronto to seeing Criminal Codes amended. [free-them] played a strong role to see MP Joy Smith's Bill C-268 (a minimum mandatory sentence of five years for traffickers caught trafficking minors in Canada) amend the Criminal Code in Canada. Bill C-268 received Royal Assent in June 2010. Invidiata has sat on round table discussions for MPP Kevin Flynn in the efforts to create new policies that were brought before the Legislators in June 2011. Invidiata with [free-them] is one of the founding Coalition members to forming the first Ontario Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force. On October 3, 2011 MP Terence Young gave his Members Statement-SO31- in the House of Commons to recognize the work of Shae Invidiata and her efforts with [free-them] to combat human trafficking. Invidiata and [free-them] have appeared on and been interviewed by many different media sources, including but not limited to, The Toronto Star, Much Music, CTV, CP24 News, The Morning Live Show CHCH News, The Daily Show Rogers TV, 106 The "X", The Drew Marshall Show Joy 1280, Metro News, Inside Halton, SNAP Toronto, and SNAP Oakville. Most recently Invidiata has been nominated by Canadian Women's Fashion Magazine Chatelaine as a Top 20 Finalist for "Canada's Women of the Year 2011" for her work and dedication to fight human trafficking and raise up others to join in the worthy fight. For more information about [free-them] and their ongoing efforts please visit their website at [www.freethem.ca](http://www.freethem.ca). For additional information about Invidiata's Chatelaine nomination, please visit [www.chatelaine.com/womenoftheyear](http://www.chatelaine.com/womenoftheyear)

### **About Walk With Me Victim Services Canada**

Walk With Me has been created by a trafficking survivor, Timea Nagy. Nagy's commitment is to ensure that survivors have a place in providing a first response to victims of trafficking and secondly to recognize survivors should have a voice in developing a coordinated community response that can meet immediate crisis and longer term needs of trafficked victims. Since inception, Walk With Me has worked closely with various police services and has been able to provide unique services and supports to many victims of human trafficking in Ontario and Canada. Nagy continues to educate and train many police

agencies across Canada. Nagy educated the following agencies in the last nine months; Winnipeg Police, Edmonton Police, Vancouver Police, Justice Attorney Generals, Victim Services York Region, Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary Police, Moncton Police, Halifax, Toronto Police, RCMP, Ottawa Police, Niagara Region Police, Montreal Police, Toronto Police Services, and much more. For more information, visit [www.walk-with-me.org](http://www.walk-with-me.org)