

**Councilman**  
**TONY CARDENAS**  
6<sup>th</sup> Council District



***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***  
**March 4, 2005**

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## **Cardenas Releases City's Report on Human Trafficking** **Taskforce's Major Findings Include Organized Sex Trafficking, Lack of Awareness**

**Los Angeles-** Today City Councilman Tony Cardenas released the findings of his Taskforce on Human Trafficking and Child Prostitution. Cardenas formed the taskforce last year after at least 12 women and girls were found bound to a brothel in South LA and forced to prostitute themselves to pay off trafficking fees. Cardenas and the Commission on the Status of Women coordinated the taskforce with the Los Angeles Police Department, advocacy groups, and state and federal authorities in an effort to find out what the city is doing to combat modern-day slavery like forced prostitution, child pornography, and sweat shops.

The report outlines a lack of awareness in the community and among some law enforcement as to what human trafficking is and how victims are identified. In response, Cardenas launched a 24-hour multi-lingual hotline and public awareness campaign called **LOOK BENEATH THE SURFACE**, a national campaign the councilman is tailoring with a localized public service announcement and other outreach material. A resource card for police officers will also be distributed. A federal grant, given to LAPD in the amount of \$450,000, designates \$150,000 for public outreach and will help launch the local campaign.

*"We've taken on a monster of many faces. Forced labor, forced prostitution, mail-order brides, and child pornography are all forms of this disgusting billion-dollar trade,"* said Cardenas. *"The city has an obligation to find out what we are doing to provide these victims the same care and counseling as our own U.S. citizens and to inform the community that it's happening to our own children domestically."*

*"The Commission's mandate to advise the Mayor and City Council about emerging issues that impact women and girls in Los Angeles -- such as human trafficking and slavery -- is integral to all residents in this City,"* said Paula Petrotta, Executive Director of the Los Angeles City Commission on the Status of Women. *"In developing and overseeing the City's interagency response to human trafficking, we believe the recommendations contained in our report will result in a comprehensive approach to not only break the cycle of victimization of women and children trafficked into our City, but it will ensure they get the services they need to begin the healing process."*

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The report also discusses the threat of organized sex trafficking, where criminals set up rings throughout several cities in California and not only use forced prostitution, but also use the Internet and porn industry to distribute videos of the victims. Between 2003-2004, Los Angeles saw about 15 cases of human trafficking, with many of those cases involving numerous victims. Some of those cases are still under investigation. According to LAPD, the underreporting and misidentification of trafficking victims is a factor in the lack of understanding how pervasive the problem is in Los Angeles.

*"I hope the report of Councilmember Cardenas' taskforce makes an impact,"* said Mayor Jim Hahn. *"This is an important subject and deserves serious attention from policymakers and law enforcement agencies."*

Cardenas will be going to Washington on March 13th to meet with staff of a senate judiciary committee to discuss possible funding of a citywide response team that sends advocates directly to crime scenes. He will also discuss the link between trafficked victims and child pornography.

Dr. Jeffrey Satinover of the Department of Politics at Princeton University is serving as an advisor to U.S. Senate investigations of the sex trade in the United States. He commented:

*"I can assure you that many in Washington have taken notice of the work of Councilman Cardenas, the Commission on the Status of Women and of this taskforce. Their outstanding efforts are important not only for Los Angeles, but through Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley, and the entire nation. This is a topic that cuts across every party and ideological divide and has garnered the support of every decent man and woman."*

The U.S. Department of State estimates that between 14,000 to 17,500 women and children are trafficked into Los Angeles each year. About 250,000-300,000 U.S. children are domestically trafficked from state to state into trades of sexual exploitation.

The 24-hour multi-lingual hotline for human trafficking is 1-888-373-7888.

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