



SHEPHERDS SPEAK

VOICES THAT CHALLENGE

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THE NATIONAL ADVOCACY CENTER SISTERS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

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We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children.
~Native American Proverb

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From The National Coordinator Saipan Women Testify about Human Trafficking

In January Sr. Carol McClenon informed me that Sr. Stella Mangona, Mrs. Laurie Ogumoro, and a young survivor of Human Trafficking, had been invited by the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources to testify about local immigration policies that contributed to the problem of human trafficking in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI).

Almost immediately the National Advocacy Center staff shifted into high gear. Alison and I met with Allen Stayman, a professional staff member for the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. He gave us a short history of the situation in CNMI that has contributed to labor and sex exploitation of women.

Traffickers go to poor villages looking for naïve young women who are eager to acquire jobs in order to send money home to help support their families. Of course when they arrive, instead of a job as a receptionist or a waitress they are forced into prostitution or some type of involuntary servitude.

This is what happened to Kayleen. She could have been anyone's little sister. Kayleen is a very brave young woman who wanted to tell her story in Washington, DC in order to prevent what happened to her from happening to any other young women. Her testimony is posted on



Lauri, Kayleen, Sr. Stella with Committee Chairman, Senator Jeff Bingaman

our website: www.gsadvocacy.org/testimony_combined.pdf.

I tried to contact every community of Contemplative Sisters in the US to ask prayers for these courageous women as they testified on February 8th. They were also supported by Good Shepherd Sisters from the Baltimore Community as well as Sr. Helene Hayes who traveled from Marlborough, Massachusetts. Lauri, Kayleen and Sr. Stella, each put their personal safety and that of their families at risk in order to tell the truth about how young women are being led into a living nightmare.

In the face of being discredited through rumors of petty payoffs, having their statistics and personal veracity questioned, they spoke truth to power. We know that they were protected by all of the prayers that surrounded them. Please continue to lift them up and all the women with whom they will journey.

S is for Saipan, T is for T-Visa, U is for United States ... Good Shepherd People Serving Victims of Human Trafficking

By Sr. Carol McClenon

Far out in the Pacific Ocean, slightly north of Guam, there is a chain of 14 small islands which comprise the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). Sr. Stella Mangona has been working as a mental health counselor and advocate on Saipan – the seat of government and the island with the highest population – since 1999, when she was missioned from Guam to follow up on rumors of women caught in the deadly web of forced servitude and/or sexual slavery.

Because of its proximity to Asia, its high reliance on “guest workers” for the labor force, and its relatively lenient immigration policies, the CNMI is an attractive destination for unscrupulous operators seeking to profit from the oppression of women and children. Sr. Carol McClenon joined Stella in 2003 and works in the Domestic Violence Shelter run by Karidat (the local equivalent of Catholic Charities), Guma’ Esperansa (which means “House of Hope” in the local Chamorro language). With the help of collaborators from various agencies, particularly Lauri Ogumoro, the manager of the shelter, our work has borne fruit in identifying and assisting 33 women affected by human trafficking since 2005.

Our First Case – Learning on the Job

On May 7, 2005, the police called us about a Chinese victim of violence who was being released from the Emergency Room and needed shelter. This 44-year-old woman had been working as a live-in babysitter and was beaten up by her employer. She only spoke two words of English (“No” and “Go”) so it took a while, with the assistance of translators, for her story to unfold. It is a horrific story of being forced to work 21 hours a day (not only babysitting but also cleaning the toilets in the prostitutes’ area of the employers’ night club), paid only \$450 over the course of five months, beaten

to the point of unconsciousness on five occasions, threatened with murder and if she complained to authorities, and forced to sign a promissory note stating she was responsible for recruiting and transportation fees, etc.—all in violation of her labor contract as a non-resident worker. The police detective assigned to the case was reluctant to investigate, regarding it as a simple labor dispute between employer and employee.



Sr. Carol McClenon and Survivor

The more we got to know about the case, however, the more evident it became that it was a case of Labor Trafficking and we began to investigate what resources were available to assist this woman. By September 2005, we contacted the Refugee and Migration Services of the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops in Washington, D.C., which is a contractor with the federal Department of Health and Human Services to assist trafficking survivors. The USCCB agreed that our Chinese client was a pre-certified victim of labor trafficking. We began the process of becoming a subcontractor, thus obtaining access to technical assistance, referrals, and reimbursement for some of the victim’s expenses in the Shelter.

Perfect Timing

On September 26, 2005, Sr. Carol, Sr. Stella and Lauri Ogumoro met with our local Bishop, Tomas A. Camacho, to share information about human trafficking and to advise him of our developing relationship with the USCCB program. Bishop Camacho was extremely interested and gave us his full support, even promising to search for funding for a Human Rights Advocate for the Diocese of Chalan Kanoa.

The very next day, September 27, we got a call from the Attorney General’s Office, asking if we could shelter two young Filipina women who had just escaped from forced prostitution. This time, the

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local authorities were fully committed to investigating and prosecuting the case. We were able to use this momentum to direct their attention to the labor trafficking case and all three women received special entry permits giving them permission to work in the CNMI while their cases were being investigated. Two arrests were made rather promptly in the sex trafficking case, and the victims began the long journey of healing.



Sr. Brigid Lawlor, Sr. Barbara Beasley, and Sr. Carol McClenon visit with survivors.

In December of 2006, a civil suit was filed in federal court on behalf of the Chinese labor trafficking victim. She remained in the shelter for her protection, since no arrests had been made in her case. The Filipina survivors found employment and, with financial help from the USCCB program, were able to take a step towards normalcy in January 2006 by moving into a small apartment on their own in the local equivalent of “downtown,” with continuing intensive case management services from the shelter.

“Certification 101” – Slow Track Versus Fast Track

A person in the United States who is identified as a victim of a severe form of trafficking may receive certification from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). **Certification** makes victims of trafficking who are not U.S. citizens eligible for a special visa and for certain benefits and services to the same extent as refugees. A person who is identified as a victim of a severe form of trafficking and is pending certification is considered **pre-certified**.

The **T-nonimmigrant visa** allows victims of severe forms of trafficking to remain in the U.S. if they comply with any reasonable request to assist in the investigation or prosecution of acts of trafficking or are under 18 years of age (i.e. minors do not have to cooperate with the prosecution), AND if they would suffer extreme hardship upon removal [from

the U.S.]. T-visa recipients may adjust their status to lawful permanent residency after three years.

They may also apply for close family members to come to the U.S.

The timeline for the certification process is supposed to be only a few months, but the “Feds” have to take the initiative for it to work like that. In our cases, the FBI declined to become involved, so the women remained in the “pre-certified” stage for 17, 14 and 13 months, respectively. For each of them, Certified Trafficking Victim status was only obtained after they applied for and ob-

tained their T-Visas.

Applying for these visas involved some challenges. Saipan is very small, with limited resources and personnel. Since there were few lawyers who knew about human trafficking and T-Visas, we had to settle for a private lawyer interested in learning about it and willing to invest the necessary time in mastering the application process. He wasn't in a position to donate his services, so we had to locate benefactors (primarily the Saipan Apostolic Fund). The biometrics (fingerprinting, etc.) requirement posed an extra financial hurdle related to our remote location and unique political status because the applicant has to report to the nearest United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) office. Normally in the U.S. this wouldn't involve much burden, but we don't have a USCIS office in the CNMI – so the women had to fly to Guam in the summer of 2006, just to get fingerprinted! We are now in contact with the USCIS to try to arrange for an official from Guam to fly to Saipan to do the biometrics for all of the women we serve at the same time.

“Aren't We Getting Too Old For This?”

We thought we were finally getting a handle on the situation, doing our regular domestic violence work, working with the lawyer on those first three

S is for Saipan, T is for T-Visa, U is for United States ... Cont'd from p. 3

T-Visa applications, continuing to support the survivors, and finally getting our USCCB paperwork right. But on March 9, 2006, a whirlwind of youthful exuberance descended upon us – six Filipina dancers between the ages of 17 and 22. These young women were the first wave of a big case being investigated by the Attorney General's Office involving two night clubs. They had been recruited under false promises and subjected to unwanted touching and degrading sexual practices, illegal salary deductions, threats of deportation for non-compliance, and many other instances of force, fraud, and coercion—classic hallmarks of human trafficking.

The girls, who had been locked up for over a year until their liberation, spent a month chafing at the need for care and security while waiting for the investigator to finish their interviews and coordinate plans for a raid on the club. When the traffickers were arrested, we breathed a short-lived sigh of relief as we moved the survivors out into a nearby apartment—until we re-discovered that supervising transitional housing is even harder than residential treatment!

The night the traffickers were arrested, nine additional victims from that club (ages 19-25) came to the shelter, and two more followed the next day. When the owners got bailed out of jail, the club reopened under their son's management. Shortly thereafter, four of the women decided to return, believing his promises of continued employment and better conditions. Unfortunately, the victims were again deceived and disappointed. Several of them re-enrolled in our case management system in January 2007.

Along with others who were referred to us at various times, the total number of sex trafficking victims from that case is 23. Four of them have chosen to return to the Philippines; 19 remain in our case management program. This case has not yet come to trial, but 227 criminal counts were filed.

When the CNMI prosecutors obtained a guilty verdict in our first sex trafficking case in the summer of 2006, negotiations for a plea bargain in this case began.

Moving On

The sentencing in our first sex trafficking case was handed down in early January 2007, and the defendants have reported to jail to serve three years each without the possibility of early release. This provided a measure of closure to their victims. We began working with them to set up the logistics of their moving on. One woman decided to move to the mainland, while the other elected to remain in the Pacific. Sr. Stella has contacts in both locations and started arranging for mentors to assist them until relationships with case managers in the new cities could be well established.

In mid-January, an extraordinary invitation speeded up the timetable. The U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources invited Lauri Ogumoro and Sr. Stella to testify in hearings on labor and immigration issues in the CNMI. They were also asked to bring a victim of human trafficking with them. These hearings were held on February 8th. On her way to Washington, DC, Sr. Stella escorted one client to her new city. They had some trouble at their port of entry to the United States because the USCIS agents had never seen a T-Visa and could not find established procedures to follow. Some scary hours in informal detention followed, then a few weeks of anxious waiting for a "deferred inspection," but on March 1st the client was officially admitted to the United States in proper "T-1" status. All her documents are in order and she now has the opportunity for a safe and better life.

Meanwhile the other young woman proceeded to the National Advocacy Center with Lauri, where they were warmly welcomed by Sr. Gayle, the Sisters and staff. Sr. Stella joined them before the



Mrs. Laurie Ogumoro and
Sr. Stella Mangona

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hearings. What an experience of solidarity! Faxes and e-mails poured in offering prayer support, and several Sisters provided moral support by attending the Senate committee as our delegation described situations involving women and children in the CNMI. The courageous victim who testified is now getting settled in her new life and we believe she will do well.

What Next?

We're hoping for a lull before any new trafficking referrals, but we have reasons to believe there are still more trafficking victims on our Island. Meanwhile, we still have plenty of work to help our 19 remaining survivors prepare to move on if their T-Visas are approved, as we expect they will be. This is privileged Holy Work. Is it difficult? Of

course, all Good Shepherd work is difficult. It's exhausting and exasperating and gratifying and relevant.



Sr. Brigid Lawlor, Congregational Leader, Angie Guerrero, Executive Director of Karidat, and Sr. Barbara Beasley, Province Leader, Mid-North American Province

Tears and laughter and midnight hospital runs and pregnancies and educational milestones and the overwhelming and trust that the clients place in our hands...Just like domestic violence work, it's full of drama and potentially danger, though we've been fortunate in that our big cases have not involved organized crime. Is it worth the aggravations and risks? Oh, yes, a thousand times yes! We are proud to be Good Shepherd People. Thank you all for

all your support.

Testimony in Pictures

February 8th was one of the coldest days of the Washington, DC winter. If you happened to live in a tropical climate like that of Saipan, the cold was intense, and staying warm became a top priority. Everyone contributed warm clothing to our visi-

tors. The wind still managed to cut through them like knives as we walked across Capitol Hill. Surrounded by prayer, they faced down the wind as well as their fears.



Sr. Stella, Mrs. Lauri Ogu-moro, and Kayleen with Sen. Daniel Akaka (D-HI)



Allen Stayman , staff for US Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

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Testimony In Pictures

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Kayleen's first snow

Washington, DC was very cold in February



Allen Stayman gave a personal tour of the US Capitol



Lauri Ogumoro gives her testimony



NAC Staff was grateful for the support of local Sisters



Group picture with Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA)



A shy Kayleen was determined to tell her story so that what happened to her would not happen to anyone else



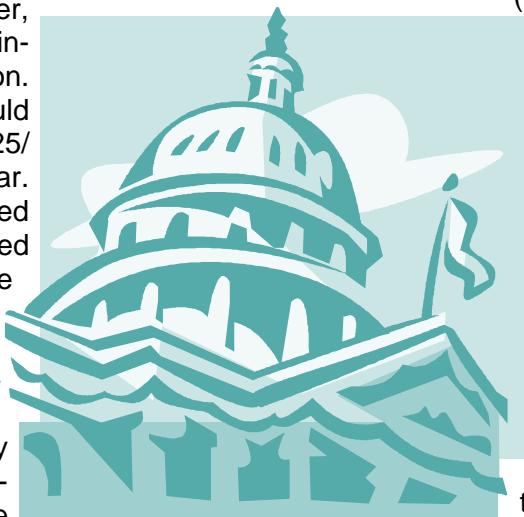
After their testimony they were interviewed by MS Magazine, Catholic News Service, and ABC News

Legislative Update

By Alison Prevost

Minimum Wage Stalls Again

The 110th Congress got off to a quick start with the new House leadership's 100 hours agenda that included legislation to make college more affordable, implement all of the 9-11 Commission recommendations, amend the Medicare prescription drug program, implement new ethics and budgeting rules, and to raise the minimum wage. The minimum wage increase was of particular interest to the National Advocacy Center, having advocated for such an increase since the office's inception. The House bill (H.R. 2) would raise the minimum wage to \$7.25/hr over the course of two year. The Senate, however, moved more slowly, though it too passed a minimum wage increase by the first of February—but not before adding several billion dollars in business tax breaks that have caused the legislation to stall. Negotiations are still underway between the House and the Senate to find a compromise. In the meantime, supporters in the House and Senate are looking for other bills to which they can attach the minimum wage. Advocates, on the other hand, continue to push for a “clean” minimum wage increase believing that the needs of low-wage workers should not be held hostage to other political issues.



Some Momentum on Immigration

Momentum is beginning to pick up on comprehensive immigration reform with the recent introduction of the Security Through Regularized Immigration and a Vibrant Economy (STRIVE) Act (H.R. 1645) in the House by Representatives Gutierrez (D-IL) and Flake (R-AZ). This bill represents a good starting point to reengage the immigration debate and will hopefully spur the leading Senate supporters of comprehensive immigration reform to introduce their own bill soon. Negotiations in the Sen-

ate, however, have so far proven to be more difficult despite advocates' hopes that reform would move forward quickly this year. The hope now is that comprehensive reform bills will be passed out of the appropriate House and Senate committees by the summer.

In other immigration news, the DREAM Act (H.R.1275/S.774), which would allow undocumented immigrant students the opportunity to attend college and adjust their immigration status, and the Legal Immigrant Children's Health Improvement Act (ICHIA—S.764/H.R.1308), which would restore Medicaid/SCHIP benefits to all immigrant children and pregnant women, were both introduced in March. Efforts are underway to increase the number of co-sponsors for these bills, but advocates hope that the DREAM Act will be included in comprehensive immigration reform legislation and that ICHIA will become part of the SCHIP reauthorization will happen this year.

Budget Looking Hopeful

After several years of budget cuts, this year's budget process is looking more hopeful. Though the President's budget again proposed significant cuts to human needs programs, large increases for the military, and extensions of costly and unbalanced tax cuts, the new Congress has taken a more balanced approach. Both the House and Senate have passed budget resolutions that provide modest increases in non-defense discretionary spending (\$6-8 billion in the Senate and \$12.4 billion in the House—for a wide range of programs including education, social services, and housing), allow for much needed new funding (\$50 billion) for the reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Pro-

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“Charity and Justice bind us to each other.”

St. Mary Euphrasia (Foundress, Sisters of the Good Shep-

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Legislative Update

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gram (SCHIP), and put the budget back on a path toward fiscal sanity by requiring that all new entitlement spending (Medicare, Medicaid, etc.) and all new tax cuts be “deficit neutral”, meaning that they must be “paid for” by finding offsets in other areas of the budget.

Although the funding levels for social services still fall short of what it needed and military increases continue to go unquestioned, the House and Senate budget resolutions this year represent a marked improvement from years past. Over the next few weeks House and Senate negotiators will be working to resolve differences between the resolutions and produce a final budget resolution that both chambers will then need to pass. Human needs advocates are hoping for as high a final non-defense discretionary number as possible, so that this year's appropriations bills will contain

much needed increases for a wide range of social services.

Mental Health Parity Reintroduced

Bills to require equity in the provision of mental health and substance-abuse benefits under group insurance plans have been reintroduced in both the House and the Senate. The House bill, H.R.1367, the Paul Wellstone Mental Health and Addiction Equity Act of 2007, already has 255 co-sponsors and the Senate bill, S.558, has 42 co-sponsors. Hearings are being held in the appropriate committees in both the House and Senate this spring to finally move these bills forward and provide much needed access to mental health and substance abuse treatment for many Americans.