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# VOICES THAT MUST BE HEARD

*the best of new york's ethnic and immigrant press*

## Feds arrest 31 members of female smuggling ring in Queens

By Liseth Almeida, Hoy, 17 August 2006.  
Translated from Spanish by Hillary Hawkins.

The federal agents arrested 31 people on Thursday for allegedly smuggling Korean women into the United States and forcing them to prostitute themselves as payment for the "benefits" they received.

The round-up occurred after Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) representatives, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and local authorities released the results of an investigation initiated in May of 2005 when a couple of Koreans, who were operating a chain of brothels in Queens, tried to bribe an undercover police officer to protect their business. During the operation, it was discovered that the women working in the brothels were brought to the country illegally – some with fake documents and others smuggled through Canadian and Mexican borders – and installed in brothels in New York, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, and Washington.

"This operation curbed an organization that exchanges human dignity for profit and greed," said Julie Myers, ICE assistant secretary. She added that the authorities managed to rescue 67 victims, who were placed in safe areas and were given medical attention. The victims will also get temporary visas in order to remain in the United States legally as victims of human trafficking.

Michael Garcia, the federal prosecutor for the Southern District of New York, indicated that each of the 19 raided brothels gained profits of up to \$20,000 per month from every woman. He added that the victims were obligated to pay their "debt" [for being in the United States] calculated by their bosses, amounting to thousands of dollars. And many times, Garcia added, the smugglers threatened to hurt the women and their families if the women tried to escape or refused to work.

"The women's dream to have a better life turned out to

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be a nightmare," said Garcia.

The smugglers were charged with human trafficking, transporting women for prostitution, and transporting illegal aliens. If found guilty, they could face 10 years in prison. In March, a detective and an NYPD agent were arrested for accepting money from the smuggling ring to protect its illegal operations.

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## Desmantelan banda traficante de mujeres

Por Liseth Pérez Almeida Diario HOY - 212.227.6066 lisethperez@hoyllc.com  
17 de agosto, 2006

Nueva York -- Un total de 31 personas fueron arrestadas por formar parte de un grupo dedicado a ubicar a mujeres coreanas para introducirlas ilegalmente a los Estados Unidos y luego obligarlas a prostituirse como pago por los beneficios recibidos.

Representantes de la Oficina de Inmigración (ICE), del FBI y de autoridades locales dieron a conocer ayer el resultado de una investigación iniciada en mayo del 2005, después que una pareja de coreanos que operaba una cadena de prostíbulos en Queens intentara sobornar a un policía encubierto para que protegiera sus negocios. Durante el operativo se descubrió que las mujeres que trabajaban en dichos prostíbulos eran traídas al país de manera ilegal, algunas con documentos falsos y otras por las fronteras de Canadá o México, e instaladas en burdeles de Nueva York, Nueva Jersey, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Washington, entre otras ciudades.

"Esta operación acabó con una organización que cambia la dignidad humana por ganancia y codicia", señaló Julie Myers, asistente de la secretaria del ICE, agregando que las autoridades lograron rescatar a 67 víctimas, a quienes se les ubicó en lugares seguros y se les está brindando atención médica y servicios en general. Las involucradas podrían recibir visas temporales para permanecer de manera legal en el país como víctimas del tráfico humano.

El Fiscal Federal del Distrito Sur de Nueva York, Michael García, indicó que cada uno de los 19 burdeles allanados arrojaba ganancias de hasta 20,000 dólares al mes por cada una de las mujeres, quienes eran obligadas a pagar sus deudas de traslado, calculadas por sus jefes en miles de dólares, y muchas veces eran amenazadas con hacerle daño a ellas y a sus familias si trataban de escapar o se negaban a trabajar.

"Mujeres a las que el sueño de una mejor vida se les convirtió en una pesadilla", dijo García.

Todos los arrestados fueron acusados de tráfico humano, transportar mujeres para la prostitución, transportar ilegales, entre otros cargos, y de ser hallados culpables podrían enfrentar 10 años de prisión. En marzo, un detective y un agente del NYPD fueron arrestados por aceptar dinero de la organización a cambio de "hacerse la vista gorda".