



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Empowerment Congress Takes on Sex Trafficking in Los Angeles**

Survivors of the forced sex trade and advocates in the struggle against sex trafficking will hold a discussion on how to bring an end to the buying and selling of children in Los Angeles and beyond.

Nola Brantley, co-founder and executive director of the survivor advocacy group MISSEY, will lead the discussion on community efforts to combat trafficking, including recent legislative efforts to establish stronger penalties for people who purchase minors for sex. The workshop, which will be held at **11 a.m. at the University of Southern California's Taper Hall, room 201**, is designed for community members to leave with a plan to take an active role in prevention as well as how to work with law enforcement, victim advocates and others to end sex trafficking in the community.

The United Nations estimates that 27 million people are living in slavery around the world today, with Los Angeles, sadly, serving as a top destination for human trafficking in the United States. Nationally, sex trafficking is a \$32 billion dollar business increasingly run by gangs. The Federal Bureau of Investigation estimates that 100,000 children in the United States are sold for sex each year. In Los Angeles, an estimated 3,000 children are trafficked annually.

"This is not just statutory rape, it is day in and day out rape of our children. We must continue to focus our attention on this sickening crime and reverse our thinking on this: that means helping the victims and holding their buyers accountable," said Supervisor Ridley-Thomas. "With this panel of experts, we hope to educate more people and work toward eradicating this epidemic of children being exploited."

The event is free, but registration for attendees is required.

**What:** 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Empowerment Congress Summit: Sex Trafficking in Los Angeles

**When:** 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Saturday, January 18,

**Where:** Taper Hall, Room 201, University of Southern California

**Who:** **Nola Brantley**, founder and executive director of Motivating Inspiring and Serving Sexually Exploited Youth

**Kim Biddle**, chief executive officer, Saving Innocence

**Dr. Beverly “Bam” Crawford**, founder and pastor, Bible Enrichment Fellowship International Church

**Emilio Mendoza**, manager, Department of Children and Family Services, Multi Agency Response Unit.

**Commissioner Catherine Pratt**, commissioner, Compton Juvenile Court, Los Angeles County Superior Court

**Michelle Guymon**, director of placement administrative services, Los Angeles County Probation Department

**D’Lita Miller**, Southern California program director, CAS Research & Education

**Empowerment Congress:** Widely regarded as the forerunner to the neighborhood council movement, the Empowerment Congress was founded by Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas when he was a member of the Los Angeles City Council. Each year various committees of the organization come together to re-dedicate themselves to activism and advocacy. This year’s summit will honor the civil and human rights legacies of Martin Luther King, Jr. and former South African President Nelson Mandela, who died last month. Both King and Mandela were enormously influential in the struggle to establish equal rights for all human beings and inspired generations of activists here in Los Angeles and around the world.

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