

New York, New York

November 16, 2011

The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) in partnership with Prostitution Research and Education (PRE) held a successful protest in front of the Village Voice building in New York City last Wednesday, November 16. The protest held at the New York City office of **Backpage.com** (owned by Village Voice Media) brought attention to Backpage's facilitation of and profiting from sex trafficking. This protest was co-sponsored by more than **120** national and international anti-trafficking organizations and prominent individuals. These included **Equality Now, Soroptimist International of the Americas, Apne Aap, Alicia Keys, Gloria Steinem, Aboriginal Women's Action Network, Breaking Free, Buglisi Dance Theatre, Ambassador Mark Lagon, Frederick Douglass Family Foundation, Temple Committee Against Human Trafficking, and A Call to Men.** Speeches by a number of leading anti-trafficking activists were featured at the protest, beginning with Cherie Jimenez from Kim's Project, a survivor's shelter. Cherie spoke about personal experiences of prostitution and sex trafficking, and thanked the protestors for their support in generating pressure on backpage to stop online trafficking. Other speakers included: CATW Board Member Dorchen Leidholdt, Sonia Ossorio of NOW- NYC, Aaron Cohen author and activist. Jonathan Walton of InterVarsity's New York City Urban Project performed his original poem "I'm Sorry Anna Nicole".

Continuing CATW's history of combining art and activism, the protest included circle drumming and singers Aliza Hava and Abby Dobson. The protestors fell silent as 24 dancers from the **Buglisi Dance Theatre** approached the protest site. The dancers formed two lines dressed in white, each holding a candle. A moment of silence recognized victims of trafficking for prostitution.

Undaunted by the rain, over 70 spirited protestors participated in the picket line. Messages on posters included "**backpage.com** is an online red light district for traffickers and pimps", "I sold a girl and a bike on backpage", and "Village Voice Media facilitates sex trafficking." Bright pink umbrellas protected the protestors from the rain and also created a stream of color making the protest visible several blocks away.

CATW's partners, the Frederick Douglass Family Foundation held an action in Phoenix (Backpage's corporate headquarters), and Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter held an action in Vancouver. Alicia Keys tweeted to her over 5 million twitter followers about our protest. This generated press coverage about our action in online media and raised the profile of our *Global Campaign for a Sex Trafficking Free Internet*. We did receive media coverage, and Village Voice simultaneously blogged about the protest. They were clearly uncomfortable with our presence. Pressure is unmistakably building against their current business plan which increasingly includes sex industry based activities.

Photos below:





