

JUSTICE NEWS

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**Three Convicted of Sex Trafficking, Forced Labor and Immigration Offenses on Long Island, N.Y.**

WASHINGTON – A federal jury in Central Islip, N.Y., today found Antonio Rivera, 36, and Jason Villaman, 33, guilty of conspiracy, sex trafficking, forced labor, alien harboring and alien transportation, the Justice Department announced today. John Whaley, 31, was convicted of conspiracy, forced labor, alien harboring and alien transportation. The charges arose in connection with the defendants operation of two bars, *Sonidos de la Fronterain* Lake Ronkonkoma, N.Y., and *La Hija del Mariachi*, in Farmingville, N.Y. Rivera was the owner of the bars, and Whaley and Villaman transported the victims to and from the bars. Villaman also worked as a security guard at *Sonidos de la Frontera*.

The government’s evidence at trial established that the defendants and others compelled undocumented Latin American women from Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico and El Salvador, hired as waitresses in Rivera’s bars to engage in commercial sex acts by using violence, fraud, coercion and threats of deportation.

“Human trafficking of this kind is the equivalent of modern day slavery. It deprives its victims of their freedom and dignity, and it has no place in our country,” said Thomas E. Perez, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. “This case should serve as a reminder that the Justice Department is committed to the aggressive prosecution of those who rob individuals of their freedom for financial gain.”

“Those who exploit vulnerable individuals for personal gain will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law,” said U. S. Attorney Loretta E. Lynch. “We are committed to ensuring that everyone receives the full protection of our laws.” U. S. Attorney Lynch also thanked the Defense Criminal Investigative Service for its assistance in this case.

“This investigation and the resulting guilty verdicts prove that there is no tolerance in our society for this form of unbridled abuse and cruel exploitation of women,” said ICE/HSI Special Agent- In- Charge James T. Hayes. “This outcome further solidifies our resolve to work closely with other law enforcement agencies to root out those criminals

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who mistakenly view the most vulnerable among us as easy prey.”

“I congratulate the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of New York as well as the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division for the successful prosecution of this human trafficking case,” said Suffolk County Police Commissioner Richard Dormer. “I appreciate the difficult task the detectives and agents had overcoming the fear that these undocumented women expressed during this investigation. This case sends an important message to all undocumented persons who may be here illegally and are being victimized: the law enforcement community and prosecutors will not tolerate your criminal exploitation; if you come forward, we will protect you.”

“A jury has convicted these men of serious crimes that degraded and exploited particularly vulnerable women,” said FBI Assistant Director-in-Charge Janice K. Fedarcyk. “Through violence and other means, the women were coerced into sexual servitude. The FBI is committed to protecting victims and potential victims of sexual predators.”

“IRS Special Agents are an integral part of financial investigations,” said IRS Special Agent-in-Charge Charles R. Pine. “If the case involves money, as in sex trafficking, we provide value in tracking down money trails. We always welcome the opportunity to provide financial investigative assistance to our law enforcement partners.”

When sentenced by U.S. District Judge Sandra J. Feuerstein, the defendants face a maximum term of life in prison on the sex trafficking and conspiracy to commit sex trafficking offenses, and 20 years for the forced labor, alien harboring, and transportation of aliens offenses. In addition, the defendants face a fine equal to twice the pecuniary gain resulting from their crimes.

The government’s case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Demetri M. Jones and Licha Nyiendo, and Senior Litigation Counsel John Cotton Richmond of the Civil Rights Division’s Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit.

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Civil Rights Division

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