



U.S. Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRESS RELEASE

**THREE ARRESTED IN LONG ISLAND SEX TRAFFICKING
AND ALIEN HARBORING CASE**

Owners and Manager of Lake Ronkonkoma and Farmingville Bars Charged

Two owners and the manager of two Suffolk County bars were arrested last night pursuant to a federal complaint charging them with crimes involving forced prostitution. The complaint charges Antonio Rivera, Jasmin Rivera, and John Whaley with conspiracy, sex trafficking, forced labor, and alien harboring.¹ Simultaneously with the arrests, law enforcement agents executed search warrants at both bars. The defendants are scheduled to make their initial appearances this afternoon before United States Magistrate Judge Michael L. Orenstein at the U.S. Courthouse, in Central Islip, New York.

The charges were announced by Benton J. Campbell, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York; John Morton, Assistant Secretary, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), New York; Richard Dormer, Suffolk County Police Commissioner; Joseph M. Demarest, Jr., Assistant Director-in-Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), New York Field Office; and Patricia J. Haynes, Special Agent-in-Charge, Internal Revenue Service (IRS), Criminal Investigation, New York.

According to the complaint unsealed today, the joint investigation revealed that Antonio Rivera, a Registered Sex Offender, and his sister Jasmin Rivera owned and operated the Sonidos de la Frontera bar, located in Lake Ronkonkoma, and the La Hija del Mariachi bar, located in Farmingville. Whaley was employed as a manager in both bars. From September 2007 through the present, the Riveras and Whaley allegedly lured young women, primarily Central American illegal immigrants, to work in the bars as waitresses and hostesses. Some of the women were as young as 17 years of age. As set forth in the complaint, after the women began working in the

¹ The charges in the complaint are merely allegations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

bars, the defendants forced them to engage in sex acts with bar patrons in exchange for money, with the defendants keeping half of the proceeds. When the women refused or resisted, the defendants used physical force, including rape and assaults, and threatened to report the women to immigration authorities. The defendants also controlled the movement of the women between the bars and other locations in Hempstead, Huntington, and Brentwood, transporting them in vehicles registered to the Riveras and Whaley. The complaint also charges the defendants with conspiring to harbor illegal aliens by concealing the women's true identities and immigration status from state licensing agencies and law enforcement authorities.

"As described in the complaint, sex trafficking preys upon vulnerable young women for profit and degrades both the individual victims and the communities where these crimes are committed," stated United States Attorney Campbell. "This Office will continue to vigorously investigate and prosecute such crimes."

ICE Assistant Secretary Morton stated, "As alleged in the complaint, these defendants lured innocent young women into the United States with promises of legitimate jobs and the American dream, but once the victims arrived, their dreams turned into nightmares as the defendants used threats and violence to force them into prostitution," said Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Morton. "ICE is at the forefront of the U.S. Government's response to international human trafficking. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to combat this egregious crime."

Suffolk County Police Commissioner Dormer stated, "These serious crimes against young women will not be tolerated in Suffolk County. This Department values its role as the local law enforcement component of the Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force for Long Island. This case demonstrates the effectiveness of the task force paradigm, which coordinates the efforts of local and federal law enforcement agencies, as well as community service agencies, support groups, and educational entities. We hope these arrests will put others on notice that sex trafficking and similar crimes will continue to be a high priority for this Department."

FBI Assistant Director-in-Charge Demarest stated, "Forced labor is tantamount to enslavement. The form of forced labor charged here made young women, some of them minors, sex slaves. As inhuman as that was, if they resisted, they were allegedly subjected to even worse. We are committed to protecting the vulnerable, whatever their status."

IRS Special Agent-in-Charge Haynes stated, "People typically don't think about IRS Criminal Investigators being involved with a sex trafficking case. But what it all comes down to is greed. Our value to this investigation comes through working with our law enforcement partners and use our financial expertise to track down the proceeds of the charged crimes."

If convicted, the defendants face a sentence of 15 years to life imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine in connection with the sex trafficking charges, up to life imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine in connection with the forced labor charges, and a maximum sentence of 20 years of imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine on the alien harboring charges.

The government's case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Demetri Jones and John Durham.

The Defendants:

ANTONIO RIVERA

Age: 34

JASMIN RIVERA

Age: 31

JOHN WHALEY

Age: 29