

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA LEADERS JOIN INTERNATIONAL FIGHT AGAINST SLAVERY

*International Justice Mission invites residents to annual events March 8-10; spotlights Southern California support of international justice work*

February 21, 2007 – Southern California business, law and community leaders stand with victims of oppression and modern day slavery by hosting a series of International Justice Mission benefit dinners on March 8, 9 and 10 in San Diego, Orange County and Los Angeles, respectively.

These events fall in a season when the country's attention is turned toward the issue of modern-day slavery due to the release of feature film "Amazing Grace" and the related "Not for Sale" campaign. IJM is an active partner in these and many other events commemorating the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the abolition of slavery.

Sharon Cohn, senior vice president of interventions for International Justice Mission, will speak at the series of dinners around the region. Cohn, along with Reagan Demas, IJM's director of operations for Africa, will describe the organization's efforts to rescue victims trapped by forced labor slavery, unprosecuted rape, illegal detention and sex trafficking around the globe. Attendees will hear specific victim stories of oppression and rescue and learn how they can become involved with the work of justice.

According to UNICEF, international estimates indicate at least 1.2 million children are trafficked each year. Proceeds from this benefit will support the work of IJM in combating human trafficking and slavery globally.

"The eagerness of local supporters in Southern California is a great encouragement to IJM," commented Cohn. "In the face of great suffering, the people of this region continue to demonstrate compassion to the poor and hurting around the world." Cohn said, "They are a great example of the real relief people can provide by directing their resources towards alleviating suffering and injustice."

Musical entertainment for the event will be provided by California band Tremolo, also headlining the upcoming Concert to End Slavery. A team of local volunteers is serving as event chairpersons, and have mobilized local community leaders in order to raise funds to help the organization rescue more victims of oppression.

Registration for the events is \$95 per plate (tax-deductible portion is \$20). For more information about these benefit events and to register online, visit [www.ijm.org](http://www.ijm.org) and click on the "IJM Benefit Dinners" banner.

To book an interview with an IJM representative, please contact Emily Nichols at [media@ijm.org](mailto:media@ijm.org).

### **Three Victims' Stories of Rescue and Hope**

Four-year-old Martha was raped and her assailant threatened to kill her and her family if she ever told anyone. IJM took Martha's case and secured justice for her and protection for her family by seeing the rapist put behind bars.

Nagaraj was sold into slavery as a twelve-year-old boy working in a brick kiln under a cruel slave master. As an adult slave, Nagaraj said the hardest thing was seeing his children, also enslaved, work to the point of sickness under the blazing sun, knowing they would never receive an education. Nagaraj and his family were rescued by IJM, received official release papers and now operate their own brick-making business, employing others with a fair wage.

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Simran was trafficked and sold to a brothel where she was brutally raped and forced to provide sex to multiple customers each night. Trapped in a dark, filthy dungeon, Simran said new life seemed impossible, but with IJM “it has become possible in my life – coming out from dirt and coming into life.” IJM rescued Simran from the grip of her abusers and she now lives a new life of hope and freedom.

These are just three examples of the victims IJM works to rescue. At the event, you’ll learn about recent cases and stories of hope made possible by people like you and will be given an opportunity to contribute financially to further this important work.

### **About International Justice Mission**

International Justice Mission is a human rights organization that rescues victims of violence, sexual exploitation, slavery and oppression. A multi-national team of law enforcement professionals and a highly qualified legal staff conduct criminal investigations and collect evidence to rescue victims and bring perpetrators to justice. IJM was founded by Gary Haugen who was the Officer in Charge of the U.N. investigation into the Rwandan genocide.

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