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**“LIVES FOR SALE,” NEW INVESTIGATIVE DOCUMENTARY SPECIAL ON
LATIN AMERICAN IMMIGRATION AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING, TO AIR ON
PUBLIC TELEVISION IN JANUARY**

**Harrowing Film Goes Beyond the Rhetoric To Show Why Immigrants are Willing
to Risk Everything for the American Dream**

While politicians, activists and the media wrestle with the thorny issue of immigration, a new investigative documentary entitled **LIVES FOR SALE** exposes the painful, rarely seen human side of undocumented immigration -- including the growing black market trade in human beings. A co-production of Maryknoll Productions and Lightfoot Films, Inc., **LIVES FOR SALE** will air on public television stations in January, 2007 (check local listings.)

Each year more than one million people attempt to cross the U.S.-Mexico border, most of them from Mexico and Central America, desperately seeking the American Dream. Their journey is filled with dangers that prey on their hopes and exploit their inexperience. Some will give their life savings to *coyotes*, mercenary agents promising safe passage; others will unknowingly become one of the almost 20,000 victims of human trafficking that cross our borders each year, finding themselves sold as modern-day slaves. And as our government further militarizes our borders with Mexico, the result is that the journey towards the Dream becomes even more perilous.

In **LIVES FOR SALE**, we meet many of those willing to leave behind all they know to escape devastating poverty in search of a better life, including Yanori Ramirez, an immigrant from Honduras, where 79% of people live in poverty. Like many making the arduous trek to the States, she travels from southern Mexico by freight train to the U.S. border. The journey takes three days and nights; some will be robbed or killed or raped or injured in falls from the train. It's a price these immigrants are willing to pay.

Says **LIVES FOR SALE**'s Executive Producer, Larry Rich: "the same grinding poverty that drives people to risk dying of thirst in the desert is the reason people will expose themselves to the danger of being enslaved. Both are born of desperation." Women account for 54% of immigrants worldwide and many of them wind up paying their way with their bodies. We meet Lucita, a poor Mexican girl who was approached by a neighbor with a seemingly great offer – the neighbor would arrange for her transport to Los Angeles with a guaranteed good-paying factory job. Wanting to help her family, Lucita reluctantly agreed and soon found herself in a California brothel, with black-curtained windows, unable to leave. As Kay Buck, who runs the Los Angeles-based Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST) says, "You have to remember that traffickers have long-standing, established relationships in those communities. These are usually not strangers. All survivors of trafficking have that hope of having a better life for themselves and their families so traffickers use that in order to manipulate them."

The decision to cross the border into the U.S is always a perilous undertaking. Many immigrants pay *coyotes*, men who can help them navigate the journey but often deliver them to people in the market for cheap laborers, domestics or prostitutes. In **LIVES FOR SALE**, we visit a crossing spot between Sonora and Arizona that runs through treacherous desert, where Father Rene Castañeda runs the Center for the Care of Immigrants & Needy, an oasis of hope for immigrants. On the American side of the border, minister Mark Adams runs Frontera de Cristo, which saves lives by putting hydration stations along the main trails traversed by immigrants. Says Adams, "There were people who didn't think it was right to give water to the thirsty. And people who thought that it was their fault if they died. They were 'illegal.' As a community of faith, that's ludicrous for us, to believe that anyone should die for trying to find a better way of life for their families."

"They say that the accomplice is as guilty as the perpetrator so I don't really want to know what happens to people once they're in the United States. What's important is that they arrive in good shape, without problems...and that they pay me. This may seem cold and businesslike, but it's the truth."

– former human trafficker (often known as a *pollero*) speaking on camera

As word of trafficking has spread, more criminals are being brought to justice. In **LIVES FOR SALE**, we meet Esperanza, a young Guatemalan woman who was sold into virtual slavery and brought to Florida as a domestic and sexual servant. A neighbor became aware of the situation and, with the help of the local Sheriff's Office, the District Attorney, and the Florida Coalition against Human Trafficking, her captor was imprisoned and Esperanza is getting the help and support she needs to move on with her life. Says Douglas Molloy, the Assistant Chief U.S. Attorney who prosecuted the case: "There will

always be people who are willing to make a sacrifice to come to this country. They believe in America. And when they end up here it is our responsibility to do something about their situation.”

Experts agree that one of the best ways to lower the number of immigrants is to improve the economic and educational conditions in their home countries. **LIVES FOR SALE** profiles two communities that are doing just that. In Salvador Urbina, the coffee growing region of southern Mexico in the state of Chiapas, the Just Coffee cooperative enables growers to sell their coffee directly, keeping more profits in the community. In Guatemala, activists are addressing the debilitating problem of female illiteracy, which is close of 80 percent. Partially funded by Guatemalan immigrants working in the U.S., the program hopes to give children the skills they’ll need to earn a decent living without leaving home.

As producer Gayla Jamison says, “In the heated debate concerning immigration, the tendency is to forget that we’re talking about human beings, courageous people who are willing to make tremendous sacrifices and take great risks in order to provide for their families. But this is also what makes them vulnerable to human trafficking.” With **LIVES FOR SALE**, viewers gain a new understanding of the often invisible people that we all see every day.

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A study by the Pew Hispanic Center reported that 6.3 million undocumented immigrants make up 4.3% of the US labor force.

These workers represent:

1 in 4 drywall/ceiling tile installers

1 in 5 roofers

1 in 5 construction workers

1 in 4 grounds maintenance workers

1 in 5 maids and housekeepers

1 in 5 agricultural workers

The US State Department estimates that between 18,000 and 20,000 trafficking victims enter the country each year.

Human trafficking -- the selling of men, women, and children for economic gain -- is one of the world's most dehumanizing practices. According to the State Department, it is also the world's third-largest illegal industry after drugs and illicit arms sales.

Featured Interviewees, in order of Appearance:

Doug Molloy, Assistant Chief US Attorney, Fort Myers, FL

Anna Rodriguez, President, CEO and founder, Florida Coalition Against Human Trafficking, Bonita Springs, FL

Kay Buck, Executive Director, Center for the Abolition of Sexual Trafficking (CAST), Los Angeles, CA

Carol Giron, Central American Institute for Social & Developmental Studies, Guatemala

Father Flor Maria Rigoni, Director of Immigrants House, Chiapas, Mexico

Father Rene Castaneda, Director, Center for the Care of Immigrants and Needy, Altar, Mexico

Mark Adams, Minister, Frontera de Cristo/Christ's Border, Douglas, Arizona

Sergio Iceda, former "pollero"

Vincent Hampel, Border Patrol Agent, Tuscon, Arizona

Janet Rincon, Detective, Lee County Sheriff's Office, Human Trafficking Unit, Fort Myers, FL

Mary Lewis, Director, Our Mother's Home, San Carlos, FL

Shawn Ramsey, Detective, Lee County Sheriff's Office, Human Trafficking Unit, Fort Myers, FL

Eri Cifuentes, President, Just Coffee Cooperative, Mexico

Elvia Bautista, Coordinator, Women's Program, Archdiocese of San Marcos, Guatemala

About Maryknoll Productions

From its founding in 1911, Maryknoll has always recognized the importance of telling stories in sharing its faith and the work of mission. Today, Maryknoll tells its stories to a global audience in many ways, through award-winning publications and acclaimed radio and television programming. Maryknoll Productions has a distinguished history of producing sensitive documentaries on difficult subjects, digging deep into the why of human suffering and how our deepest beliefs call us to respond.

About Lightfoot Films

Lightfoot Films, Inc. was formed in 1981 to produce social issue, cultural, and human rights educational documentaries. Of special interest are women and Latin America. Lightfoot productions have aired on PBS, The Learning Channel, and NBC.

Executive Producer Larry Rich, Maryknoll Productions, has been head of the TV and radio unit of the Catholic mission organization since 1994. During that time, he produced three television series: *The Field Afar*, aired nationally on the Odyssey Channel; *Caminante*, aired on the Spanish-language Galavision cable network; and *My Americas*, presently airing on public television. He has also produced ten documentaries, including the 1995 Academy Award-nominated *School of Assassins*. Prior to assuming the role of Executive Producer at Maryknoll he worked in Peru from 1981 to 1993, where he established and coordinated the video unit of a human rights center.

Producer Gayla Jamison, an independent producer with many human rights and social issue documentaries and awards to her credit, was supervising producer on the three Maryknoll series cited above. One of the episodes in the *Caminante* series, *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*, won the prestigious Gabriel Award in 2003. She also produced *Approach of Dawn*, about Maya women of Guatemala and human rights, which aired on NBC; *Scraps of Life*, about Chilean women activists with family among the disappeared, which aired on PBS; and *Living in America: One Hundred Years of Ybor City*, about the Latin community of Tampa, Florida, which aired on The Learning Channel series, "New to America."