

An OPEN LETTER to VILLAGE VOICE MEDIA

We agree with 51 Attorneys General.

Girls and boys should not be sold for sex on Village Voice Media's Backpage.com.

Mr. Jim Larkin, CEO and Chair
Members of the Board of Directors
Village Voice Media

Dear Mr. Larkin and the Board of Directors of Village Voice Media:

It is a basic fact of the moral universe that girls and boys should not be sold for sex.

So we were surprised and stunned to realize your company, Village Voice Media, continues to publish an Adult section on its classifieds Web site Backpage.com that has been used as a platform for the trafficking of minors.

Arrests of adults selling minors for sex via Backpage.com have been reported by the media in Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Mexico, Ohio, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin. And these are just some of the cases that have been documented.

As moral and religious leaders of many creeds and backgrounds, we are united in calling on your publication to shut down the Adult section of Backpage.com. We appreciate your efforts to put in place new measures attempting to screen for ads featuring minors. However, we do not believe that these measures are doing enough to adequately solve the problem, and we share the opinion of the nation's 51 Attorneys General that the best way to eradicate your company's connection with the sex trafficking of minors is to shut down the Adult section of your Web site, as Craigslist did.

We trust that your company shares our outrage over the sex trafficking of minors. While we empathize with your business challenges and the increasingly difficult marketplace in which Village Voice Media competes, we trust that you are committed to running your business without compromising the lives of our nation's girls and boys.

We know there is much more to be done to end the sex trafficking of minors beyond what we ask of you. Ending this practice for good requires a groundswell of people in our business, media, and religious communities joining together in partnership. We need educational campaigns and robust law enforcement to challenge all dimensions of the problem, including the poverty and abuse at the root of the practice.

But we can do something right now to help these girls and boys. Please shut down the Adult section of Backpage.com immediately so that no minor is exploited through advertisements on your Web site.

Sincerely,

Imam Shamsi Ali
Islamic Cultural Center of New York

Imam Abdullah T. Antepi
Muslim Chaplain
Duke University
Durham

Rabbi Marcelo Bronstein
B'nai Jeshurun
New York City

Rabbi Sharon Brous
Senior/Founding Rabbi
IKAR
Los Angeles

Sister Simone Campbell, SSS
Executive Director
NETWORK

Bishop Minerva Carcaño
Bishop of the Phoenix Episcopal Area
United Methodist Church

The Rev. Peg Chemberlin
President, National Council of Churches
Executive Director, Minnesota Council of Churches

Rabbi Gilah Dror
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The Rabbinical Assembly

Greg M. Epstein
Humanist Chaplain
Harvard University

Bishop Yvette Flunder
Founder/Pastor, City of Refuge UCC
Executive Director/CEO, Ark of Refuge, Inc.
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The Rev. Dr. James A. Forbes
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The Rev. Alison Harrington
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The Rev. Dr. Katharine Henderson
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Rabbi's for Human Rights—North America

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Rabbi Eric H. Yoffie
President
Union for Reform Judaism

Organization names are for identification purposes only and do not necessarily represent institutional endorsements.

GROUNDSWELL
the social action initiative of Auburn Seminary

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www.groundswell-movement.org/backpage