

**Norma Jean Hotaling
1951 – 2008**



A Mass in Celebration of Her Life

**Saturday December 27, 2008
St. Anthony's Church, San Francisco**

The women and girls that we work with are the discards of society, the throw-always. I include myself in that description. We've come as close to death as anybody could come and still survive. Most people think 'they will never recover, they will never heal, and all they're going to do is cause a lot of trouble and cost a lot of money.' But we've proved them wrong. We've not only asserted that women and girls are worthy of help; we have shown that with the right nurturing and the right environment, we can do more than heal. We can be so incredible and give back to our community and help make it safe for other women and girls. - Norma Hotaling

Norma Hotaling, founder and Executive Director of the SAGE Project in San Francisco died on December 16, 2008 following a short illness.

Norma Hotaling transformed her own experiences in prostitution into a mission of social justice for her sisters and brothers who had also been trafficked and exploited in prostitution. Through Ms. Hotaling the voices of survivors of commercial sexual exploitation reached the forefront of the global movement against human trafficking. Her life and her work dissolved myths about prostitution, proving it to be the world's oldest oppression rather than a victimless crime. She was a beacon of courage and an extraordinarily effective champion of victimized and marginalized women, children, men and transgender people.

At the SAGE Project, Ms. Hotaling created a service agency for all survivors of sexual exploitation. SAGE especially welcomed those who had been prostituted and trafficked. Her model of peer-led services offered by those who had "been there, done that" as she explained, inspired people in prostitution who felt that they previously had no hope. Many survivors of prostitution who arrived at the doors of SAGE are emphatic that their lives were saved by the example of Ms. Hotaling's life and her affection for them as people who she deeply cared for.

Ms. Hotaling founded The First Offender Program, a prostitution diversion program run jointly by SAGE and the San Francisco District Attorney's office. Informally referred to as the "johns' school," the First Offender Program continues to offer educational programs to men arrested for soliciting prostitution, teaching them about prostitution's harms to women, the community, and to their own health. Hotaling's model of the "johns' school" is now used throughout the United States and in Canada, South Korea, and England.

Ms. Hotaling led The SAGE Project's staff while she also frequently spoke at conferences and provided counsel to public policy experts. She frequently testified for the United States Congress and the California legislature about the harms of

prostitution and the needs of those in it. Although based in San Francisco, Ms. Hotaling's work took her around the world where she worked with governmental leaders and agencies. She worked tirelessly with journalists in the print and broadcast media to help create a comprehensive picture of prostitution.

Ms. Hotaling was a board member and leader of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), one of the many organizations she worked with. She received numerous awards for her work. In 1998, SAGE and the First Offender Prostitution Program were recognized as one of the best examples of innovation from among more than 1,800 nominated programs. The programs were given the Innovations in American Government Award jointly from the Ford Foundation, Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and the Council for Excellence in Government.

In 2000 SAGE's peer education program was celebrated with the Peter F. Drucker Foundation Award for Nonprofit Innovation.

In 2001, Ms. Hotaling was honored with an Oprah's Angel: Use Your Life Award which brought national recognition to SAGE. Ms. Hotaling accepted the award on behalf of SAGE on the Oprah Winfrey show.

In October 2008, Ms. Hotaling was most recently honored by the Center for Young Women's Development who gave her the Cheyenne Bell Award honoring her work with young women escaping San Francisco street prostitution.

When she spoke, Norma Hotaling used experiences from her own prostitution that moved her audience to tears while educating them about the cruelty of prostitution. She made it clear that almost everyone in prostitution had a burning desire to get out. Yet when Hotaling herself was struggling to escape prostitution, the only available services were inside jails.

At a San Francisco Health Department hearing on harm reduction Ms. Hotaling described the time in her life when she was turning tricks, was addicted to heroin and was prostituting

for a pimp who frequently beat her but to whom she was attached. She described having approached a San Francisco health department program to ask for help and they told her she should resolve her heroin addiction. In that meeting, Ms Hotaling had said, "You don't understand, I said I need help."

Norma Hotaling dedicated her life to what is called harm elimination in today's public health language: providing women, men, and the transgender in prostitution not only condoms and emotional support but services informed by an understanding of the multi-traumatic nature of prostitution. Rather than assuming that exit from prostitution was impossible, Ms. Hotaling fought for the right of those in prostitution to the same quality of life that others have.

Ms. Hotaling's legacy is that the help she herself sought is now far better understood by public health agencies, even if they are not yet offering those services to the thousands of people in prostitution who seek to escape it. Her pioneering work lives on in the expansion of services for trafficked and prostituted people, and in the requirement of accountability for those who buy and sell human beings. The loss of Ms. Hotaling is felt and mourned by the thousands of people she touched in her too brief life.

Born July 21, 1951 and raised in Palm Beach Florida, Ms. Hotaling attended San Francisco State University. She graduated Magna Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Science degree in Health Education. She is survived by her mother, Norma Louise Hotaling, her brother James Hotaling, and her beloved companion dog Emma.

A public memorial will be announced for January. In lieu of flowers, donations are requested to SAGE Project, 1275 Mission Street, San Francisco 94103, in honor of Norma Hotaling's life and work.

I just loved her so much. She had a vision and she followed through. She met with whoever she had to meet with to make her dream a reality. I loved the courage she had. She was so driven. I admired that. She stayed focused. I try to emulate that.

Sandra Domingue, SAGE mental health case manager

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"The Day I was Offered a Second Chance to Live 4 Me"

I was a 13 year-old in Youth Guidance Center, I was there for 2nd degree murder, runaway, and prostitute. I got some help at YGC, and then I went to SAGE. They accepted me in SAGE, showed me love and care and wanted nothing in return but self-commitment. As I opened up to my caseworkers, they became my best friends, like they always knew when something was wrong but most of the time when I got so mad I know there was always Norma's office and phone to call or go to. If I walked into her office crying I walked out laughing and actually feeling good.

Norma changed my life 100%. If they never would have come to save me I'll be gone so I thank Norma and others for helping me change and learn that I do have Rights and the right to love and Be Loved not be hurt. And for Norma she was my Angel. Now she's with my daughter Imani watching mommy do the best she can and what should have been done a long time ago.

Norma without you creating this program many lives wouldn't even exist. You saved many. And only me and her know and share secrets but never did she say she was ready to go. But inside I know within me she was tired and I wouldn't have wanted for her to be in pain or hurt any longer. So Norma watch over Imani and I thank you for that second chance to live my own life and know the difference you made as I take over the job you been wanting me to do for years.

Melinda Garrett, SAGE

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At a time in my early recovery when I barely had the capacity to believe in myself, Norma, in an effort to expand SAGE's services for men, hired me as the first male employee. She believed in me and empowered me to explore and utilize my own inner strength and with that I developed the men's program. She hit the nail on the head when she said we'd be "building the plane as we flew it" because I certainly had no idea how to develop nor implement anything, let alone a whole program within a program. With her guidance, as well as the support from other SAGE staff, I was successful and reached many men whose needs were not being met elsewhere. Norma constantly paved new roads and was a revolutionary in doing so.

Sam Forno, former SAGE staff member

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20 years ago, Norma Hotaling approached me as I lay in a jail cell kicking heroin. She introduced herself and told me of her past. I was selling my body and soul to try to escape the deep pain my life had become. As the next couple of years progressed, I was arrested numerous times. Each time, I would see Norma. My hopeless existence slowly turned into a spark of hope, as she never judged me and never gave up on me. In 1993, I became the first prostitute Norma assisted in getting off the street. We became dear friends and colleagues, fighting to create services to help pull other women out of hell. We did street outreach in our spare time to bring women to a group once a week in a donated space, we never gave up, and SAGE became funded. It has become an internationally recognized program and has saved many lives. Although I moved on from SAGE years ago, I will eternally be grateful to Norma for saving my life and through me, many more, as I continue to work in trauma-specific treatment.

Angel

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I will remember Norma Hotaling for her courage and leadership. Norma was the first person I met when I founded Veronica's Voice, a program like SAGE. At that time, I had no idea there was anyone working on changing the system and helping women trapped in prostitution. Norma had the spirit of a true social justice fighter. I have much respect for all she has done to help make sure the voices of victims of the commercial sex industry are heard. I am honored to have known her - she was my 'Shero.' I am a better person and leader because of Norma

Kristy Childs, Veronica's Voice, Kansas Cit

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Norma was an inspiration to all who knew her. She provided a path for those who have been trafficked and for survivors to provide services to those wanting out of oppression. We will never know the scope of her legacy that has reached the far corners of the earth and of all the people she has helped to rescue. She is a 'Shero' whose quick wit and intelligence will be missed by everyone. I am proud to have learned from her and that I had the opportunity to call her my friend, colleague and my sister.

Kathleen Mitchell, Founder, DIGNITY House, Phoenix

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I have had the honor and privilege of knowing Norma since 1994. She is a true 'Shero.' She has sacrificed her life in spreading the truth about the harms of sexual exploitation and in doing so; many have been set free. Norma will always be loved and never forgotten.

Vednita Carter, Executive Director, Breaking Free, Minneapolis

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Dear Norma, I know that where ever you are you will be fighting for us hopefully you can join forces with Diego my son who is up there. Thank you for being there for me always in good times and bad times I promise I will keep an eye on Emma. All my love Marisa Ugarte, Bilateral Safety Corridor Coalition, Corredor Bilateral de Seguridad

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Dearest Norma: You rescued women and girls from slavery. You taught people around the world what slavery means, what it feels like. You helped us connect the dots between trafficking abroad and here at home. You inspired us and made us laugh. You drove us to do more. May God's Peace embrace you.

***In Admiration, U.S. Department of State,
Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons***

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Exceeded by none in a field she helped pioneer, Norma insisted we hold to account the men who buy and sell women, and not stigmatize and punish those women. Now dozens of communities emulate her intuition-inspired tough love for men whose demand fuels sex trafficking, because it manifestly works. And I found one could not wish for a better friend.

Mark P. Lagon, Ambassador at Large and Director of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, U.S. Dept. of State

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Norma Hotaling overcame the worst kind of abuse and trauma, and redirected her life into an extraordinary mission of social justice. Norma served as the Executive Director of SAGE, a model program that should be adapted in cities across America to help women, men, and youth to leave the sex trade and overcome addiction.

Norma will be remembered for her courage and compassion in confronting criminals and searching for victims of the sex trade in the Bay area. Her life was an inspiration not only to those looking to find their way out of a life of sexual exploitation, but to all who want to make their own contributions to a more just and compassionate world.

Gavin Newsom, San Francisco Mayor

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[Norma Hotaling collaborated with the San Francisco District Attorney's office to develop a law that charged johns and pimps with child abuse.]

Norma's life in many ways could have been considered a tragic one, but she turned a tragic life into the life of a hero. Almost more important than the law was what Norma did to demystify and stop romanticizing prostitution. She got people to understand that women and girls are being treated as commodities.

Kamala Harris, San Francisco District Attorney

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Norma didn't just survive sexual abuse in childhood and prostitution, she dedicated her life to ending all exploitation of girls and women. She showed us what it looks like to move from victim to hero and we are all blessed to have worked with her.

*Norma Ramos, Co-Executive Director,
Coalition Against Trafficking in Women*

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Norma's life was a triumph of hope over experience. Because of Norma, hope came to life for so many women in the remarkable sanctuary she built that is SAGE. With Norma, we too stand against global exploitation.

Janice Raymond, Coalition Against Trafficking in Women

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Her pain, and the brave and open manner in which she described and bore it, inspired others to ensure that millions of vulnerable girls and women throughout the world would be spared the enslavement she endured. If the 21 century becomes noted as a period of world history in which women became emancipated and empowered, Norma will have been a major contributor to this development. You made a difference, dear, good friend!

Michael Horowitz, Hudson Institute

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Despite her own wounds and despite having survived incalculable wrongs, Norma showed the anti-trafficking movement her passion, charity, compassion, healing, and understanding. She led by example, and showed the rest of us constructive ways to tend to the wounds of people who were despised, to love them, to help them heal. In that way, Norma is a something of a Mother Theresa. She dedicated her life to offering hope and healing to those most of society simply ignores. That type of love deserves honor and recognition.
Lisa Thompson, Liaison for the Abolition of Sexual Trafficking, Salvation Army National Headquarters

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Norma was a survivor who turned into a warrior who fought not just for herself but for all her sisters and brothers in prostitution. In addition to pimps, johns, and traffickers she challenged people who didn't really want to know about prostitution but who nonetheless were riveted by her powerful life story and learned from it. She helped those of us who witness the human rights violations of prostitution to better understand it. She helped me understand the deep psychological trauma caused by prostitution.
Melissa Farley, Prostitution Research & Education, San Francisco

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Norma was a hero. While many people act heroically for moments, most do not truly devote their lives to helping others, succeed in doing so, and become living, breathing heroes. Norma was the real thing. She took her life story and — courageously, remarkably — survived, thrived, and used her life to help create global change. I miss her now, not as a hero or leader, but as a friend. She was a force of nature - strong, delicate, sweet, ferocious, gentle, and tough as nails. There will never be another Norma.
Michael Shively, Abt Associates, Cambridge

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Norma Hotaling was a phenomenal spirit. She was an unstoppable force driven by her unwavering dedication to ending prostitution. Her legacy remains an inspiration for abolitionists around the world who adhere to the fundamental knowing that the buying and selling of human beings is a most tragic form of human rights abuse. Norma had a big heart and gave hope and love to women on the street, telling each their lives were worth saving. This simple gift helped many women and girls into a life worth living. May we all learn from her fierce dedication and may she now rest easy knowing the many seeds she sowed will grow and flourish around the world as our work to end prostitution continues.

Ann Simonton, Media Watch

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I first met Norma Hotaling when I interviewed her for my book, *The Natashas*, and I was impressed. Then I met her in person in San Francisco when I sat in on her last class at the John School just before she went into hospital. I was blown away at her dedication and passion. I am truly blessed to have met such a wonderful and amazing woman. So much so that I have dedicated my upcoming book *The Johns* to Norma.

Victor Malarek, writer, Toronto

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Norma taught me that our life is what we choose to do after our first life is over. When Norma started at San Francisco State University in 1992, her first life was over, almost literally. She had a steel plate in her head from where a pimp kicked her, and she still had throbbing headaches and PTSD. She talked about how she had almost died and probably should have died. At the age of 40, she grabbed hold of her life and started anew. In her short second life, Norma changed the world. Her legacy lives on through those of us who knew her and worked with her, and the programs, policies, and laws she founded.

Beverly Ovrebo, DrPH, Professor Emeritus, Dept of Health Education, San Francisco State University

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Norma Hotaling changed the world. As a result of her vision and action, the world is coming to view men who buy sex acts as being responsible for prostitution and sex trafficking. She claimed that men's purchase of sex acts created a demand for young women and girls, without which they would not have been recruited into prostitution. Norma Hotaling founded a diversion program informally called the "johns' school" (The First Offender Program) to educate men arrested for soliciting prostitution about the harm they were doing to women and the community and the risks to their own health.

Donna Hughes, Carlson Endowed Chair, University of Rhode Island

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I first met Norma Hotaling in 1999 in Bangladesh during the CATW International meeting. I was inspired, and so were the survivors from the Philippines, Bangladesh and the rest of Asia. Now, our sisters from the Bagong Kamalayan Survivors' Collective and Buklod are all re-entering formal school to be able to finish Psychology, or Social Work, or Law, to be able to help other women. Since we met Norma and learned of SAGE, we have been finding ways to address the demand side of prostitution, in many strategic ways. Norma lives on in the our work, in the hearts of advocates and in the lives of survivors.

Love, Jean Enriquez, Executive Director

Coalition Against Trafficking in Women-Asia Pacific

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As long as we point the finger away from ourselves, away from the institutions that blame and criminalize women and children for their own rape, sexual abuse, trafficking and slavery, away from the men who we normalize as - Johns, - and as long as we disconnect adult prostitution and the exploitation of children and disconnect prostitution and trafficking in human beings for the purposes of rape and sex slavery; then we are to blame and we have assisted in creating well-funded transnational criminal networks - dollar by dollar. - Norma Hotaling