

# Chron. Reporter Accused of “Ruining the Party” with Four-Part Series on Sex Slavery

Last November, Meredith May finished work on a four-part series examining sex slavery as it played out among San Francisco’s 90-plus massage parlors, as well as in South Korea, which she visited in early 2006.

Running on the front page of the *San Francisco Chronicle* last October, May’s story tracked the odyssey of a young woman who was trafficked into the United States, eventually landing into a state of “debt bondage” at a Geary Street brothel .

“It really touched a lot of nerves,” May says of the series, which generated over a million hits on the newspaper’s website. About 500 bloggers were also posting comments within the first week.

During her visit to South Korea, May observed an unexpected level of materialism among young Koreans. “The pressure to look rich

is outlandish,” she says, and young girls are going to great lengths, in some cases prostitution, to get the money they need to buy a pair of



S.F. Chronicle Staff Reporter  
Meredith May

American sneakers or a Louis Vuitton handbag.

Back in San Francisco, May followed a team of inspectors from the Department of Public Health, the

City Attorney’s office, the Department of Building Inspection, the police and fire departments, and Mayor Newsom himself as they made unannounced visits to five alleged brothels.

At one stop, the team got no further than the lobby before they found a man having sex with a masseuse on the couch.

Of some 400 emails May received from readers, about half said they were moved by the story. Among the other half were regular customers of the city’s massage circuit, who claimed May was “ruining the party” by stirring up so much controversy. The series also stimulated emotions within the Korean community, with about half of those writing in thanking her for bringing the issue out from under the rug. The other half accused her of stereotyping Asian culture.

Copyright 2007  
The City Edition  
[www.thecityedition.com](http://www.thecityedition.com)

*It takes more than  
a speech to fix the  
world’s problems.*

Invest in a good human  
rights organization today.

Association of Humanitarian Lawyers  
*San Francisco based since 1982*

On the web at [humanlaw.org](http://humanlaw.org)

(Donate online at [guidetoaction.org](http://guidetoaction.org))

