

## SILICON VALLEY SOCIAL MEDIA GIANTS HAVE TURNED ALL THE PALO ALTO MASSAGE PARLORS INTO WHORE HOUSES

By Susan Leed

While the Rosewood Hotel in Silicon Valley is widely acknowledged to be a 'high end whore house' for venture capitalists, something sleazier is happening in the strip malls in Silicon Valley.

All of the over-paid Millennials and Java programmers at Google and Facebook are running down San Antonio Drive to nearby strip malls for hand jobs and quickie anals from the local massage parlors.

After one of Google's top executives was recently killed by his prostitute, the focus on Silicon Valley prostitution has increased.

All over America, the crackdown on human trafficking has begun. In one town, a place called "Oakworks Therapy" was raided. Word spread quickly online about the fate of Oakworks Therapy.

Within hours of federal agents descending on the unassuming, white house on Portsmouth Avenue - with its discreet backyard parking lot and garage renovated into the lobby of a massage parlor - people started posting on a forum about the business being shut down.

The website, one of several that help illegal businesses operate, says it facilitates "fantasy as it meets reality." The U.S. Attorney's

office described what was occurring inside Oakworks Therapy differently: prostitution.

After the raid, federal prosecutors indicted the owner, Ken D. Ma, for violating the Travel Act by using the internet to promote prostitution at his businesses, which also included massage parlors in Plaistow and Salem.

In a brief interview, Ma said the indictment was false.

In recent years, euphemistic advertisements for illicit massage businesses have become easy to find online, at websites like backpage.com, which has been shut down since the FBI seized it in April.

In New Hampshire, the proliferation of those advertisements corresponds with a change in the landscape of prostitution, federal prosecutors said. Prostitution rings, which often operated out of short-term lease apartments and moved frequently, increasingly seem to be opting for more formal settings.

"We've seen an uptick in those businesses opening," Assistant U.S. Attorney Mark Zuckerman said. In the past, "you didn't have a business that was kind of hanging out a sign or filing papers with the Secretary of State ... it was more under the radar. But over the last few years, we've seen more businesses open as massage parlors."

There are now 27 massage parlors in New Hampshire listed on just one website.

They include Aqua Therapy in Londonderry, Asian Massage in Merrimack and Sunset Spa in Manchester.

Ma was the registered agent of Aqua Therapy until 2014, when it was transferred to Gui Hua Chen. Attempts to reach Chen were unsuccessful.

Asian Massage and Sunset Spa are registered to Bo Xuan Zhang, whom Merrimack police arrested in 2013 as a fugitive from New York, where the Brooklyn district attorney had indicted her on charges that included sex trafficking and promoting prostitution. A spokesman for the Brooklyn District Attorney's office said it did not have a record of Zhang being arraigned after her arrest in New Hampshire, and it is unclear if she was ever tried or convicted.

Attempts to reach her by phone and email were also unsuccessful.

Several local parlors listed on the illicit massage website are registered to owners with addresses and phone numbers in Brooklyn and Norwich, Conn., another sign that the industry is changing.

"I think we're in kind of a burgeoning market for that industry," Zuckerman said. "They're moving north from Boston and New York and looking to get a foothold in New Hampshire."

The illicit massage business is growing across the country, according to a January report from the Polaris Project, which works to counteract human trafficking and slavery. The nonprofit estimated that there are more than 9,000 of the businesses in

the U.S., generating more than \$2.5 billion in annual revenue.

Individual parlors are often part of larger networks that also control the trafficking, transportation and housing of the women involved. The Polaris Project reported that victims tend to be women in their mid-30s to 50s from China and South Korea.

That meshes with what advocates in New Hampshire have seen. Unlike other forms of sex trafficking in the Granite State, women involved in the illicit massage parlor business are mostly from China but are legal residents of the U.S., according to Rebecca Ayling, project director of the New Hampshire Human Trafficking Collaborative Task Force.

"There haven't been a lot of people coming forward" as trafficking victims in New Hampshire's massage industry, she said. "There are a lot of different reasons, but traffickers are really clever and strategic. They spend a lot of the time giving people reasons why they shouldn't report the crime."

That can include confiscating their identification documents, moving them often among locations and threatening to hurt their families.

Investigators monitor massage advertisement websites and keep tabs on the businesses listed there, said Manchester detective Eric Tracy, who is the department's human trafficking task force officer. But the advertisements alone are not enough evidence to shut down a business or arrest the owners.

"We're victim-centered; that's the approach we take," he said. "We're trying to focus on how we get into these buildings to

Speak to the women and get them help."

Often, massage parlor workers don't want to discuss their treatment. The task force, which is funded by \$1.3 million in grants, provides translation services and helps connect victims who do want help with housing, transportation and other services.

From January 2017 to March 2018, the task force provided services to 24 trafficking victims, according to data obtained through a Right-to-Know request. Law enforcement agencies participating in the task force also opened 39 new human trafficking investigations, arrested 19 people and secured six indictments.

Now EVERY SINGLE "therapy center", "Massage Envy" and "health center" in Silicon Valley can expect hidden cameras under cover agents and Google and Facebook employees can expect to get busted in increasing numbers.