**Linda Smith**

Linda Smith is a leader in the global movement to end sex trafficking of women and children around the world and in the United States. In 1998, while still a member of the U.S. Congress, Linda traveled to Falkland Road in Mumbai, India—one of the worst brothel districts in the world. The hopeless faces of desperate women and children forced into prostitution compelled Linda to found Shared Hope International (SHI). SHI was established to support shelter and service creation for sex trafficking survivors using a comprehensive model for restoration. By [partnering with local organizations](http://sharedhope.org/what-we-do/restore/partners/), SHI provides restorative care, shelter, and education and job skills training through the [Women’s Investment Network (WIN)](http://sharedhope.org/what-we-do/restore/services/) at Homes and Villages of Hope where women and children can live without time limit. Today, Shared Hope provides leadership in education and training, prevention strategies, research, and policy initiatives.

Linda founded the War Against Trafficking Alliance (WATA) in 2001, coordinating regional and international efforts necessary to combat sex trafficking. In 2003, WATA co-sponsored the World Summit with the U.S. Department of State, uniting leaders from 114 nations that demonstrated sustained commitment to protect the vulnerable from the sex trade. Six international summits followed, leading governments in under-achieving nations to pass human trafficking laws and plan for enforcement. In 2006, SHI spearheaded the [U.S. Mid-Term Review on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)](http://sharedhope.org/wp-content/uploads/PIC/US_MTR_of_CSEC.pdf)—bringing together leaders from across the United States to assess progress made in combating the sexual slavery of children in America. The U.S. Mid-Term Review on CSEC in America was the basis for a United States – Canada Regional Consultation in preparation for the 2008 World Congress III Against CSEC, where the report was presented by Shared Hope as part of the U.S. delegation.

Under a grant from the U.S. Department of State, Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, Linda and her team conducted field research in Jamaica, the Netherlands, Japan, and the U.S. to investigate the business model fueling the sex industry. These findings were compiled in the 2007 publication of the [DEMAND. report](http://sharedhope.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/DEMAND.pdf) and the production of the [DEMAND. documentary](https://vimeo.com/51465052).

Since 2006, Linda and SHI have worked in partnership with human trafficking task forces in cities across the U.S. to provide research, training, and technical assistance. With funding from the U.S. Department of Justice, SHI conducted four years of research on Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST)—the exploitation of American children through prostitution, pornography or sexual performance. In 2009, Linda presented the findings in [The National Report on Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking: America’s Prostituted Children](http://sharedhope.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/SHI_National_Report_on_DMST_2009.pdf) to Congress. By examining the governmental and nongovernmental efforts and gaps in addressing child sex trafficking in the U.S., this research pioneered today’s movement against child sex slavery in America. Both [DEMAND.](http://sharedhope.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/DEMAND.pdf) and [the National Report](http://sharedhope.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/SHI_National_Report_on_DMST_2009.pdf) have been entered into the Congressional Record. Using this research as a platform, Linda is an advocate for a strengthened response at the federal level, and has been instrumental in helping states design legislative frameworks to protect the innocence of America’s children.

In 2011, Linda commissioned a landmark initiative to assess every state’s laws as they relate to or impact domestic minor sex trafficking. This project, the [Protected Innocence Challenge](http://sharedhope.org/what-we-do/bring-justice/reportcards/), is a strategy to comprehensively combat child sex trafficking by identifying gaps in state laws and providing a blueprint for legislative action. Washington State Attorney General Rob McKenna spoke in support of this initiative, stating that the attention it draws to the issue is necessary to create effective change. Additionally, Linda designed an integrated training and awareness model, [Do You Know Lacy?](http://sharedhope.org/what-we-do/prevent/training/), aimed at educating a variety of audiences using a multi-dimensional approach.

As a foremost expert on international and domestic trafficking, Linda has spoken out against the trafficking of women and children in numerous Congressional hearings and in national and international forums, such as the World Conference on Trafficking and the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission on the Protection of Children. Linda has participated in more than [300 media interviews](http://sharedhope.org/media/), and has appeared on CNN, MSNBC, USA Today, Dan Rather Reports, ABC News, the Dr. Phil show, O’Reilly Factor, and CBN. Linda received the 2009 Soroptimist Making a Difference for Women Award and the 2010 Soroptimist Ruby Award: For Women Helping Women. Linda has been published in news outlets and journals around the world; including The New York Times, the Fletcher Forum of World Affairs, the International Review of Penal Law, and the Regent University Law Review.

Linda’s political career began in 1983 as a Washington State legislator. From 1983 to 1993, Linda served as a member of the Washington State House of Representatives (1983-86) and State Senate (1987-93). During her time as Senator, Linda chaired the State Senate Children and Family Services Committee, overseeing programs related to issues of children and families with a focus on protection, restoration, adoption, child welfare, drug rehabilitation, and homeless children. While in office, Linda drafted a package of foster care bills that provided greater permanency for foster youth by limiting the number of times they could be moved. In 1994, she was elected to the U.S. Congress following a remarkable grassroots write-in campaign where she defeated the only Republican candidate listed on the primary ballot. While in Congress she became known for her stand against taking special interest money and served on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, a position that provided her initial exposure to the horror of sex slavery. Her compassionate and uncompromising belief that every individual has dignity has carried her from advocating for permanent safe homes for children as the State Senate chair of the Children and Family Services Committee, to the halls of Congress, and ultimately to searching out victims in red light districts around the world. Linda and her husband, Vern, reside in Vancouver, Washington.