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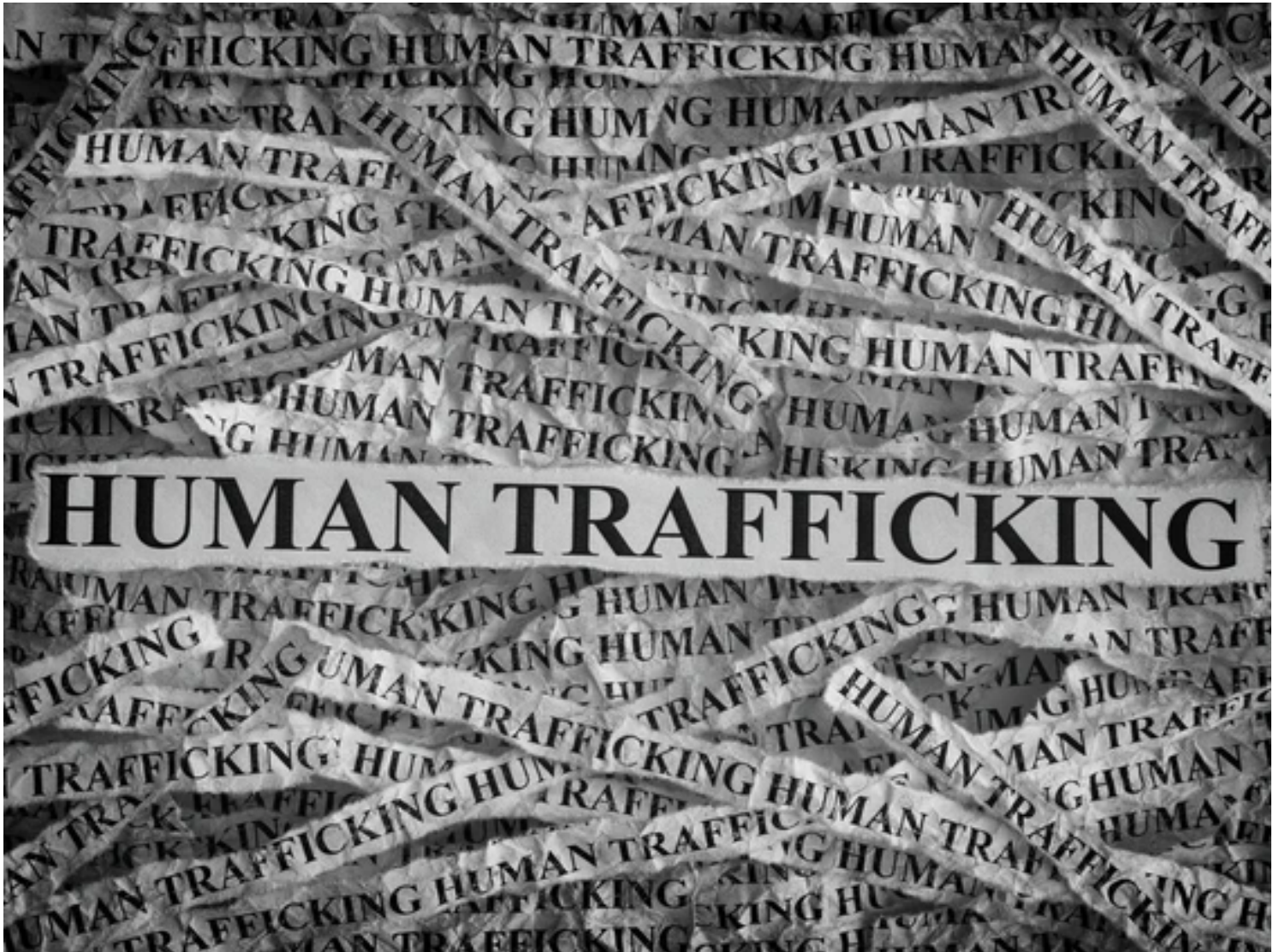


Local News

Teen who dreamed of exotic dancing lured into prostitution, court told

Doug Schmidt

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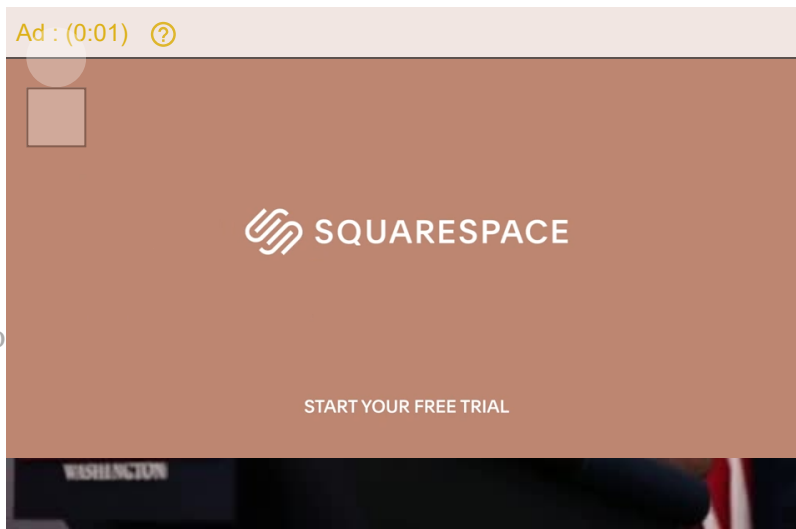


A human trafficking trial involving a 17-year-old complainant began Tuesday in Superior Court in Windsor. PHOTO BY GETTY IMAGES /Windsor Star

A London teen too young to be a nightclub exotic dancer thought she had met the right person on social media to help her launch an early professional career in Windsor’s strip joints.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

But her Windsor connection, a total stranger until the pair struck up an online relationship on Instagram, had different work in mind for the youth — prostitution.



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Within hours of being picked up outside her London apartment on a Friday night, the girl was settled into a Windsor hotel room and the first older gentleman caller arrived with cash for oral sex, followed by a second, even older man, about an hour later.

The young complainant, 17 at the time, testified Tuesday via Zoom from London at the start of a human trafficking trial before Superior Court Justice Bruce Thomas in Windsor.

Two Windsor residents are each charged with counts of forcible confinement, hostage taking and theft — Zuhair Gorges, 46, arrested in April 2019 after Windsor police intervened; and Breyia Latouf, 23 at the time of her arrest the following month.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

The complainant, who cannot be identified by court order, was living on her own at the time and in regular contact with youth workers. She testified she had older friends who spoke of the “glamourized” lifestyle of exotic dancing and the quick cash that could be earned, and she said she needed money.

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The exterior of the Superior Court of Justice in Windsor is shown on Thursday, April 22, 2021. PHOTO BY DAN JANISSE /Windsor Star

She testified that Gorges — whom she knew as “Zeelo” — reached out to her on Instagram and said he knew Windsor’s strip club owners and could get her a job on the stage. Even after her first night in Windsor and being hooked up with the older men for paid sex, the youth said she still harboured hopes of being introduced to strip club work the following night.

“I still did want to see how that went,” the young woman said of the dream to become an exotic dancer. “I just tried to forget about the night before.”

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

The second john, she testified, warned her Gorges was “a bad guy ... he said he was dangerous.” During questioning by assistant Crown attorney Jayme Lesperance, the complainant said she was very shy at the time and that she “felt like I had to do it ... it was just one of those situations.”

After those first two tricks — she told a third man to go home after he said he had no money — Gorges and Latouf showed up at about 3 a.m. and there were vodka drinks, cocaine and some sexy dance outfits Latouf brought for her to try on before the couple left the exhausted youth. By that first morning, however, she’d only had about an hour’s sleep and woke up to discover all the cash she’d made, as well as the “emergency” money she had brought from London, were missing.

STORY CONTINUES BELOW

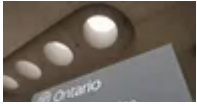
With no money — she said Gorges had earlier drawn from her emergency funds to pay for the hotel — the youth testified Latouf picked her up later that Saturday morning and drove her to the couple’s home. On the drive, she told Latouf she had to be back in London by Monday at the latest, to which the reply came: “I don’t know about that.”

The complainant testified: “I just got a really bad feeling at that point.” She continues her testimony on <https://windsorstar.com/news/local-news/teen-who-dreamed-of-exotic-dancing-lured-into-prostitution-court-told>

Wednesday.

MORE ON THIS TOPIC

Human trafficker sentenced to 6.5 years prison for kidnapping, torture



Gorges boasts a lengthy criminal record and is currently in custody after being sentenced earlier this year to a 6.5-year prison term after being convicted of kidnapping and torturing a Windsor woman in 2018 in an attempt to force her into prostitution.

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