

Subscribe/Manage Account Place An Ad LAT Store Jobs Cars Real Estate Rentals More Classifieds Custom Publishing

Los Angeles Times

LOCAL U.S. WORLD BUSINESS SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT HEALTH LIVING TRAVEL OPINION

Search

L.A. NOW POLITICS CRIME EDUCATION O.C. WESTSIDE NEIGHBORHOODS ENVIRONMENT OBITUARIES FINDLOCAL

YOU ARE HERE: LAT Home > Collections > Slavery

ADS BY GOOGLE



Give the gift of storing and sharing for Apple users.
amazon.com
16GB Wi-Drive for \$59.99
Kingston TECHNOLOGY

Advertisement



The 2012 C-Class
Just \$349/mo for 30 months.*
Now through Jan. 3, 2011.
SEE OFFER DETAILS FIND A DEALER
Mercedes-Benz
The Winter Events

Sold into slavery as a girl, Shyima Hall becomes a U.S. citizen

When she was 10, Shyima Hall was smuggled from Egypt into the U.S. as a slave to a family in Irvine. In Montebello on Thursday, she became an American citizen.

December 16, 2011 | By Phil Willon, Los Angeles Times

A decade ago, Shyima Hall was smuggled into the United States as a 10-year-old slave, forced to cook and clean inside the home of a wealthy Irvine family and, at night, sleep on a squalid mattress in a windowless garage.

On Thursday, the Egyptian-born 22-year-old stood before a federal judge in Montebello with nearly 900 others and was sworn in as naturalized U.S. citizen. The ceremony capped a hard-scrabble journey that began with Hall's rescue, wound through the foster care system and ended with her living on her own, working, and with ambitions to become a federal agent.



Shyima Hall, 22, moments after becoming a U.S. citizen. She lives in Beaumont... (Irfan Khan / Los Angeles Times)

Recommend 6

4

Tweet

ADS BY GOOGLE

Diabetes Diets

Help Control Blood Sugar With a Healthy Diet. Get a Free Meal Guide

www.WhyInsulin.com

RELATED

A medical miracle poses ethical dilemma

UC Berkeley to offer financial aid to more middle-income families

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Home of the freed

August 14, 2008

Irvine couple who enslaved girl get prison, fine

"I went through something terrible, but right now I'm in a great place," Hall said after Thursday's citizenship ceremony at the Quiet Cannon Country Club. "I can't imagine anything greater than having my own life."

Hall's Egyptian parents sold her into slavery when she was 8 for \$30 a month, according to authorities. The Cairo couple who bought her moved to Irvine two years later, smuggling Hall into the U.S. where she toiled for them and their five children until she was 13.

October 24, 2006

Pair Face Charges in Case of Kept Girl

February 3, 2005

MORE STORIES ABOUT

Slavery

Hall said she worked 16 hour days, scrubbing floors, cooking meals and cleaning house, and was rarely allowed outside the spacious home. She was forced to wash her own clothes in a bucket and was forbidden from going to school. She never visited a doctor or dentist and didn't speak a word of English.

Her captors, Abdel Nasser Eid Youssef Ibrahim and his former wife, Amal Ahmed Ewis-abd Motelib, berated her and occasionally slapped her around, authorities said.

"I didn't know anything about what America was about. My only hope was to go back home and live a normal life with my family, my brothers and sisters," she said. "That's all I wanted."

In 2002, acting on a tip from a concerned neighbor, child welfare authorities rescued her from the house. Her case was investigated by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, leading to the prosecution, federal imprisonment and, later, deportation of Ibrahim and Motelib.

Hall formed a tight bond with one of the lead federal agents, Mark Abend of ICE's Homeland Security Investigations, who has served as a friend and mentor. He was at Hall's citizenship ceremony Thursday.

"I'm really proud of her. Think of everything she's been through. Being sold into slavery at an early age. Coming over here. Not having a family," Abend said. "The resiliency she has is just amazing. The fortitude. Not falling apart. Not being a destroyed soul."

Abend remembers interviewing Hall, then 13, with the help of an Arabic interpreter for the first time when she was being cared for at the Orangewood Children's Home in Orange. Her captors told her to never speak to police, that officers would beat her. She stayed tight-lipped until she was allowed to call her parents in Egypt, and her father ordered her to go back with her captors.

"That's when I saw a spark," Abend said. "She stood up to her dad. She said, 'No! This is not right. What they did to me was not right. You sold me into slavery.'"

ADS BY GOOGLE

Los Angeles Passport Svcs

Quick US Passport, Renewal, Photo's Visit Us Today Call: 310-402-1619

www.samedaypassport-visa.com/la

At 13, Hall decided that she wanted to stay in the U.S. She hasn't returned to Egypt or seen her family.

In recent years, Hall has spoken to groups across the country about combating human trafficking. She's briefed ICE agents about the emotional and physical trauma victims face.

In 2010-11, federal immigration officials launched 651 investigations into human trafficking, arresting 300 people. According to the U.S. State Department, there are more than 12 million people entrapped in some form of slavery worldwide.

Hall said her dream now is to become a federal agent for ICE to help crack down on human trafficking and free the enslaved.

"That's my top goal," Hall said. "I've been through it. I know I can help."

Los Angeles immigration attorney Angelo Paparelli, who represented Hall pro bono, said that her citizenship application was filed under a special provision for juvenile immigrants and that county officials from the outset supported her decision to stay in the U.S.

"She has literally gone through a living hell, and now she wants to give back," said Paparelli, of the national law firm Seyfarth Shaw. "She's there to give other people courage."

For now, Hall is living in Beaumont in Riverside County and working at the Cabazon outlets as a store supervisor. She's deciding whether to go back to college to finish a degree or to apply for the local police force.

"I'm very excited. I can start my career now," she said. "I can start my life."

phil.willon@latimes.com

ADS BY GOOGLE

US Marriage Immigration

Specializing in US Marriage Visas. AOS & marriage based Green Cards.

www.1-800-usa-immigration.com

[Email](#) [Print](#) [Digg](#) [Twitter](#) [Facebook](#) [StumbleUpon](#) [Share](#)

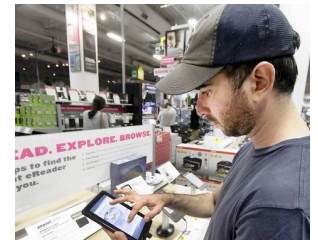
FEATURED



Russians are leaving the country in droves



Taking the bang out of pressure cooking



Kindle Fire and Nook Tablet undercut iPad but come with trade-offs

MORE:

Life choices dwarf pollutants in breast cancer risk, report finds

Science and religion: God didn't make man; man made gods