



U.S. Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRESS RELEASE

**THE FOUNDER OF "NXIVM," A PURPORTED SELF-HELP ORGANIZATION
BASED IN ALBANY, N.Y., ARRESTED FOR SEX TRAFFICKING AND FORCED
LABOR CONSPIRACY**

***Defendant Founded a Secret Society in Which Women Were Branded with Defendant's
Initials, Served as His Slaves and Coerced Others into Performing Sex Acts***

A complaint was unsealed today in federal court in Brooklyn charging Keith Raniere, also known as "The Vanguard," with sex trafficking, sex trafficking conspiracy and forced labor conspiracy. Raniere was deported by Mexican authorities after he was found Sunday outside Puerto Vallarta, Mexico in a luxury villa. Raniere's initial appearance is scheduled for tomorrow afternoon at the federal courthouse in Fort Worth, Texas.

Richard P. Donoghue, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, and William F. Sweeney, Jr., Assistant Director-in-Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, New York Field Office (FBI), announced the charges.

"As alleged in the complaint, Keith Raniere created a secret society of women whom he had sex with and branded with his initials, coercing them with the threat of releasing their highly personal information and taking their assets," stated United States Attorney Donoghue. "This Office and our law enforcement partners are committed to the prosecution of those who break the law by preying upon and violating members of our community." Mr. Donoghue expressed his grateful appreciation to the FBI for leading the investigation, and thanked the New York State Police, the FBI Albany Field Office, the FBI's Mexican Legat, the Mexican Federal Police, the New York State Office of the Attorney General, the New York State Department of Health and the United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of New York for their assistance.

"As alleged, Keith Raniere displayed a disgusting abuse of power in his efforts to denigrate and manipulate women he considered his sex slaves," FBI Assistant Director-in-Charge Sweeney stated. "He allegedly participated in horrifying acts of branding and burning

them, with the cooperation of other women operating within this unorthodox pyramid scheme. These serious crimes against humanity are not only shocking, but disconcerting to say the least, and we are putting an end to this torture today.”

Defendant’s Founding of Nxivm

According to the complaint, during the past 20 years, Raniere established a series of purported self-help workshops called “Executive Success Programs” (“ESP”) within his umbrella organization “Nxivm” (pronounced NEX-i-um). Nxivm is based in Albany, New York and has operated centers in the United States, Mexico, Canada and South America. Nxivm maintains features of a pyramid scheme, as its courses cost thousands of dollars each and participants (“Nxians”) are encouraged to pay for additional classes, and to recruit others to take classes, in order to rise within the ranks of Nxivm. A number of Nxians were residents of the Eastern District of New York when they were recruited, and Nxivm has held promotional recruiting events in Brooklyn. Since Nxivm’s creation, Raniere has maintained poly-amorous relations with its members.

According to the complaint, in 2015, Raniere created a secret society within Nxivm called “DOS,” which loosely translated to “Lord/Master of the Obedient Female Companions,” or “The Vow.” DOS operated with levels of women “slaves” headed by “masters.” Slaves were expected to recruit slaves of their own (thus becoming masters themselves), who in turn owed service not only to their own masters but also to masters above them in the DOS pyramid. Raniere stood alone at the top of the pyramid. Other than the Raniere, all members of DOS were women.

Most DOS slaves were recruited from within Nxivm’s ranks. When new DOS slaves were recruited, they were explicitly told that the organization was women-only, and that the organization would empower them and eradicate weaknesses that the Nxivm curriculum taught were common in women. Raniere’s status at the top of the structure was concealed from new recruits.

As a pre-condition to joining DOS, women were required to provide “collateral,” which included highly damaging information about friends and family members, nude photographs and/or rights to the recruit’s assets. DOS slaves feared that their collateral could be released for any number of reasons, including telling anyone about DOS’s existence or leaving DOS. Many DOS slaves were branded on their pelvic areas using a cauterizing pen with a symbol which, unbeknownst to them, incorporated Raniere’s initials. During the branding ceremonies, slaves were required to be fully naked, and a master would order one slave to film the branding while the others restrained the slave being branded.

As detailed in the complaint, some DOS masters gave their slaves, including Jane Does 1 and 2 as described in the complaint, work which directly or implicitly required the slaves to have sex with Raniere. These DOS masters received financial benefits from Raniere. According to the complaint, both Jane Doe 1 and Jane Doe 2 believed that if they did not have sex with the defendant, their collateral could be released.

The charges in the complaint are merely allegations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

If convicted of the crimes charged, Raniere faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 15 years' imprisonment, and up to life imprisonment.

The government's case is being handled by the Office's Organized Crime and Gangs Section. Assistant United States Attorneys Moira Kim Penza and Tanya Hajjar are in charge of the prosecution.

The Defendant:

KEITH RANIERE (also known as "The Vanguard")

Age: 57

Residence: Waterford, New York

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 18-MJ-132