





Road in Williamsville; in homes and hotels in Batavia, Lockport, Jamestown, Niagara Falls and Grand Island. And this defendant – Valentino Shine – was the master manipulator behind the entire criminal scheme," Tokash said.

"Some of the prostitution acts you're going to hear about in this trial actually happened within blocks of this very courtroom you are sitting in. And all of the participants – every woman who was exploited – every woman who was coerced into this – all were born and raised in our community. Not in Thailand. Not in India. Here in Western New York," she said.

The woman, who is 49 and is a grandmother, said she had been using drugs since she was 8 years old and was abused by her parents. She said she was 27 when she first started using crack cocaine, a drug she became addicted to quickly. It eventually consumed her life. At one point, she was homeless and lived in and out of crack houses on Broadway in Buffalo. She said she would prostitute herself, walking up and down Broadway looking for customers.

She had tried many times to get clean but would always relapse. She said she met Shine at a Narcotics Anonymous meeting and they became fast friends.

Once he took her in at a house on Minnesota Avenue, she said, she realized that he made his money by pimping out women who were addicted to either crack or heroin.

He would sometimes encourage them to get clean but at the same time he sold crack, marijuana and sometimes pills, she testified. He would also supply the women with drugs to reward them for making money from prostitution.

The woman testified she would make several hundred to several thousand dollars a night, depending on how many men she'd meet. Then she'd come home to the house she shared with Shine and eventually Shine's girlfriend, who would then take the money she earned to go shopping for clothes, including a mink coat Shine liked to wear.

Shine had control over her because he knew she was vulnerable and had nowhere to turn. He would often hit her, mostly on the head, if she broke rules.

"I was scared for my life," she said. "I always got hit in the head."

On Dec. 21, 2015, the woman testified, Shine punched her in her left eye so hard it made her wet her pants. He then made her sit in her wet pants and poured water on her, video recording the incident. "That was one of the most humiliating moments of my life," she said.

She took photos of herself which she posted on Facebook, hoping someone would believe her. She said she always went to the Family Justice Center, where advocates took photos of her injuries.

Shine's attorney Michael Stachowski raised questions about the woman's statements to law enforcement about her previous drug use and mental health history. He also asked her about her appearance on "The Jerry Springer Show," which she said was about the father of her son cheating on her. He questioned why she stayed with Shine for over a year.

"I had nowhere else to go," she said.



([https://buffalonews.com/author/maki\\_becker/](https://buffalonews.com/author/maki_becker/)) **Maki Becker** – Maki Becker has been a staff reporter at The Buffalo News since 2005. Before that, she worked at the New York Daily News and the Charlotte Observer.