

We The People
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We the People The Phoenix Woman



Good day to you. Now a most interesting and compelling story about a person who says she was once a rebel without a cause. Meet Andre'a Simmons, a well presented youthful woman of 46 with a Brazilian heritage. If the eyes are a window to the soul then Andrea's are no exception and I wondered how such a person could have travelled the road she had. How could someone march to the beat of a drum which ultimately tested her very being and the will of her family. This latté skinned exotic woman was an anachronism yet very much a product of a world of money and power and ultimate failure. She is the Phoenix Woman and now let me share her story with you.

At just 21 Andre'a was a millionaire with all the trappings one could ask for from the building industry. She owned multiple properties, flash cars and led a life of unrivalled self indulgence for her age. Ultimately she produced two daughters who are now well in their twenties and successful in their own right. She was an actor, film producer and creative writer. However somewhere in the middle of all that around 6 years ago, in a moment of deep sadness, she was tempted to try a drug along with the words "**trust me**" issued by a friend. The result was immediate she was hooked and loved the euphoria and energy the drug seemed to create. She could afford it financially but as its chemical grip tightened she couldn't do without it and her life spiralled down that long dark highway to destruction. She had unwittingly taken the drug called 'ICE' which is a particular methamphetamine and the choice of drug in today's challenged society. It is by any measure the Satanic drug Lucifer himself has created, such is the devastating effect on the lives of those who consume it. Andre'a was no exception. For two years she lived for nothing else and the cost of **\$500 a day** meant she was spending at a rate most cannot imagine.

Her weight dropped to 40 kg as eating held no priority, only the drug. She lost touch with her children and sold all she had as the drug commanded her to 'follow me'. Soon her fortune was completely gone and she was a physical and psychological wreck in significant debt. There was simply no hope and death shadowed her every move as she joined the homeless, sleeping rough. One day without notice, she had what I declared an 'epiphany' but she soon corrected me as she says an epiphany is a kind of unique self awakening and instead said it was rather "**an encounter with God**". Either way it was a moment of revelation and somehow through extraordinary power, her life was changed. She became one of the tiny 2% who overcome the drug, she was Lazarus retuning from the dead. Internally Andre'a suffers lasting side effects but you would never know when speaking with her. The enduring effects are profound but somehow with a lorry load of faith she has made it through but I suspect the evil shadows her every move.

Now Andre'a Simmons devotes her life to helping others but in particular with the drug ICE and its inherent dangers. Her focus is on the Montana Program developed to educate and drive home the point to young teenagers that all it takes is one event and you may well be hooked for life. Andre'a emphasised that her own effort is not the focus but I think differently, in that, she carries the message from her own awful encounter. She is well qualified to speak on the subject and in that and her daily battle, she is the best positive example I can think of. She is the risen phoenix on a fragile branch and is a warning to all that there is no future in taking ICE, only pain and suffering. She said to me, "**I sometimes fall apart when I see the damage done and believe me this can happen to anyone**". Take heed parents and grandparents and be on the watch because last year alone there was a 58% increase in young people taking ICE. That's 27 young Australians a day we must save.

You may contact Andre'a through the Australian Anti Ice Campaign at Helensvale. These good folk will send literature, arrange seminars and identify warning signs. My thanks to Jim Wilson, previous mayoral candidate, for his awareness and his abiding interest in this social catastrophe. *The truth will set you free.*

Until next time this is Kent Bayley