



Understanding the Complexities of Sex Work/Trade and Trafficking

a companion reader to *War on Terror & War on Trafficking*

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A Companion Reader to *War on Terror & War on Trafficking*
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Introduction

I released my last political zine, *War on Terror & War on Trafficking: A Sex Worker Activist Confronts the Anti-Trafficking Movement* five months ago, just before I traveled to San Francisco to present a workshop on this topic. It was an instant hit: I sold more than 100 copies of the zine within a couple of months, and probably gave away at least 20, which is a large circulation for a zine that isn't even serialized and basically spread by word of mouth.

War on Terror & War on Trafficking debunks many unfounded myths regarding sex trafficking of women and children, and exposes aspects of U.S. anti-trafficking movement that are intimately tied to social, economic, national security, and religious conservatism. Many people (those who generally agree with me) told me that they were surprised and glad to learn that so many of the claims made by anti-trafficking groups were demonstrably false, and that my zine was an invaluable resource for sex worker activists and allies to counter the misinformation that are used to persecute sex workers.

But some sex worker activists, allies, and others who benefit from the sex industry (e.g. *Village Voice Media*, men who are probably clients) used my research to argue that sex trafficking is not a serious issue, or that the number of minors engaging in the sex trade are extremely low (under 1,000 per year in the entire U.S.). An adult industry news outlet even called me a “sex industry activist.”

For the record, I am not a sex industry activist; I am an advocate for sex workers and others who engage in the sex trade. And it is concerning that many people do not seem to understand the distinction.

Also for the record, I do not think that the only problem with the sex industry is that it is criminalized and stigmatized. To pretend that decriminalization and destigmatization are the only worthy goals of the sex workers' movement is to prioritize interests of white, middle-class, cisgender, adult sex workers above those of women of color, indigenous people, queer and trans people, immigrants, poor people, and youth.

My last zine was an attempt to counter misinformation and start a more honest, reality-based dialogues about human rights abuses within and beyond the sex industry. But I feel stifled by the mainstream sex workers' movement and its “sex-positive” allies and consumers of erotic services as much as I am by the anti-trafficking movement.

Writings included in this zine seeks to further complicate our conversations about sex work, sex trade, and (domestic minor) sex trafficking. I have been struggling to come up with simpler ways to talk about this complicated subject, and what you see in this zine is the result of this struggle.

Compared to *War on Terror & War on Trafficking*, this zine is less structured and is more like a collection of my recent writings. I hope that in these articles I have succeeded in articulating complex ideas in accessible ways.

Understanding the Complexities of Sex Work/Trade and Trafficking: Ten Observations from a Sex Worker Activist/Survivor/Feminist

1. Start from the assumption that women's (and other people's) experiences in the sex trade are diverse and complicated, just like women's experiences in the institution of marriage.
2. Sex trade is often one of the few means of survival employed by members of marginalized communities. Criminalizing or taking away means of survival without replacing it with other, more preferable options and resources (as judged by people who engage in this activity) threatens the lives of marginalized people. If, on the other hand, we could actually provide more preferable options and resources, there is no need to criminalize or take away the option of trading sex.
3. The presence of consent does not imply fairness of the transaction, because consent can exist under deeply problematic relationships of power. Consent does not imply that one is solely and individually responsible for all consequences of the act performed consensually.
4. There is nonetheless a meaningful distinction between consensual and unconsensual sexual transactions because it helps us to recognize modes of intervention that are helpful rather than counter-productive to those involved. People who engage in consensual sex trade are harmed if the transaction is stopped, while those who are part of unconsensual acts are harmed if the transaction isn't stopped.
5. Work under neoliberalistic capitalist economy is often exploitative and degrading. Treating sex work "just like any other work" is inadequate when "other work" are often performed under unsafe or exploitative conditions. Selling and buying of sex as commodities can be exploitative and degrading, as are selling and buying of labor, health, and safety in the neoliberalistic capitalist marketplace.
6. Legalization or decriminalization of prostitution will not end State violence against people in the sex trade. There are other laws, such as those concerning drugs, immigration, and "quality of life" crimes, that are being used against them. Arguments over how the law should classify prostitution (legalizing, decriminalizing, criminalizing, Swedish model, etc.) eludes realities of communities that are targeted by State as well as societal violence.

7. It is undeniable that the mainstream pornography and sex industry reflect and perpetuate women's lower status in relation to men. But so do mainstream media and workplaces—sometimes in more harmful ways.
8. It is theoretically plausible to eliminate sex trafficking by ending the demand for commercial sexual services. But it would take a long time and a large investment of effort to actually lower the demand to the level where sex trafficking is no longer profitable. In the meantime, even a small decline in demand will have a devastating impact on the women's bargaining power to negotiate for more money and safer acts, putting their safety and health at greater risk.
9. Many “experts” and “spokespersons” for the anti-trafficking movement are social, fiscal, and religious conservative extremists who have promoted anti-welfare, anti-immigration, anti-gay agenda. These very policies break down families and make women and children vulnerable to sexual exploitation and trafficking. Feminists and human rights activists must choose our allies.
10. We cannot fight sex trafficking effectively without partnering with sex workers, people in the sex trade, and their advocates. All over the world, it was workers organizing among themselves that have challenged and transformed exploitative and abusive working conditions, not police officers or politicians. In addition, people working in the sex industry have access to insider knowledge that need to be incorporated into any successful campaign to combat sex trafficking and other human rights violations within the industry.

Youth in the Sex Trade: How Understanding Push & Pull Factors Can Better Inform Public Policy

October 19, 2011

Recently, there have been several articles in the media challenging the frequently cited “statistics” that claims anywhere between 100,000 to 300,000 children annually are trafficked into sexual slavery in the United States, most notably in *Village Voice* (06/29/2011). I have also analyzed this claim in my zine, *War on Terror & War on Trafficking*, criticizing the methodological problems in the original study as well as misinterpretation of the study by the media and anti-trafficking organizations. (*Village Voice* requested a phone interview with me before that article came out, but I thought they were going to twist my comments so I insisted on a written interview over email, after which they trailed off.)

But while it is not true that hundreds of thousands of children are forced into sexual slavery, *Village Voice* is clearly wrong to suggest, based on the number of juveniles arrested for prostitution-related crimes, that underage prostitution is extremely rare. Any social service providers serving street-based youth know that underage prostitution is fairly common among the youth they work with, even though it does not look like what the media often depict it to be.

The confusion arises from the application of the legal definition of “human trafficking” to frame our understanding of underage prostitution. Because the law defines any youth who engages in sex trade (which is a value-neutral descriptive term I use instead of “sex work” or “sexual exploitation”) as victims of human trafficking, many people equate that to mean that all youth who engage in sex trade are enslaved by traffickers.

This impression is further reinforced by certain anti-trafficking organizations such as Shared Hope International that promote the notion that any child, even white middle-class children from good homes in the suburb, can be trafficked into sexual slavery. Such campaigns fuel fear and panic among white middle-class parents that their daughters might be “taken” from their suburban schools and malls by urban (code for Black) pimps. This fear-mongering tactics is highly effective for grabbing funding, media attention, and political influence than campaigns that focus on the plight of runaway and throwaway youth of color and youth from impoverished or broken homes—a more typical profile of a teenager involved in sex trade.

It is true that any child can be trafficked, but like everything else, poverty, racism, and other societal violence are huge risk factors: A pimp who goes to a suburban school to pick up a girl is much more likely to be noticed or caught, and the girl that went missing will be reported to the authority immediately. On the other hand, youth who is neglected or abandoned by their family and has no safe place to return to is a much easier and safer target for anyone looking for a minor to exploit.

But the misguided panic among middle-class suburban parents lead to policies that are ineffectual or even counter-productive, such as curfews and more policing at schools and malls. Curfews or youth shutouts in public spaces that are intended to protect youth from harm at night would only work if the youth had a safe place to go home to at night; if they don't, curfews would force them to find some random adult to stay with for the night, which may not necessarily increase their safety.

Village Voice and other critics of “100,000 to 300,000” figure are correct to point out that the number of youth who are held in captivity and subjected to commercial sexual servitude—which the word “slavery” implies—is low. But when you include youth who occasionally or regularly engage in survival sex, which is trading sex for food, shelter, and other survival needs, and those who stay with a “boyfriend” or pimp not because they are unable to escape from them but because they get something out of the relationship that they are not getting elsewhere, the number would be exponential.

I believe that there are some anti-trafficking activists and organizations that distort reality about youth in the sex trade in order to advance agenda that have nothing to do with ending sexual exploitation of youth. I count Shared Hope International as well as the producers of the documentary, *Sex+Money: A National Search for Human Worth* in this group. I base this allegation on these activists' and groups' activities, such as Shared Hope shamelessly using its mailing list to distribute anti-abortion propaganda, and *Sex+Money* producers using its screenings to hand out “purity bands” that encourage viewers to pledge abstinence until they are married.

But I wonder if organizations that actually care about the youth are also making a conscious decision to let the public imagine there to be 100,000 to 300,000 minors who are “sold” as sex slaves, not challenging their misperceptions, precisely because *they know that the public would care less about the youth if they understood the reality* that most of them are not “forced,” at least not in slavery-like conditions, but are simply doing what it takes to survive. I wonder if they are intentionally hiding the fact that the youth in the sex trade are overwhelmingly youth of color, queer and trans youth, and other runaway, throwaway, and homeless youth, and not your typical white middle-class children taken from suburban schools and malls, because *they fear that the public won't care about these children and youth*. If white middle-class parents stop caring, there won't be any funding to provide services to the youth who desperately need it. That seems like a reasonable hypothesis that explains why many social service agencies that work with this population remain complicit in upholding wildly inaccurate misperceptions about the problem at hand.

But, as I've pointed out above, such strategy also leads to ineffectual or counter-productive policies. I am especially alarmed that some of the social service agencies are forming and strengthening unnerving partnerships with the law enforcement, such as riding along in the police vehicle when cops conduct prostitution sweeps. The purpose of the ride-along is ostensibly to provide support and resources to any youth that might be uncovered in the sweep, but many street youth understandably view the police as their enemy, and it harms the social service agency's credibility and trustworthiness in the eyes of the youth.

Further, the public misperception over who the youth are result in overemphasis on *pull factors* of underage prostitution, and almost complete lack of attention to its *push factors*. “Pull factors” are the presence of sex industry, johns (clients), pimps, and traffickers that lure youth into engaging in sex trade; “push factors” are factors such as family violence, poverty, prison industry, racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia, and unjust immigration laws, that make youth vulnerable in the first place.

Almost all anti-trafficking organizations focus on policing and prosecution of johns, pimps, and traffickers—the pull factors of the equation. Behind such approach is a naive assumption that the youth have a safe home to go back to or remain at if it weren’t for the sex industry, johns, pimps, or traffickers. But this is not the case for the vast majority of youth who trade sex. Even if the institution of prostitution and sex industry disappeared altogether, the youth will have to find another way to survive in the hostile society, possibly by selling drugs or robbing stores.

Anti-trafficking activists and organizations that knowingly promote false images of “modern day sex slavery” infuriate me. So do Village Voice and others that claim that underage prostitution is not a significant problem. And most of all, I am exasperated by “the public,” the middle-American parents, television watchers, and people who click “like” in facebook as a form of activism, *who don’t and won’t care about what youth have to do to survive, as long as their own children aren’t at risk.*

Over the past couple of years, I have criticized anti-trafficking movement from a sex worker’s rights perspective, but I am finding it increasingly limiting to associate myself with the sex workers’ movement. Because sex workers’ movement seeks to decriminalize and destigmatize sex trade as a “transaction between consenting adults” just like any other market transactions, the movement automatically excludes minors from its consideration. I am not interested in “rescuing” youth from the sex industry, but I feel that it is our responsibility as adults to provide support and resources to the youth struggling to survive (whether or not they engage in survival sex or sex trade), while confronting social and economic violence that are “pushing” them onto the street in the first place.

Consent is Overrated: Why “Yes Means Yes, No Means No” is Inadequate

October 21, 2011

“Consent workshops” are increasingly popular on college campuses and activist communities across the country (or is it just the pinko Northwest?) as a sexual assault prevention and healthy relationship program. They are valuable in a society where people’s clothes, sexual history, and pre-existing relationships (i.e. being partners or spouses) are often regarded as an implicit consent, some sort of binding contract that can be enforced against one’s will.

But the whole concept of “consent” just feels too legalistic to me. To be fair, there is a difference between the notion of “consent” that is codified in law (and college policies) and those promoted by activists presenting consent workshops. Seattle University student group Break the Silence explains:

We begin by presenting the legal definitions for Washington State and Seattle University (since that’s where we’re located), which are, incidentally, extremely similar. [...] Both of the definitions below are highly problematic and do not encompass the idea of radical consent. After presenting the definitions to participants, we ask the questions “what is missing, assumed, and excluded?” and begin to break apart the definition of radical consent from, in part, Generation 5 and Common Action, and ask the same questions of it.

Legal definitions treat consent as a static agreement that is enforceable once it is freely given. The radical version, as explained by Break the Silence, goes:

Consent means everyone involved wants and agrees to be present at each step of the way. You can change your mind at ANY TIME before or during sex. Consent means that ALL parties say YES!. Just assuming someone wants to have sex is not enough—it’s not safe. Further, it is a free, fluid ongoing discussion and negotiation about what our desires are, what we want for ourselves in our lives and what we want for the people we’re either intimate with or in relationships with at any level. [...]

To complicate consent is to realize that we live within an oppressive society, so consent is always tenuous. We don’t really get to consent to the country we live in, we don’t really get to consent to live within capitalism. Often times, even making a choice, yes or no, has many other implications about the choices we were forced to make before that.

I particularly appreciate the last paragraph from Break the Silence, but I think it is the main weakness of “consent”: it individualizes choices in the name of respecting self-determination, often neglecting contexts of choices we make and making us solely and individually responsible for their consequences.

The language of consent is inadequate when people's survival and well-being depends on entering into agreements, especially but not necessarily when market transaction is involved, which is why the notion of "consent" is particularly difficult for me as a sex worker activist.

Under the neo-classical economic theory, any third-party intervention preventing freely entered transactions are harmful to the parties that are involved. The logic goes: if the transaction is not net-positive for both parties, the transaction won't happen. Therefore, stopping them from entering into the transaction harms both parties, even if they appear unfair to a third party. For example, they argue that minimum wage law harms the people it is intended to help, because it deprives employment from people whose market evaluation is below the legal minimum wage: if there weren't minimum wage laws, people with low expected productivity can still get a job at a lower wage, rather than facing unemployment. They extend this argument to other "repugnant" transactions, such as transplantable organ trade, sweatshops, commercial surrogacy, and yes prostitution—some of which are legal under certain jurisdictions, some not, but all are controversial.

I do not think that the transaction should be banned simply because it is problematic: after all, I consider much of the capitalist economy problematic. But even if I don't think prohibition is appropriate—like in the case of prostitution—I think there are harmful repercussions if we treat them as unproblematic. I will say this again: *prostitution in this society is a deeply problematic institution, as are marriage and capitalism.*

In early October 2011, I went to see Carmeryn Moore's one-person play "Phone Whore," which is based on her experiences working as a telephone sex operator. She intermixed her personal life and relationship with composite of actual scenarios she performed with the men who called her service, and it was quite entertaining. Some of the calls were, as you can imagine, deeply problematic, such as the obligatory incestuous scene, and white men calling to enact fantasy of being sodomized by big Black men, which she says is a major theme in her work.

Her main argument throughout the show and the discussion afterwards was that fantasies are always "okay and good." Acting on pedophilic desires or projecting racist, homophobic (which is why the scene has to involve forced penetration, and also why they call her instead of actually calling a phone sex line for gay men), homoerotic desire to an unconsenting Black man would be illegal and/or unethical, but calling a phone sex line to explore such fantasies with a consenting operator is totally healthy and fine, according to Moore.

But I don't agree that they are unproblematic. I agree that judging people for their desires would be useless, and I prefer that they find outlets to explore such fantasies in safe and consensual ways (which phone sex lines are). But I still don't feel that sexism, racism, and homophobia are "okay and good" just because it is expressed on a phone sex line.

While I was in college I briefly worked as a phone sex operator from a dorm room. The company wanted to post pictures that supposedly represented me, so I insisted that they use images of an Asian girl: I felt fine playing the role of a skinny model with huge breasts wearing revealing clothes, but I didn't feel okay

playing any other race. Callers obviously knew that the girl they are speaking to probably wasn't that model, but they went along.

Dealing with the (predominantly white, I assume) men's fantasies about Asian women turned out to be more stressful than I had imagined, even more so than doing other forms of sex work, because phone sex is so verbal. But I kept working until Student Housing for some reason decided to disconnect my phone, so in some way I was consenting to the onslaught of submissive-yet-slutty Asian girl pornographic stereotypes. But it made me more conscious of comments and gaze I experience while riding bus, shopping at grocery store, and just going about everyday things. The racist and sexist messages I experience outside of the phone sex work are less explicitly sexual in nature, but I sense that they come from the same source. To me, they are inseparable from what I was hearing while working for \$0.35 per minute of logged time, and I wasn't even being paid at all!

I can consent to engage in racially and sexually problematic conversations over the phone, but I don't have a choice as to whether to live in a racist and sexist society. I don't have a choice to live in a society in which food, housing, and college education are luxury rather than a fundamental right. The appeal of sex work for some people is that it turns the master's tools into a survival method, but it is still the master's house that we are living in. While laws to prevent me from working on the phone sex line would be draconian, it feels very invalidating to hear someone say that all fantasies are "okay and good" when they are rooted in racism, sexism, and other social injustices.

Another way the notion of "consent" can become harmful is when consent for a specific act (often market transaction) is regarded as consenting to the social context surrounding the act as well as its consequences. The logic of classical liberalism couples choices we make with implicit and explicit personal responsibility for their consequences. In addition to blaming the victim of violence and poverty for their experiences ("you brought it to yourself"), it leads many advocates to deny agency and resilience of survivors who make "choices" that trouble us, such as abuse victims who kill their batterers, or childhood sexual abuse survivors who engage in sex trade.

These survivors are said to be suffering from "battered women's syndrome" or re-enacting their early abuse, and therefore they should not be viewed as criminals freely choosing to be violent or engage in illegal activities. Many self-professed advocates for youth who trade sex, for example, emphasize that the youth should be treated as victims of crime (especially sex trafficking) because they are incapable of making a choice to engage in sex trade, both because of age of consent laws and because they are "trafficked." While this approach is preferable to treating them as delinquents and criminals, it feels profoundly disempowering and patronizing.

I argue that most people who trade sex are making conscious choice to engage in that activity, but the presence of consent should not be confused with the fairness or equity of the contexts in which such consent occurs. Nor should it be assumed that because one makes a choice to do something, that individual is solely and individually responsible for all consequences of that action.

The choice I am speaking about is the kind of choice a rape victim makes when

she closes her eyes and dissociate from the sensation of her attacker's tongue slithering on her skin so that she can stay alive. It is the choice parents make when they cross heavily militarized borders on the desert, risking their lives to give their children a better life. It is a choice that queer and trans youth make when they can't take any more of abuse at home and bullying at school and run away to a big city instead of committing suicide.

We have many choices in life, but we often cannot choose the number and quality of choices that are presented to us or contexts in which we must make choices. That is the reality, and consent is rarely as simple as "yes means yes, no means no." Even the radical, activist formulation of "consent" is too individualistic and legalistic, and does not differ enough from the neo-classical economic ideology of individual choice and responsibility.

Break the Silence is correct to point out that consent in a deeply unjust, capitalist society is "tenuous," but throughout the rest of its "consent workshops," they appear to forget this insight. For example, they list many examples of participatory exercises for such workshops, but none of them address this concern: it is as if everything would be "okay and good" as long as we learn to express and honor each others' desires. It is not.

I'm not complaining that they are not doing a good job presenting a consent workshop; rather, I feel that this is an inherent flaw in workshops that center the notion of "consent." There certainly is a tension between honoring each individual's right to self-determination and recognizing that choices we make are constrained by social and economic factors that are beyond our control. There is also a practical issue, which is that consent workshops are not designed to stop people from having sex, but to do so in consensual and respectful manner. But I feel that there is a deep lack, and it becomes more of a problem when we are discussing the intersection of sexuality and market, that is the sex industry.

Anti-Trafficking Documentary Praises Politicians Who Promoted Policies that Increase Trafficking

October 7, 2011

Last night I went to a Portland screening of the new feature-length documentary about domestic minor sex trafficking, *Sex+Moey: A National Search for Human Worth*. It was a brilliantly produced and well-structured film, but unfortunately it did not go beyond what I had expected from seeing the trailer which repeated the myth of extremely low the “average age of entry” into prostitution. It also quoted people claiming that there are 100,000 to 300,000 trafficked children in the U.S., which is demonstrably false.

The film lost me from the beginning when the young white producers pushed their professional-quality cameras into massage parlors with Chinese signs, grilling the older Asian business owners and managers (who did not seem to be very fluent in English) about services they provide. They tried to trick the managers into offering illegal sexual services, but were unable to do so; later, the producers discussed among themselves that they should plan better. Well perhaps they should have partnered with Asian immigrants’ and workers’ advocates if they were serious about addressing the safety and rights of women who work there.

The producers claimed that they interviewed 70+ people around the country including sex workers. But the few sex workers and allies they “interviewed” were ambushed at the adult industry expo or while counter-protesting anti-prostitution demonstration. All other interviewees were treated more formally in their office, home, or other setting. A porn actor’s statement that she enjoys her job is followed by “experts” explaining, without evidence, that vast majority of sex workers have been abused as children and learned to treat sexual violation as the norm.

The film kept going back to policymakers like Sen. Sam Brownback (now Governor of Kansas) and former Rep. Linda Smith (now the director of Shared Hope International, which has not responded to my questions about the discrepancy between its own study and its public statements) as experts. But they fail to mention that Sen. Brownback was one of the leading religious conservatives in the Senate that want to cut social services to fund tax breaks for rich people and corporations, and create harsher conditions for undocumented immigrants—both of which will exacerbate the problem of human trafficking. Former Rep. Smith also had her day as the anti-abortion, family values conservative, whose policies have devastated women and children (and also, people who signed up to receive updates about Shared Hope also receive anti-abortion materials). And yet, the film treats them like heroes.

Trafficking survivors’ stories describing the violence they experienced from pimps and johns were chilling, and yet I kept feeling how similar they were to the stories of women abused by their husbands and boyfriends. In fact, if I were

to make a film that depict all marriages or even heterosexual relationships as inherently abusive, I could interview some survivors of domestic violence and edit the footage to show exactly that. It would not be persuasive only because many viewers know from their experiences that not all husbands and boyfriends are violent, and there are many loving, caring heterosexual men out there. But most (white middle-class) people are not familiar with pimps, and most johns do not admit to being johns, so people get very limited ideas about pimps and johns from films like this. Anti-prostitution activists decry the glorification of pimp culture in the media, which I tend to agree with (hey I don't think it's so *hard out here for a pimp*), but their depiction of pimps as sadistic monsters is also overly simplistic.

There was an interesting segment during the film in which producers grapple with whether it is appropriate to classify all prostitution as slavery. Several "experts" argued either that it was appropriate to do so, or that it was merely a matter of degrees. The representative of Polaris Project actually made sense for once—he pointed out that, while there are cases of severe human rights violation that appear indistinguishable from slavery, we must be careful about the use of the term "slavery" because the word has a specific historical context in the United States. I agree: slavery in the U.S. was a complex institution supported by the Constitution, the law enforcement, the commerce, and the rest of the fabric of the mainstream society, and should not be applied lightly to individual cases of rights violation or even to the underground, illegal activities as a whole. But then, the use of the word "Polaris" in the organization—the north star that guided escaped slaves through the Underground Railroad—does seem to contradict his careful positioning in the matter.

After the film, they brought up local "experts" fighting domestic minor sex trafficking for a panel discussion. The panel consisted of an attorney working for children in foster care, a supervisor at Oregon Department of Health and Human Services, and an assistant US Attorney who heads the Oregon Human Trafficking Task Force. The emphasis on the State and police power was evident, despite the fact that the very youth they are trying to "rescue" experience police harassment and abuse all the time.

I also found a handout created by Multnomah County at the resources table set up outside the auditorium which posits the logo of Janus Youth (social service provider for youth on the street) next to the logo of Portland Police Bureau. This is a bad idea. I know Janus struggles to maintain a cooperative relationship with the police when they need it while shielding youth from bad interactions with the police, but over the last few years I've seen Janus become closer and closer to the police in its public presentation as more of their revenues began to come from anti-trafficking grants while traditional funding streams have narrowed due to the economy, cutting street outreach and other programs, and I am alarmed.

Pimping Does Not Equal Slavery: Thoughts on Resilience of Youth and Adults Who Have Pimps

November 14, 2011

Language shapes our perception of reality. The term “human trafficking,” for example, shifted governments’ and NGOs’ approaches to addressing the issue of involuntary migration and labor (including sexual labor) from those that focus on economic empowerment and labor rights protections to ones that center policing and criminal prosecution. Similarly, the legal definition of “sex trafficking” that is interpreted to treat all minors who trade sex regardless of their circumstances as “trafficking victims” have distorted public perception of who these youth are and their lived experiences.

In my previous article about street youth sex trade, I pointed out that the popular imagery of “domestic minor sex trafficking” in which very young (white, suburban, middle-class) girls are “taken” by evil men (of color from urban areas) and forced into sex slavery is a very small part of the picture, and does not reflect realities of the vast majority of youth who trade sex. This understanding (which I came to based on my own experiences and observations) is echoed by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice study of street youth in New York City, which was recently featured in *Village Voice* (11/02/2011).

Another concept that have distorted public perception of sex trade is “pimps” and “pimping.” Even the John Jay study, which correctly points out that only about 10% of youth who trade sex have any relationship to a pimp, equate “pimp” with “exploiter,” leading readers to assume that these 10% of youth are forced or coerced to engage in sex trade. There are two distinct problems with this equation.

First, media often depict people as “pimps” when they are arrested or charged with crimes of facilitating or promoting prostitution, but most of these people are not actually what most of us think of as pimps. They are often friends, partners, mentors, family members, photographers, drivers, bodyguards, and others who do not control the person trading sex in any way. When a youth “trafficking victim” is “rescued” from a “pimp,” the person they arrest as the “trafficker/pimp” is often another youth, such as a boyfriend of the “victim.”

In the October 2008 nationwide “search” for trafficked minors (Operation Cross Country II), which is the only one in which relevant data is made public, FBI claims to have arrested one pimp for every 7.76 “trafficked minors” and adult prostitutes in the 29 cities where the sweeps were conducted. Even though FBI does not provide the breakdown of the ages, genders, or roles these people played in the lives of youth and adults in the sex trade, there is no question that the vast majority of these people are not what most people think of as “pimps.” Real pimps are notoriously difficult to identify or prosecute. They are very rarely caught or convicted because the prosecutors cannot build a case against

them without “victims” coming forward and testifying against them.

Another problem with the equation of “pimps” as “exploiters” who use force, fraud or coercion to exploit youth and adults is that this is simply not true in many people’s lives, even if we were to limit the discussion to the “real” pimps (as opposed to partners, friends, drivers, etc. who are labeled as such by the police). I do not question the assertion (backed by my own experiences as well as others) that many pimps are violent or abusive, but that should not be confused with sexual enslavement of people who have abusive pimps. Let me explain.

We know that many marriages and romantic relationships are violent or abusive. We also know that many victims of abuse (often girlfriends and wives) do not leave their abusers/batterers/perpetrators. There are many good reasons abuse victims do not leave. Some victims might be afraid for their lives if she attempted to escape, and remain under siege—but that is not the most common explanation. Most of the times, victims receive something from the relationship, whether it is financial security for themselves and their children, affection (when the abuse is in remission), or something else. Many do not leave the abusive relationship *because they love their abusers*.

To be sure, that many victims of relationship abuse choose to stay with their abusers should not be treated as *consenting* to the abuse: they consent to the relationship, not the abuse. But it would also be wrong to suggest that these victims are held captive by the violence; they are not staying because of the violence, but *in spite of it*.

Pimping relationship that are abusive can be understood in the same way: while some people are forced to trade sex because of the violence, many remain in the pimping relationship for the same reason many abuse victims stay with their abusers: they get something out of the relationship that they are not getting elsewhere. To put it differently: they remain in the relationship because they get something *that our communities are failing to provide*. This includes basic necessities such as food and housing as well as emotional needs such as affection, validation, and support. In fact, some pimps consider themselves to be workers performing emotional and care labor for their “girls” similar to the sex trade.

I do not think that these relationships are unproblematic, or that violence and abuse should be tolerated just because the victims do when they can’t control it. But there is a huge policy implication to recognizing agency and resilience among people who stay with their pimps instead of treating them as passive, powerless victims or “sex slaves.” Efforts to unilaterally “rescue” these individuals take away their security and support, leaving them worse off than before (and still having to engage in sex trade to survive under less desirable circumstances).

A better approach is to ensure that our communities provide resources and support that everyone needs and deserves. They include housing, jobs, education, and healthcare, but that is not enough. We also need human connections that give us a sense of belonging, validation, support, love. The former is essential for our physical and economic survival, but the latter is just as important if we truly cared about ending relationship abuses, whether it is in

romantic relationship or pimping relationship (which can also be romantic). There is no contradiction between acknowledging resilience of abuse victims who remain with their abusers, and wanting to create caring communities that instills greater resilience to abuse in the first place. Increased policing and prosecution only helps a very small group of victims who are actually held hostage by threats and violence, and by all means we should liberate these victims from their captors, but the application of this approach is harmful for the vast majority of youth and adults who trade sex. And the racist mainstream media representations of “pimps” make it harder to promote real solutions to abuse in our lives and relationships.

The Anti-Trafficking Movement and the Betrayal of Street Youth by the Social Service Industrial Complex

November 23, 2011

The City of Portland shut down the Occupy Portland encampment in Chapman and Lownsdale Squares across the street from the City Hall earlier this month as part of the nationwide takedown of Occupy demonstrations. In an interview with PBS, Mayor Sam Adams explained his decision:

Police said the sites have been plagued by a series of problems, including multiple assaults and two fatal drug overdoses. [...] When I have homeless and homeless youth advocates telling me that this is a very unsafe situation, you know, I listen to that.

I felt that it was disingenuous for the Mayor to cite overdoses and safety concern for youth as reasons for shutting down Occupy Portland. Occupy does not cause drug overdoses: they happen all the time across the city. If anything, the presence of the camp can save lives because people experiencing overdose are far more likely to survive when they are surrounded by many other people.

Similarly, Occupy does not endanger street youth: Occupy merely attracted youth who have already been endangered by poverty, homelessness, and lack of services. Taking away the resources the youth found for themselves by evicting them is inherently disempowering and does not make them any safer. It is as if the City wanted overdose deaths and youth endangerment to be scattered across the city so that it would not have to recognize the magnitude of its failure, even if that means homeless youth and adults are put in greater danger.

I was particularly offended that the Mayor claims to have listened to “homeless and homeless youth advocates” when he decided to destroy a community many homeless youth and adults have chosen to stay. I initially thought he was making it up, but I was wrong.

Janus Youth, Portland-area’s largest provider of services to youth including Yellow Brick Road street outreach program, actually did advise the City about how Occupy Portland endangered youth several days before Mayor announced his decision to crack down on the movement. A letter from Janus executive director Dennis Morrow, which was very unwisely posted on the Mayor’s website, says:

When Yellow Brick Road teams went through Occupy Portland during the early afternoon on Monday October 17th, they were greeted by large numbers of homeless youth who had voluntarily exited Homeless Youth Continuum (HYC) services to take part in the event. [...] While we are very supportive of young people having both meaningful voice and purpose, our years of experience with vulnerable street-affected youth tell us that this requires a great deal of structure and expertise or it is a recipe for disaster.

[...] We have also met numerous youth who were voluntarily opting out of homeless youth services or refusing to access services as new clients because they felt they were getting their needs met adequately at Occupy Portland sites.

In talking with Yellow Brick Road staff, it is their sense that the political leanings of the original march and occupation have been overwhelmed by the large numbers of homeless youth and possibly runaway minors who have descended upon the area and, in some instances, brought the violent nature of street-based subcultures and internal hierarchies to the protest site. There are young people with significant developmental delays, mental illness and drug/alcohol abuse issues mingling with potentially predatory adults (and young children) in a largely unchecked environment. More recently we have seen several cases of staph infection from young campers in the area. Recent days have seen the implementation of “safe injection” and “sexual assault response” tents which, despite our unwavering support for risk reduction, speaks to the level of unexpected behavior in the area.

It appears to me that the main concern for Janus was the fact that many youth have abandoned its programs, making their failure as a social service provider apparent. Youth who decided to abandon Janus services did so because Janus was failing to provide competent and respectful services that were meaningfully superior in the eyes of youth to what a group of disorganized volunteers at Occupy provided, which wasn't very much. The encampment was not taking away the youth from Janus; Janus was losing them. And the agency wanted them back, even if that meant a destruction of the youth's chosen community.

I used to love Janus. I still love and trust many people who work at Janus. But over the past several years, I have noticed its distinct departure from harm reduction principles as the agency received funding from and embraced anti- (domestic minor sex) trafficking efforts. They are now frequently seen appearing and working alongside law enforcement officers, compromising youth's trust in the agency as well as its ability to meet the youth where they are at.

But the magnitude of Janus' betrayal of youth was much worse than I had imagined in the past, as I found out when I attended a presentation about Portland's CSEC (commercial sexual exploitation of children) programs at the national runaway and homeless youth conference that was held in the week following Occupy's demise. The presentation, titled “CSEC: A Collaborative Approach to Addressing Sexual Exploitation of Children in Your Community,” was presented by three individuals representing Janus Youth, FBI, and Sexual Assault Resource Center (which has a trafficked minor program inside a big church).

The person from Janus started off his presentation with a statement that he was going to say some critical things about his agency. His complaint: Janus workers were not very friendly to the police officers in the past. For example, he continued, when police officers detain and deliver youth to the Janus service center for curfew violation and other reasons, youth are frequently angry at the police officer. They often complain that they have been brutalized, harassed, or

otherwise treated unjustly by the officer. Social workers at Janus had validated their feelings and helped them file grievances, which made police officers hostile to Janus.

Janus guy felt it had to change, so he told all of his staff to treat police officers “like their best friends.” As a result, police began to like Janus a whole lot more, and now they are such great partners. In other words, Janus has made a conscious decision to side with the police when youth feel violated and abused by the police, rather than affirming and validating youth’s experiences.

Janus also helped police officers get hold of a youth who was camping at Occupy Portland. Because many Occupy protestors were hostile to police officers, it wasn’t the best idea to send police officers into the camp in order to search a youth. Instead, they asked Janus worker to go into the camp to find the youth for them. It was in the context of this intimate relationship between Janus and the law enforcement that the former provided the justification for the City to use its police force to forcibly evict youth who had chosen Occupy camp over Janus’ services, presumably to save youth from themselves.

The director of trafficked minor program at SARC spoke next, also describing friendly relationship with the law enforcement. She, too, criticized other feminist anti-violence projects that are skeptical of law enforcement, and discussed how SARC was different from those in that they value partnering with the law enforcement.

The person from FBI who works closely with the anti-trafficking division of Portland Police Bureau also repeated her satisfaction with the law enforcement’s relationship to service providers like Janus and SARC. She explained that the law enforcement specifically chose these two organizations to work with over other anti-violence projects because of their pro-police stances.

“Collaborations with Janus and SARC are great; they make victims better witnesses for the prosecution,” she said. SARC person echoed this sentiment when she explained the benefit of SARC’s services: Because SARC isn’t a mandated reporter, youth feel safer disclosing their experiences to them. And once they disclose their experiences to someone, they are more likely to disclose to other service providers who are mandated to report, or even to the law enforcement.

In my opinion both Janus and SARC have perverted their mission to support youth when they bought into the structure that prioritize prosecution rather than empowerment and long-term well-being of their clients. It is probably true that someone who discloses once to a non-mandated reporter are more likely to disclose to someone else who will act on that information, but is it beneficial to the youth? It feels like the premeditated manipulation of youth they are supposed to empower.

Erasure of Transgender Youth in the Sex Trade: How Transgender Community, Sex Workers' Movement, and Anti-Trafficking Movement Fail Transgender Youth

Note: Below is an outline of the presentation I gave on a panel at the transgender law symposium at New York University, and as the keynote lecture at Portland State University for the Transgender Day of Remembrance, both of which were held in November 2011.

Terminologies with Comments

- **Transgender:** Identifying or expressing one's gender in a way that is incongruent with the sex established at birth. This is just a general term to describe a group. When dealing with a specific individual, respect how that person identifies. Some people use the term *cisgender* to refer to people who are not transgender.
- **Transgender Women:** Trans(gender) women/girls are people who were raised as males who now identify or live as female. Trans men/boys are those raised as females who now identify or live as males. *I don't know why people often get confused about this.*
- **Youth:** Has multiple definitions with various legal and social service implications. May mean under 18, under 21, or even under 25, depending on the context. Minors (under 18) engaging in sex trade are automatically considered trafficking victims, while older youth might be viewed as criminals for engaging in the same acts.
- **Sex Work / Sex Worker:** Term coined by people who work in the sex industry (escorting, exotic dancing, porn modeling, phone sex operation, etc.) to promote their rights as workers. This term should be generally avoided when discussing street youth who trade sex because that is not how most youth view what they do.
- **Sex Trade:** Value-neutral term (unlike "sex work" or "sexual exploitation") that describes exchanges of sexual contact or communication for anything of value, such as money, food, housing, and drugs. I use the phrase "people who trade sex" or "people in the sex trade" to focus on what people *do* instead of what they *are*.
- **Survival Sex:** Engaging in sex trade to obtain food, shelter, warmth, drugs, and other survival needs. Some people engage in survival sex very occasionally when things get rough. Others survive this way on an ongoing basis.
- **Decriminalization:** Abolishing laws that prohibit consensual exchange of sexual acts for money and other valuable things. Different from

legalization, which suggests government regulating sex industry, as it does in Nevada brothel system. Most sex worker activists in the U.S. prefer the approach of decriminalization, because they do not trust government to enact regulations that protect and benefit workers.

- **Trafficking:** Recruiting, transporting, transferring, harboring or receiving a person through a use of force, coercion, or fraud for the purpose of exploitation. Force, coercion, or fraud need not be present if the victim is a minor for it to be considered sex trafficking. In this presentation, I focus on the movement against domestic minor sex trafficking because that is the largest force within the U.S. anti-trafficking movement today.

Main Arguments

- Transgender youth, especially transgender youth of color, represent a large portion of youth engaging in survival sex.
- Transgender community, sex workers' movement, and anti-trafficking movement have all excluded and erased transgender youth in the sex trade.
- The exclusion is not the consequence of mere oversight, but arise from fundamental structural flaws in their framing within these movements.

Reality

- According to Young Women's Empowerment Project, which outreaches to girls and young women in sex trade and street economies, about 20% of its constituents are transgender girls and women; vast majority are girls and women of color.
- Transgender girls and young women of color are the most frequent targets of anti-transgender hate crimes, including murder. Many of them were involved in the sex trade.
- Transgender girls and young women are routinely profiled as suspected prostitutes by the police. Many victims of crime mistrust police and do not report their abuse.

Why Are Transgender Youth Overrepresented in the Sex Trade?

- Many became runaways or throwaways because of transphobia in their families, schools, and communities.
- Cannot get regular job due to their age, mismatched documents (wrong name/gender in official identification), and discrimination.
- In many cities, you can only find communities that are supportive of transgender people at venues where alcohol, drugs, and prostitution are common.

Transgender Community: Basics

- Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR) is the largest nationwide annual event in November of each year addressing violence against

transgender people.

- The purpose of TDOR is to memorialize victims of “anti-transgender violence” and to honor their lives.
- “Remembering Our Dead” website collects and displays information about transgender or gender-variant people who have been killed by hate crimes.

Transgender Community: Criticisms

- “Anti-transgender bias” is not the only source of violence against street transgender youth. Racism, sexism, ageism, poverty, and state violence all impact their lives.
- Suicide, HIV, prisons, and poverty claim far more lives of transgender people than hate crimes.
- “Remembering Our Dead” website refuses to include names of transgender women murdered in men’s prisons.
- The founder of TDOR and “Remembering Our Dead,” a white middle-class trans woman, claims “ownership” to them.
- Transgender community does not honor the lives and struggles of street transgender youth and adults while they are still alive and desperately in need of support and community.
- The only street transgender youth who are valuable to the transgender community are *those killed in hate crimes*.
- When media portray transgender persons who are homeless or engaging in sex trade, they protest: “That is a stereotype! Transgender people can be teachers, doctors, or lawyers!”
- Understandably, street transgender youth almost never show up at TDOR.

Transgender Community: Fundamental Flaws

- Treating street transgender youth *as a liability* to their public image, rather than members of their community who need and deserve their support.
- Failure to understand how various systems of oppression operate in concert, resulting in the high frequency of homicide and other deaths among transgender girls and women of color.

Sex Workers’ Movement: Basics

- Stresses that sex work is legitimate work, like any other occupation.
- Distinguishes sex work, which is a transaction involving two or more *consenting adults*, and forced prostitution or sex trafficking that should be treated as violent crimes.
- Works to decriminalize and destigmatize sex work.

Sex Workers’ Movement: Criticisms

- By defending sex work as an act involving consenting *adults*, sex workers' movement has *nothing to say* about the experiences and struggles of youth in the sex trade.
- Sex workers' movement often relies on dichotomy between “making a choice to engage in sex work” vs. “being forced,” making it difficult to discuss how racism, sexism, ageism, poverty, and other factors influence choices we have.
- Calling sex work as “work” and focusing on decriminalization mostly reflects priorities of white, middle-class sex workers. For youth, people on the street, immigrants, and people of color who trade sex, the laws against prostitution is only a small part of the problem.
- Sex workers' movement is really uncomfortable with the existence of youth in the sex trade, or the idea of survival sex; they fear that they would be used to invalidate their argument that sex work can be freely chosen, consensual, and even empowering.
- When asked, sex worker activists often feel pressured to say “youth should not have to engage in the sex trade, and people should not pay youth to have sex with them” to avoid looking like apologists for pedophilia and sex trafficking (which is legally defined as any sex trade involving youth).

Sex Workers' Movement: Fundamental Flaws

- Defending sex work as a legitimate work relies on defining it as a transaction between *consenting adults*, automatically excluding youth engaging in sex trade or survival sex from consideration.
- Emphasis on decriminalization reflects white middle-class priorities, neglecting how other laws, such as drug laws, immigration laws, loitering, and “quality of life” crime statutes are used to target youth and adults on the street.

Anti-Trafficking Movement: Basics

- Media sensationalize that even the girls from white, middle-class suburban communities can be recruited into “sexual slavery,” not just those from broken families in the inner city. They tend to ignore (often gay) boys and transgender youth.
- Prevention efforts focus on more security at schools, malls, and public spaces to keep out pimps and traffickers (often implied as young Black males).
- Emphasis on policing and prosecution of johns (clients), pimps, and traffickers: presence of sex trade “market” is viewed as the root cause.

Anti-Trafficking Movement: Criticisms

- Any minor can become a victim of sex trafficking, but it is overwhelmingly runaway and throwaway youth, queer and trans youth, and youth of color from impoverished communities who make up most of youth in the sex trade.

- Prevention efforts emphasize almost exclusively on *pull factors* such as the presence of sex industry, johns, pimps, and traffickers. But there are also *push factors* that lead to so many youth being runaways, throwaways or homeless in the first place, such as abuse in the family, poverty, prison industry, homophobia and transphobia, and unjust immigration laws.
- The number of youth who are held in captivity and subjected to commercial sexual servitude (as the word “slavery” implies) is small. But the number of youth who engage in some form of survival sex sometimes or regularly is exponentially greater. Many youth also stay with a pimp not because they are unable to escape from them, but they receive something from their relationship that they are not getting elsewhere. Anti-trafficking groups’ equation of youth survival sex with “sexual slavery” distorts reality and leads to ineffectual and even counter-productive policies (e.g. curfews).
- Focus on pull factors presumes that youth have a safe home to return to in the absence of johns, pimps, and traffickers. But this is rarely the case for youth in the sex trade.

Anti-Trafficking Movement: Fundamental Flaws

- Misidentifies the problem as sexual slavery when the reality is that many youth engage in survival sex.
- Emphasis on policing and prosecution targets pull factors, neglecting the fact that youth will continue to have to find a way to survive as long as push factors exist.
- Cracking down on sex trade takes away means of survival without replacing it with better options and resources.

Transforming Conversations

- Start from recognizing that communities and movements that are supposed to help transgender youth in the sex trade have consistently and systemically failed them.
- Center lived experiences of the youth. The public’s obsession with images of “sexual slavery” must be confronted. Terminologies we use must reflect realities of youth’s lives, and avoid terms like “children,” “trafficked/prostituted youth,” and “modern day slavery” unless they are used under specific contexts where they are appropriate (that is, they are not appropriate most of the time).
- Transgender and sex worker communities must provide support to the transgender youth in the sex trade, rather than exploiting their deaths to score political points.
- Address push factors that make many youth vulnerable. The goal is not to end sex trade, but to enhance their autonomy and long-term safety and health.
- Support organizations that organize and support youth in the sex trade that use harm reduction and empowerment models, rather than those

that treat youth merely as victims lacking any agency and power.

Pro-Youth Group Checklist

Below are some questions you can use to determine if the supposedly “anti-trafficking” group actually supports youth.

- Do they use sensationalistic language (e.g. “slavery”) and imagery or wildly exaggerated statistics (e.g. “average age of entry into prostitution” said to be as low as 13, or that there are 100,000 to 300,000 “trafficked children” in the U.S., both of which are demonstrably false) to incite fear and panic?
- Do they address *pull factors* of sex trafficking, such as racism, sexism, poverty, homophobia and transphobia, prisons, and immigration laws?
- What is their relationship to the law enforcement? Police violence is a fact of life for many street youth, and it is hard for an organization to remain pro-youth when it works closely with the law enforcement.
- Do they oppose all prostitution and sex trade, not just those that are coercive or exploitative? Many “anti-trafficking” projects are actually fronts for Christian fundamentalist groups that have ulterior motives.
- Are their services voluntary, or do they provide diversion program?
- Do they practice harm reduction?
- Are they led by women of color, indigenous people, queer and trans people, formerly homeless or incarcerated people, or survivors of sexual abuse and exploitation?
- How do they support leadership development among the youth they work with?
- Do they partner with members of transgender community and sex workers’ movement?

List of Emi-Approved Groups

Please support these groups *for real*. Clicking “like” on Facebook is not a form of activism.

Young Women’s Empowerment Project — Chicago
<http://www.youarepriceless.org/>

Streetwise & Safe — New York City
<http://www.streetwiseandsafe.org/>

Different Avenues — Washington, D.C.
<http://www.differentavenues.org/>

Native Youth Sexual Health Network
<http://www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com/>

Women With A Vision — New Orleans
<http://wwav-no.org/>

Northwest Network (Youth Program) — Seattle
<http://nwnetwork.org/what-we-do/youth-programs/>

“Rescue” vs. Peer Support: A Comparison of Outreach Materials

In April 2011, I attended the annual Take Back the Night rally and march against sexual violence at Portland State University. Many community organizations and service providers were tabling at the rally, handing out candies, pens, and (most importantly) information and resources.

One of the handout materials I found looked like this.



Four sides of this square were folded in like origami, which can be unfolded to reveal what's inside. So I unfolded the side with “You Are...” and this is what was below it.



The message is that “you” (the person who is unfolding it) are priceless, strong, worthy, able, intelligent, survivor, street smart, resourceful, and resilient. Some word choices are a little bit strange, but okay, they are generally positive messages.

Then I unfolded the other side that says “you may experience...”:



WHAT? It appears that the handout is an outreach material for someone who is working in the sex industry, but what does “you may experience boyfriend” or “you may experience lingerie” mean? It makes no sense... and further, if they think that this list of words and phrases appeals to people who are working in the sex industry for whatever reasons, they are *clearly out of touch* with the population they are trying to reach out to.

Anyone who actually does outreach or know a little bit about sex worker organizing recognize how ridiculous this handout is. They are putting these words and phrases together without having any awareness as to what specific culturally appropriate approaches they need to take for people working as escorts, or dancers, or lingerie models, or street prostitutes working the track. As a result, the handout appeals to none of the communities that it is intended to.

What is sad about this is that this handout is designed and distributed by an organization that serves victims of sexual assault and abuse, and it is one of the core members of the Portland metro-area CSEC (commercial sexual exploitation of children, which should really be changed to CSEY, commercial sexual exploitation of *youth*) protocol. This organization has also received a new funding from the City of Portland and Multnomah County last year to double the number of victim advocates for youth who have been in the sex trade.

How can an organization that has a big program assisting youth who have

worked in the sex industry be so clueless about how to outreach to them? I'm afraid that the answer is that the City and County are basing their funding priorities on ideology (i.e. opposition to prostitution and sex industry) rather than the actual needs of the population being served and the service provider's competence to meet them.

Compare this incoherent outreach material to the pictures below, which come from outreach handouts designed for SAVVY, a now-defunct project of Portland Women's Crisis Line and Outside In that provided peer support, education, and resources for women working in the sex industry (I edited the image to disguise date/time and address for SAVVY meetings, because the group no longer exists and I don't want to mislead people that it's still there):



The text says:

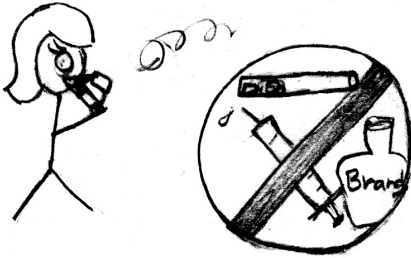
Ladies, Are you tired... Of police harassment, haters, and the dangers of the sex trade? Do you need... Free, discreet, non-judgmental assistance and support? We offer... Confidential support from current and former sex workers; Cute clothes box; Healthcare info and Legal referrals; Condoms and safer sex supplies; Work-related safety tips; Needle exchange; Free. Just drop-in.

The other side of the sheet (reproduced on the next page) contained illustrations depicting very practical “tips” for women who trade sex.

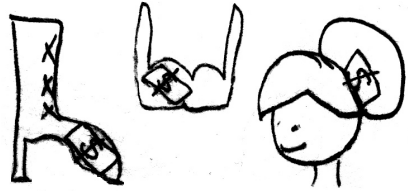
There are many differences between the SAVVY handout and the other outreach material, but the main difference is: SAVVY was a peer-run program run by former and current sex workers and women who traded sex themselves. As such, they know how to reach out to their peers.

SAVVY existed until several years ago, but its funding was cut. In the meantime, more and more public and private monies are pouring into the anti-trafficking groups, many of which are not just incompetent, but clearly out of touch with reality. That is the sad state of the movement right now.

Never work while you
or the trick is high.



Always get the \$\$\$ first.
Put it away, but keep it
close to you.

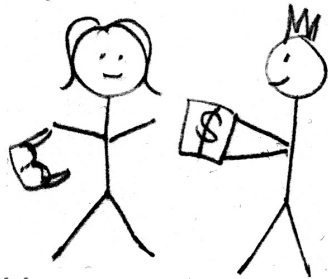


Use a condom for
everything



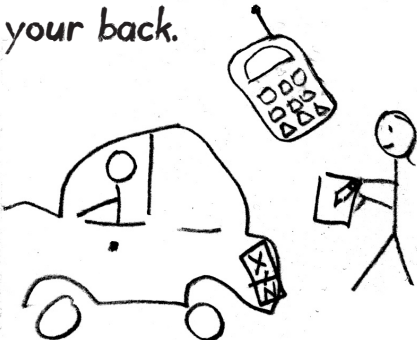
even head.

Charge more.



Add-ons or changes cost
extra. Get \$ upfront.

Get someone to watch
your back.



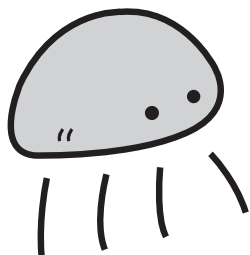
Make a plan.

DONT BELIEVE THE HATE



We are
mothers
daughters
sisters
lovers
workers
wives &
friends.

Hos R just as
good as any body!



www.eminism.org