



Awareness

Advocacy

Action

Stop Trafficking! Newsletter www.stopenslavement.org/index.html

January

Human Trafficking
Awareness Month

The 'P' Words: Prostitution & Porn

It is not women's free choice; it is not men's right; IT IS NOT INEVITABLE.

10 Myths Refuted

Myth: Women choose to get involved in prostitution.

Fact: Most women become involved in prostitution because of lack of choice. Many are groomed, pressured and/or coerced by pimps or traffickers. The men buying sex are those exercising free choice. Purchasing vulnerable women and girls maintains prostitution and fuels trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Myth: Prostitution is just sex.

Fact: Prostitution is not about sex, but about exploitation, violence and abuse. More than 50% in prostitution have been raped and/or seriously assaulted; up to 95% in street prostitution are intravenous drug users; and 68% suffer PTSD.

Myth: Only women sell sex.

Fact: While the overwhelming majority of those who sell sex are female, there is also a hidden population of men who sell sex and experience many of the same issues of exploitation and abuse. Economic circumstances combined with the demand for sex have forced individuals into prostitution. However, those who buy sex, either from men or women, are predominantly male.

Myth: Criminalizing the purchase of sex drives prostitution underground.

Fact: Prostitution primarily operates underground and is very difficult to scope or quantify. Criminalizing the purchase of sex and offering support services to people in prostitution is the only viable way to work towards an end to this exploitative industry. In Sweden, where they have criminalized the buying of sexual acts, there has been a significant reduction in trafficking and prostitution with a halt in recruitment of new women. Sweden is no longer an attractive market for traffickers and pimps – the law clearly works as a deterrent.

Myth: Legalization is better for those involved in prostitution.

Fact: Prostitution is harmful; legalization does not remove that harm – it simply makes the harm legal. Legalization or decriminalization of the industry does not

deal with the long term psychological and physical effects of having unwanted and often violent and abusive sex numerous times a day and having to act like you enjoy it. Legalization does not make individuals safer and it expands an industry in which violence against the women and sometimes men involved is at its most extreme.

Myth: Legalizing prostitution stops illegal prostitution and trafficking.

Fact: Legalization and complete decriminalization gives a green light to pimps and traffickers making it easier for them to operate. In New Zealand, complete decriminalization led to the illegal sector expanding to control 80% of the industry. According to the Mayor of Amsterdam, "It is impossible to create a safe and controllable zone for women that is not open to abuse by organized crime."

Myth: Treating prostitution as ordinary work removes the stigma.

Fact: Normalizing prostitution makes the abuse, violence and exploitation invisible and turns pimps and johns into business people and legitimate consumers. Recognizing prostitution as "just a job" ignores the violence, poverty and marginalization, which drive people into prostitution. "In Germany a service union offered membership to an estimated 400,000 sex workers, entitling them to health care, legal aid, a five-day workweek, 30 paid holiday days a year with Christmas and holiday bonuses. Only 100 joined the union - i.e., .00025% of the sex worker population. Women don't want to be prostitutes." (<http://www.oneangrygirl.net/antiporn.html>)

Myth: Many involved in the sex industry find it sexually liberating and a glamorous career choice.

Fact: Mainstream media glamorize the "porn star" life and focus on the fantasy of a successful, glamorous call girl. Media does not reveal the actual harm experienced by individual women, nor the cultural harm of normalizing an industry that thrives on gender inequality and the

objectification of women. 'Empowered sex workers' are a minority of those involved in commercial sex. Most struggle with addiction, poverty, mental health issues, abuse from a partner, or childhood abuse. These women are the true invisible majority.

Myth: Most of the public is in favor of legalization of the sex industry.

Fact: A minority of voices calls for legalization, but there is no evidence that they speak on behalf of society as a whole. Before legal sanctions were introduced in Sweden, public support stood at 49%, but rose to 82% after enactment.

Myth: The Swedish law that criminalizes demand has not provided support services for those involved in prostitution or for those exiting.

Fact: This is simply untrue. 70 million kroner (US\$10 million) were invested in support services when the Swedish legislation, criminalizing the purchase of sex, was introduced in 1999. Estimated numbers of people in prostitution consequently fell from around 25,000 to an estimated 2500.

For more detail on each myth, see: <http://www.endprostitutionnow.org>

What Can You Do?

Check the following websites and spread the word on how PORN harms:

- 'Fight The New Drug' educates youth about the harmful effects of pornography. <http://www.fightthenewdrug.org/>
- 'Stop Porn Culture' activists and academics fighting the pornification of our society from a feminist perspective. <http://stoppornculture.org/>
- 'AntiPornography.org' has activist resources and education about anti-pornography, anti-prostitution, and anti-trafficking efforts. <http://www.antipornography.org>
- 'Vice Report' is an aggregate news site about porn, sex addiction, and ways to get help. <http://www.vicereport.com/>