



Awareness

Advocacy

Action

January

Human Trafficking
Awareness Month

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

Myths about Prostitution

Since prostituted women are often victims of sexual exploitation and human trafficking, it is important to understand the fallacies behind these myths. The European Women's Lobby has a pamphlet in which they refute the usual myths that are put forward as reasons prostitution will always be with us. Listed below are a few of the myths and facts.

For the complete document, go to: <http://www.womenlobby.org/news/ewl-news/article/18-myths-on-prostitution>

Prostitution is the oldest profession

Let us change the perspective: pimping could indeed be considered the oldest profession in the world. In any case, just because something has existed for a long time does not mean that it should or cannot be changed. We do not say "murder has been around forever: we cannot do anything about it."

"It is a job like any other."

Do you know any other job where people face a mortality rate 10 to 40 times above the average? Where 60 to 80% of "workers" experience regular physical and sexual abuse? If this is a job like any other, how come the overwhelming majority in it are migrant women? Does this mean that this so called "job" is only for the foreign women in your country? For the sake of gender equality, should we campaign to promote this job for men?

"Prostitution is a choice"

Extensive research indicates that poverty, family loss, homelessness, drug addiction and a history of physical and sexual abuse combine to make young women vulnerable to entering prostitution. Moreover, the majority of women who enter prostitution first do so very young. It is not a valid choice.

"Prostitution brings a lot of money"

To whom? According to Interpol in Europe, a pimp earns US \$122,250 per year per woman in prostitution. If it were such a good job, how come the majority of women in prostitution do not own a car, an apartment, or save money for the future? Moreover, debating on the amount of money earned is a dishonest strategy: whatever the amount, prostitution is about someone buying access to your body and sexuality. Human beings are priceless.

"Only "sex workers" should talk about prostitution, because they know best."

Should only women who have been victims of domestic violence be entitled to denounce intimate partner violence? Domestic violence is recognized as a structural form of violence against women, that affects us all, women and men, because it is about societal values. Prostitution also affects us all: it conveys norms and representations to young people; it is trivialized and even glamorized by the media and the culture industry. No wonder the insult 'whore' is so widespread! Millions of invisible persons are still in prostitution. It is time to listen to them.

"Prostitution is useful, esp. for socially isolated and lonely men."

Sex buyers do not fit this stereotype. International research shows that the majority of sex buyers are men married or in a relationship, and are more likely to have a larger number of sexual partners than the rest of the male population. By justifying prostitution as a social institution, one would imply that some women are to be sacrificed for the "needs" of these men.

"Demand will never disappear."

What a sad vision of men. According to this assumption, men are driven by their so-called sexual "irrepressible needs", not by their brain. It is all the more surprising to believe, as the majority of men are not sex buyers. Demand is justified by a certain vision of masculinity, related to virility or strength, all stereotypes about men conveyed in our unequal societies. Demand can be reduced by education, prevention and legislation. It is as simple as that.

People who do not want to change society use fatalism.



"Abolishing prostitution would lead to more rapes."

Actually, it is the other way round: studies have shown that men buy sex simply because it is possible. The normalization of prostitution fosters acts of violence against women, by sending the social signal that women are commodities. Nevada, where pimping has been decriminalized, sees the highest rate of rape compared to the other U.S. states. In a study on men, 54% of prostitute-users exhibited aggressive sexual behavior towards their partner(s).

"We must combat trafficking. Prostitution has nothing to do with it."

Such claims contradict reality. If prostitution has nothing to do with sex trafficking, what exactly are women trafficked for? According to EU data, 62% of trafficking in the EU is for sexual exploitation. Trafficking is profit-driven and has a direct link with prostitution markets, where the demand fuels the supply. It is estimated that benefits from trafficking for sexual exploitation amount to US\$ 27.8 billion. Where does this money come from? From the buyers. This is why prostitution and trafficking are intrinsically linked.

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/>
- 'Porn Harms' is part of 'Morality In Media', which opposes pornography and indecency through public education and the application of the law. It runs several important campaigns. <http://pornharmaction.com/>