

AUGUST 27, 2023

Prostitution cannot be squared with human rights or the equality of women.

Prostitution exists because inequality exists. Prostitution embeds into society the very inequality it feeds on. For prostitution to exist as a monetary exchange, women must be commodified as products in the stream of commerce. Legalizing prostitution has a harmful impact on every indicator of violence against women. A thriving sex industry increases child prostitution and other sex crimes<sup>1</sup> and has a negative effect on how women are regarded by men.<sup>2</sup> The men who are buyers have more discriminatory attitudes toward women and are more accepting of prostitution and rape myths as well as being more violent themselves.<sup>3</sup> Violence against women and children increases when prostitution increases because acceptance or normalization of prostitution sets up the image of women as suitable targets of violence.

Many women are forced into prostitution for economic, and indeed sheer survival, reasons; this does not constitute “consent.” In the United States, nearly eighty percent of prostituted women report a history of child abuse, and twelve to fourteen is the average age at which children are first used in commercial sex. At that age, a child cannot legally quit school, marry, sign a contract, or drive a car. Nor can she give “consent” to enter prostitution.<sup>4</sup>

The answer to the poverty of women cannot be prostitution but must be the fair distribution of power and resources. Maintaining prostitution as the last refuge for poverty-stricken women is exploitation and cannot lead to gender equality. So long as prostitution remains an “option” for poor women, there is no incentive to develop educational opportunities, job programs, or economic policies that could uplift the poor.

Experiments in legalization have failed.<sup>5</sup> Amsterdam Mayor Job Cohen said, “Almost five years after the lifting of the brothel ban, we have to acknowledge that the aims of the law have not been reached. Lately we've received more and more signals that abuse still continues.” According to the Amsterdam police, “We are in the midst of modern slavery.” In New Zealand, a 200% to 400% increase in street prostitution has been reported since prostitution was decriminalized.<sup>6</sup> Police say organized crime groups are

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<sup>1</sup>[http://www.researchgate.net/publication/228784653\\_Ten\\_reasons\\_for\\_not\\_legalizing\\_prostitution\\_and\\_a\\_legal\\_response\\_to\\_the\\_demand\\_for\\_prostitution](http://www.researchgate.net/publication/228784653_Ten_reasons_for_not_legalizing_prostitution_and_a_legal_response_to_the_demand_for_prostitution)

<sup>2</sup>[http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/uncategorized/international\\_law/ekberg\\_articleview\\_updated\\_0504271.authcheckdam.pdf](http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/uncategorized/international_law/ekberg_articleview_updated_0504271.authcheckdam.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.prostitutionresearch.com/MFarley%20CV.pdf>

<sup>4</sup>[http://www.in.gov/attorneygeneral/files/Demand\\_Reduction\\_Critical\\_Next\\_Step\\_in\\_Fight\\_Against\\_Sex\\_Trafficking.pdf](http://www.in.gov/attorneygeneral/files/Demand_Reduction_Critical_Next_Step_in_Fight_Against_Sex_Trafficking.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Sullivan, M.L. (2007) *Making Sex Work: A Failed Experiment with Legalized Prostitution*. Spinifex: North Melbourne.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.prostitutionresearch.com/MFarley%20CV.pdf>;  
[www.sagepub.com/walshstudy/articles/section12/Raymond.pdf](http://www.sagepub.com/walshstudy/articles/section12/Raymond.pdf)

involved in many aspects of prostitution.<sup>7</sup> In Victoria, Australia, the number of legal brothels doubled, and illegal brothels increased by 300%.

On the other hand, in countries where they have adopted the Nordic Model (penalize the buyer who is committing the crime and offer the victim exit options but not a criminal conviction) prostitution has decreased as has harm to women.<sup>8</sup> Sweden was the first country to pass an Equality Model (Nordic Model) in 1999. Since then, France, Norway, Canada, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Iceland, and Israel have passed the law. Most recently in the U.S., Maine has joined the group. This model is supported by the majority of sex trade survivors like The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), Rights4Girls, World Without Exploitation, and the National Center on Sexual Exploitation.

In the Nordic Model, the buyer is the one committing the crime. In most states in the U.S. today, the buyer is rarely if ever arrested. Rather, it is the woman who is arrested and penalized for the actions of the male when in fact she is the victim. But she is selling you say! Circle K sells beer. It is quite easy to walk into a Circle K, grab a 6-pack of beer out of the cooler, and run out. So who is the criminal? Is it Circle K's fault because they made it so easy to steal the beer so they cannot be considered a victim but should themselves be ticketed for luring an innocent teenager into committing a crime?

Take another example. In 2010, miners in West Virginia's Upper Big Branch coal mine knew that the mine was dangerous because of the poor state of equipment and lack of safety protocols. They had filed many complaints but went down into the mine anyhow because they needed the money. The mine blew up; 10 people were killed. Were they victims or criminals? They gave their consent. They freely went down into the mine under conditions they knew they should not have. They knew a crime was being committed. Should the survivors have been arrested because they violated the mine safety act?

We would consider arresting the survivors of the mine explosion ludicrous. Yet we arrest the victims of sex trafficking and prostitution regularly and let the perpetrators go, whether they are johns, pimps, cartels – or Jeffrey Epstein's big name buddies.

Prostitution has extremely negative legal and practical consequences for women and women's rights. A society where full gender equality exists cannot at the same time support the idea that women are commodities that can be bought, sold, and sexually exploited. Prostitution is not only discrimination, exploitation and abuse by an individual man or men, but also a structure reflecting and maintaining inequality between men and women, north and south, white and non-white. Prostitution is the sexualization of power based on sex, class, and ethnicity and negatively impacts society's view of women. Abolition is the only solution.

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<sup>7</sup> By Jo McKenzie-McClean, 18 April 2006, *Prostitution law change 'a disaster'*

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.feministcurrent.com/2013/01/22/new-research-shows-violence-decreases-under-nordic-model-why-the-radio-silence/>

