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PROSTITUTION AS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: NGO STONEWALLING IN BEIJING AND ELSEWHERE

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Synopsis—International policies and legislation increasingly omit prostitution per se from the category of violence against women. Various governmental and non-governmental groups make efforts to distinguish and thus to legitimize certain practices of sexual exploitation, drawing distinctions, for example, between forced and free prostitution. These efforts culminated in lobbying for what would be finally included in the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* that emerged from the Fourth World Women's Conference in Beijing. This article addresses these efforts; the NGOs who advocate such distinctions; and the consequences of revising the harm done to women in prostitution into a consenting act. © 1998 Janice G. Raymond. Published by Elsevier Science Ltd

The *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* that emerged from the Fourth World Women's Conference in Beijing is clear in its condemnation of violence against women. It denounces the systematic rape of women in wartime and advocates prosecuting perpetrators as war criminals. It acknowledges that domestic violence is a worldwide problem and urges governmental intervention. And it condemns genital mutilation of girls and sexual harassment as human rights violations (United Nations, 1995a, pp. 51-65). What the Platform excludes as violence against women, however, is a tale of governmental stonewalling and NGO (non-governmental organization) complicity that began before Beijing.

There has long been an effort on the part of many NGOs to exempt prostitution per se from the category of human rights violations. This effort culminated especially in lobbying for what would be finally included in the *Platform for Action* in Beijing (Center for Women's Global Leadership, 1995, p. 16).¹ Many NGOs—instead of viewing prostitution itself as violence against women, and thus a human rights violation—acted on the assumption that prostitution is a human right, a right of women to do what she wants with her body. In this article, I want to address the role of NGOs and their position on prostitution and sex trafficking.

The philosophy that prostitution is a human

right has been advanced, in international forums such as Beijing, by drawing distinctions between forced and free, adult and child, third world and first world prostitution, and between prostitution and trafficking.² These distinctions are then used to make some forms of prostitution acceptable and legitimate, revising the harm that is done to women in prostitution into a consenting act and excluding prostitution from the category of violence against women. The sex industry thrives on this language and these distinctions.

When distinctions are made between forced and free prostitution, for example, it becomes almost unsurmountable for many, if not most, women in prostitution to prove that they have been forced. When distinctions are made between child and adult prostitution, the age of consent in some countries is simply reduced.³ In practice, the age of children in prostitution is becoming lower and lower; Human Rights/Asia, in their report on the trafficking of Nepali girls and women into India (1995, p. 15), states that the average age of the thousands of Nepali girls recruited every year for prostitution in Indian brothels, has dropped from 14-16 years of age during the 1980s, to 10-14 years of age during the 1990s.⁴

NGOs that work to abolish institutionalized trafficking and prostitution per se receive funding only if they adhere to these distinctions; only

if they call prostitutes commercial sex workers; only if they refer to prostitution as "forced prostitution"; only if they separate trafficking from prostitution and focus on closed brothels where women are kept in obvious indentured conditions; and only if they work with other groups who accept these conditions and distinctions.⁵ Some governments who have vocally opposed making prostitution a violation of human rights are also funding NGOs, such as the Dutch Foundation Against Trafficking in Women (STV) and its international offshoot, the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW), which take similar positions.⁶ Thus governments and funding agencies are able to exert enormous influence over the agenda of what gets counted as violence against women. Increasingly, prostitution per se is declared a violence-free zone.

A lot of NGOs have the right words to say against violence against women. For example, the recent report of Human Rights Watch/Asia, referred to previously and which is entitled *Rape for Profit*, is a carefully researched and sensitively written report on the trafficking of Nepali Girls and Women into India's Brothels. Yet after documenting the extreme youth, the poverty, the horrendous abuse, the coercion, and outright abduction of young 10–14 year old girls into prostitution in India, the Report goes on to refer to them as "sex workers" (Human Rights Watch/Asia, 1995, e.g., pp. 13, 49, 65). In a footnote designed to show that the researchers are familiar with the controversy over this term, the report says: "... many activists in India who work with trafficking victims object to its use (i.e., the term *sex worker* or *commercial sex worker*) . . ." (Human Rights Watch/Asia, 1995, note 15 at p. 13). However, the Human Rights Watch reporters have obviously sided with those who favor the term, *sex worker*, and that is the term that is used throughout the Report.

What are we to make of this? If reality hangs on the thin thread of language, this debate is no mere semantic quarrel. Many claim they use the term, *sex work*, to dignify and professionalize the women of prostitution. "The more 'professional' the sex worker, the more care she takes of herself. The more legal or legitimate she feels, . . . the more she will . . . be able to develop a degree of professionalism in her work. Is this not an argument in favour of recognition of prostitution as a form of legitimate work?" (Foundation Against Trafficking in Women,

1995, p. 3). But the term, *sex work*, doesn't dignify the worker; all it dignifies is the sex industry—the pimps, procurers, and traffickers. And coming from human rights activists and feminists, it gives the sex industry more dignity than it has ever had, or could get anywhere else. The term, *sex work*, doesn't convey the exploitation of trafficking and prostitution. It ratifies prostitution as simply another form of work, something that has become a way of making a living. But for most of the women and children in prostitution, it's not living; it's barely surviving.

WHISPER, a Minneapolis-based organization of women who have both survived and who are coming out of prostitution, and who are committed to ending prostitution as a form of violence against women, found it difficult to identify job skills gained in prostitution which would advance anyone's career (Gamache, 1991, p. 4). They found that the skills of prostitution are: performing sex acts, feigning sexual enjoyment, enduring all kinds of bodily violation, and allowing your body to be used in any imaginable way by another person (Giobbe, 1990, p. 4). What young girl would we encourage to develop these "skills?" Yet there are now "courses" to teach would-be "sex workers," as they are called, the sexual techniques of prostitution and everything they need to know to become "skilled" in the trade.⁷

What prostituted women must endure in their "employment" is, what in other contexts, would be the accepted definition of sexual harassment and sexual abuse in the workplace—"employer" behavior that is unwanted and insulting, and unwelcome sexual attention, violence, and conduct that is offensive and threatening. What then happens to women in prostitution whose very "job"—if we term it "commercial sex work"—constitutes, what in any other "workplace," would be defined as sexual harassment and abuse?⁸ It is the *exchange of money* in prostitution that serves to transform what is actually sexual harassment, sexual abuse, and sexual violence into a "job" known as "commercial sex work," a "job" performed primarily by racially and economically disadvantaged women in the so-called first and third worlds,⁹ and by overwhelming numbers of women and children who have been the victims of childhood sexual abuse.¹⁰

Another term that misrepresents the exploitation of prostitution, and the harm that it does to women, is the term "forced prostitution."¹¹

What does this term mean? It means we are encouraged to distinguish forced prostitution from free prostitution? The Human Rights Watch Report not only consistently uses forced prostitution throughout, but also the term "forced trafficking" (Human Rights Watch/Asia, 1995, p. 7). Are we to assume, then, that there is "free" trafficking? Building on the shaky foundation of consensual prostitution, do we now have "consensual" trafficking where some women and children freely choose to be trafficked from one place to another? Few human rights activists and people of conscience would use the term "forced slavery" or "forced apartheid" but so glibly slip into the language of forced prostitution and, now, forced trafficking.

The sex industry makes no distinctions between forced and free prostitution while encouraging others to do so. The industry is linked financially and politically with groups like COYOTE in the United States to promote prostitution as a women's personal choice, proclaiming that the worst thing about prostitution is that the women are stigmatized. But the worst thing about prostitution is its violation of and violence against women and children. Although claiming to be a prostitutes rights organization, COYOTE works more for the rights of the customers and the industry, rather than for the rights of women to leave prostitution. The former director of COYOTE, Margo St. James, served as a witness for the defense at the pimping trial of well-known U.S. pornographers, and works to abolish U.S. laws against pimping and soliciting women for the purpose of prostitution.¹²

It is doubtful that COYOTE's membership even includes many women in prostitution. For example, Priscilla Alexander, one of COYOTE's founders, equates prostitution with her own promiscuous dating experiences at Bennington College in Vermont. Referring to this time, Alexander writes: I never have literally worked as a prostitute . . . although I was stigmatized as a whore at one time (Alexander, 1987, pp. 14-18). Yet Alexander worked in the leadership of COYOTE for years building a career for herself as a prostitutes rights spokeswoman, even to the extent of being employed by the WHO (World Health Organization) as a consultant on AIDS/HIV and prostitution. To all appearances, she has been accepted as speaking on behalf of women in prostitution because she has been there—but she was never in prosti-

tution. The same is true for Margo St. James, another founder of COYOTE who recently ran for an elected seat on the San Francisco City Council. Furthermore, COYOTE does not reveal its membership or the percentage of its members who are prostitutes, thus making it seem as if COYOTE is an organization of women in prostitution. Even researchers who write in praise of COYOTE and agree with its positions have alluded to the institutionalizing [of] an organizational myth upon which COYOTE is built. For example, author Valerie Jenness states that contrary to COYOTE's public image, only a small percentage of its members have worked as prostitutes, and an even smaller percentage are active prostitutes who are also active in the organization. On occasion, St. James has admitted that COYOTE is not an organization *of and for* prostitutes (Jenness, 1993, p. 114).¹³ COYOTE capitalizes on this lie with its spokeswoman promoting the image of COYOTE as an organization *by and for* prostitutes (Jenness, 1993, p. 116).

Meanwhile, groups who truly represent prostituted women—groups such as WHISPER and the Council for Prostitution Alternatives in the United States—are composed of many women who are survivors of prostitution, or women currently in prostitution trying to leave. Whenever I speak in the United States on the topic of prostitution, the question inevitably arises who represents the concerns of women in prostitution. Most of the audience has heard of COYOTE and immediately assumes that COYOTE speaks for all women in prostitution. Very few know about the work of WHISPER in Minneapolis; the Council for Prostitution Alternatives in Portland; PROMISE in San Francisco; Genesis House in Chicago; RESPECT in Madison; and SAGE in San Francisco. These are several of the groups advocating for women in prostitution—who are composed of many survivors of prostitution, who oppose prostitution per se as a human rights violation, who are not linked with the sex industry, and who work primarily to help women out of prostitution and create sustainable alternatives to prostitution in women's lives. Because such groups are not supported financially and politically by the sex industry, and thus do not have the resources to publicize their policies and positions, they do not receive the same public attention and prominence as the pro-prostitution industry groups.

A lot of NGOs are now working for Wom-

en's rights to better their conditions in prostitution instead of helping them out of prostitution. Annabel Fan, a US lawyer, spoke of her impressions after completing a research trip to Thailand. "A lot of the NGOs whom I met with talked about ending the exploitation of women. Nowhere did I get the impression that prostitution itself is being targeted, to stop the practice. Definitely, what NGOs are concerned about is women's rights to determine how they work as prostitutes Also, my sense is that there are not a lot of alternatives being offered by NGOs, but rather that the work done tends to maintain the system. The empowerment of women seems to be in the context of prostitution It is empowerment in prostitution and not separate from prostitution . . . a lot of organizations I talked to do not want the criminalization of anybody, not clients, not pimps, no one, because they say, if you penalize the clients and pimps, then you disadvantage the women in the way they operate . . . Brothels are everywhere in Thailand . . . There are more brothels than schools" (Fan, 1995, p. 3). Such NGO groups talk about women's empowerment *in* prostitution¹⁴ and primarily teach women how to perform better as prostitutes, how to negotiate with customers, and how to get men to use condoms and make it part of the sex,¹⁵ but they don't offer women a way out. Why? Because it's easier to believe that prostitution is a choice for these women. And talking about women's empowerment in prostitution means you don't have to confront the controversial issue of the customer.

In fact, the silent participant who is actually a silent perpetrator of prostitution, is the customer. He is often depicted, like the woman in prostitution, as a victim too,¹⁶ but this sentimentalizes his reality as opposed to hers. Surely, the question is not why do women choose to enter prostitution, but why do so many men choose to buy women and children in prostitution? If the issue of choice must be raised, let it be raised in the context of the men who buy the sex of prostitution. *Why do men choose* to buy the bodies of millions of women and children, call it sex, and seemingly get tremendous pleasure literally over their bought bodies?

Confronting the issue of the male customer also means, for many non-governmental organizations, confronting the fact that many of their own members are part of the clientele that buy women for the sex of prostitution.¹⁷ I was in Sweden in May, 1995, shortly after the Social

Summit had taken place in Copenhagen. I spoke with an advocate who works with Danish women in prostitution, and she told me that many human rights activists attending the Social Summit, as well as United Nations staff and personnel, had avidly visited the brothels of Copenhagen. She related that this NGO and governmental stampede for commercial sex made the pages of several Danish newspapers who noted the irony of a Summit focused on economic development providing Denmark's sex industry with the greatest economic development it had experienced in a long time.

Opponents of making prostitution a human rights violation argue that past attempts to abolish prostitution have been repressive and worked against women. This is true, but only because such legislation has punished the women in prostitution and not the pimps, procurers and customers. To argue that prostitution and trafficking are violations of a person's human rights means that we cannot regulate prostitution into categories of good and bad prostitution. We cannot create a zone of brothels or "eros centres," the usual approach to regulating prostitution, within which anything goes. Germany, for example, restricts prostitution activity to specific eros centres, or large prostitution buildings—a type of barracks mentality—which are the designated sex zones in cities with populations over 20,000, the cities in Germany where prostitution is legal. "Red-light" districts, or zoned areas in which brothels, as well as other forms of sex entertainment, may function are found in many countries as diverse as Turkey, Tunisia, Holland, Belgium, and South Korea. The U.S. version of zoned prostitution is Nevada where regulated prostitution functions throughout the state except in Reno and Las Vegas. Brothels, such as the infamous Mustang Ranch on the outskirts of Reno, were located outside the city limits, so as not to violate the law.

The regulationist system has been a failure because:

1. It doesn't work. Most women do not want to be registered officially as sex workers, thus creating a permanent record of their prostitution.
2. It increases the extent of illegal prostitution. Particularly, it promotes the illegal trafficking of women into regulationist countries from poorer countries in the third world for

the purposes of cheaper sex. "The normalization of prostitution in European regulationist countries has actually promoted trafficking in women to the Netherlands. Neo-regulation relaxes the policing of prostitution, making it easier for traffickers to move in and out of the country. Trafficking from the Philippines, Latin America, and Eastern Europe has expanded in the Netherlands as it did a few decades earlier when Germany legalized prostitution" (Barry, 1995, pp. 234–235). In fact, the case can be made that when a country regulates prostitution, the number of unregistered and unregulated women in prostitution increases simply *because* women are pressured into identifying as prostitutes, paying taxes on paltry earnings, and undergoing non-elective and often demeaning health screening and testing. "The regulations governing prostitution (medical, check-ups, card and brothels) were historically one of the main causes of the prostitution of women, and still are, because they do not allow them to abandon this activity and return to their social group. Because of the regulations, they come to form a separate category of women living on the fringes of society, who are vulnerable and 'marked for life'" (UNESCO, 1986, p. 7).

The reality is that during the 1980s as the sex industry in several European countries underwent notable development, commercialization, and legitimation through regulationist legislation, it also became an international business. "In certain parts of the world . . . prostitution is . . . a 'planned' and 'institutionalized' part of it [the national income] . . . in South-East Asia and Europe, the existence of mass prostitution and the structure of the market, which makes use of the media, airlines, hotel chains, international communication and the banks, mean that it could neither exist nor develop without the tacit or implicit agreement of the institutions" (UNESCO, 1986, p. 7). This kind of trafficking in women for prostitution is linked with economic development policies of so-called promotional states which directly or indirectly foster sex tourism for the remission of foreign currency. Additionally, Asian women bear the brunt of migration policies which channel them into gendered jobs, such as domestic labor and entertainment that often become sexually exploitative. The internationalization of the labor

markets, and free trade, has also meant the internationalization of women's bodies for sex (de Dios, 1993, pp. 3–11). Migration, turned into migrant trafficking, has also become a bonanza for organized crime. Large numbers of women from developing countries and, with the end of the cold war, from Russia and eastern Europe are illegally brought into western European countries for sex. Major John Alleart of the Belgian national police states that these international crime syndicates are "... very sophisticated, far-flung networks with access to high-tech communications equipment and the best legal advice money can buy" (Hood, 1995, p. 1). Women became goods and services in an industry without national borders. The sex industry treats women as moveable property, passing them from one club to another, from one district to another, and from one country to another.

The presence of legalized or regulated brothels, eros zones, sex clubs, and recruitment agencies made all this possible—ready made and legitimate locations for the flesh handlers and trade. It was regulation that, in large part, made possible increased trafficking in women from developing countries into Europe. Sex businesses had to cut costs to compete in the sexual marketplace for cheaper and more exotic male tastes and demands so they imported women from developing countries to meet the demand (De Stoop, 1992). It has been estimated that there are between 200,000 and 400,000 prostitutes in Germany, 60 per cent of whom are foreigners, and most who work illegally within the regulated eros zones (De Stoop, 1992, p. 119). The Netherlands, which has a specific policy against trafficking in women but at the same time regulates prostitution, has an active and thriving sex industry that promotes demand for cheaper and more exotic women from developing countries. "The Netherlands differentiated between Dutch women . . . and Third World women . . . Making the distinction between 'free' and 'forced' prostitution, their economic interests are apparent. Third World and Eastern European immigrant women in the Netherlands, Germany, and other regulationist countries lower the prostitution market value of local Dutch and German women . . . The price of immigrant prostitution is so low that local women's prices go down, reducing the pimps and brothels cuts . . . The result: a movement against 'trafficking in women' that promotes local prostitution on the basis of an erroneous distinction

between 'free' and 'forced' prostitution to protect market prices" (Barry, 1995, pp. 233–234). A large number of Dutch towns and villages have their sex clubs or their sex farms offering women deemed to be "exotic" and mostly from developing countries (De Stoop, 1992, p. 121). Rife with contradictions, the anti-trafficking policy of the Netherlands makes it easier for traffickers to move in and out of the country because of the ready-made set up for prostitution and the relaxing of policing.

What kind of public policy and legislation do we need? For one thing, we need to encourage more countries to ratify the 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others, and to add a new protocol to the Convention whereby countries that have ratified it are made accountable for enforcing its provisions.

Most importantly, we need to reinforce and expand the 1949 Convention with a new Convention Against All Forms of Sexual Exploitation that, among other things, *makes all prostitution and trafficking violations of a person's human rights; that de-criminalizes the women in prostitution; and that punishes pimps, procurers and customers*. This new Convention also addresses the social services, educational opportunities and economic alternatives necessary for survivors of sexual exploitation.¹⁸

Any feminist or human rights activist knows that legislation alone is not the answer. But legislation that punishes the perpetrators and not the victims of the crime of prostitution is necessary; together with political activism, education, economic alternatives and social services aimed at helping women in prostitution.

A new Convention Against All Forms of Sexual Exploitation speaks to the seriousness of the violation of merchandising women and children sexually. It proclaims that the international community will not tolerate this abuse, regardless of the victim's age, consent, race, or geography. It declares for the first time that all sexual exploitation is a violation of a person's human rights. It promotes social and economic remedies for women in prostitution, without minimizing the enforcement measures that are necessary to thwart and punish the perpetrators and customers. And it provides mechanisms for international supervision.

This new Convention Against All Forms of Sexual Exploitation recognizes that there can be no supply of women and children without the

male demand for the sex of prostitution; without the sex industry's commodification of women and children; without the direct and/or tacit approval of governments in fostering sex tourism, for example, or zoned areas of prostitution; and without the exporting of a western sexual liberalism that depicts prostitution as sexual pleasure and liberation, calls it work, and tells us that prostitution is about a woman's right to control her own body!

The new Convention Against All Forms of Sexual Exploitation recognizes that women's human rights are seriously threatened by the massive and growing sexual exploitation of women, and that international policy and legislation must be made more effective in the struggle against sexual exploitation. Finally, it affirms that all women have the right to sexual autonomy and integrity.

ENDNOTES

1. At the Beijing conference, the Human Rights Caucus was composed of many different NGOs. The Caucus was coordinated, however, by the Douglass College Center for Women's Global Leadership. *The Report of the Women's Human Rights Caucus at the Fourth World Conference on Women Beijing 1995* was prepared by representatives from the Center for Women's Global Leadership and the International Human Rights Law Group who both helped orchestrate the lobbying for what would be finally included in the *Platform for Action*. The report states: "The prostitution subgroup of the human rights caucus lobbied strongly for the deletion of 'prostitution,' per se as an example of violence against women" (p. 16). Exempting prostitution per se from the category of violence against women has long been the position of NGOs such as the Dutch Foundation Against Trafficking in Women (STV) and its international satellite, the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW) which itself is composed of a number of NGOs.
2. In a COYOTE press release authored by Carol Leigh and distributed on the Internet, the delegation of The Network of Sex Work Projects at the Fourth World Women's Conference announced their victory in Beijing and named their NGO partners as the Human Rights Caucus. Touting their success in thwarting the abolitionist efforts that call for the elimination of prostitution, they continue: Working in tandem with the Human Rights Caucus, a handful of representatives from The Network of Sex Work Projects successfully revised the Platform language to distinguish between forced and voluntary prostitution . . . the Platform for Action does not call for legal measures to abolish prostitution. (See Carol Leigh @ aol.com, Subject—COYOTE Press Release, October 10, 1995).
3. Holland is a primary example where the age of consent has recently been lowered to 12. At the same time that Holland has articulated opposition to child prostitution,

- it has decreased the age of consent. Among other things, this effectively means that any girl over age 12 can be presumed to consent to prostitution, and that adult men who engage in sex with any girl beyond age 12 cannot be punished. The age of consent has long been a contested legal area, a most famous example being the turn of the century reformers' campaigns to raise the age of consent from 10 to 16 in Britain (Jeffreys, 1985, p. 54).
4. Not only the case in developing countries, the average age of girls entering prostitution in the United States is 13 or 14 (Silbert, 1980, p. 39). Silbert found the mean age was 13, with some as young as 8. Updated studies such as the WHISPER Oral History Project (1988), an unpublished study done by Women Hurt in Systems of Prostitution Engaged in Revolt (WHISPER) and based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, confirm this U.S. average age of 13 or 14 (Giobbe, 1993, p. 51).
 5. In conversations with prospective funders, it has been suggested to representatives of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women that its future funding possibilities would be enhanced if we were willing to "compromise" on the forced/free distinction and "dignify" women in prostitution as "sex workers."
 6. The government of the Netherlands has been one of the most vocal proponents—within the European Union, at the Beijing conference, and elsewhere—that prostitution per se is not violence against women, that distinctions between forced and free prostitution are necessary, and that prostitution should be accepted as "sex work." They have funded several NGOs which work in a non-governmental capacity to promote the above goals. The Dutch Foundation Against Trafficking in Women (STV) and its international satellite, the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW), are supported with funding from the government of the Netherlands. Specifically, the Foundation Against Trafficking in Women (STV) was officially set up in 1987 with subsidies from the Dutch Ministry for Social Affairs (Acknowledged in Lin Lap-Chew, 1993, p. 13); also acknowledged in this report is the Dutch government's acceptance of prostitution as work. The STV and the GAATW in their March, 1995 letter to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, authored by Lin Lap and responding to the Special Rapporteur's 1995 Preliminary Report on violence against women, especially the section on "Prostitution and Trafficking," state: "It would be useful to consider placing prostitution, since we are referring, in these times, to 'commercial sex workers' under labour issues, and not as an issue of violence against women What we are suggesting is that prostitution per se should NOT be included as an issue of violence against women" (Quoted in STV *International News Bulletin* 1, March 1995, p. 1). Likewise, the Dutch government funds groups in developing countries which promote the same position (Foundation for Women, 1995, p. 2). The Foundation for Women report is compiled by an NGO in Thailand which has led the lobbying for making distinctions between forced and free prostitution. The Report was funded with support from The Netherlands Minister for Development Cooperation, Section Women and Development.
 7. The Prostitute Information Centre in Amsterdam has offered a 6-day course, costing \$160, on how to practice "sex work" in the Netherlands. The course includes field trips to sex bars, role-playing between women and actors who assume the role of customers, and information on the tax-deductibility of expenses such as condoms, leatherwear, etc.
 8. (See, in this context, Leidholdt, 1993, pp. 107–133). Leidholdt's article analyzes a lawsuit in which a woman employed in the sex industry did try to hold her employer accountable under sexual harassment law in the United States for subjecting her to forms of pimping.
 9. It has been estimated that at least one-quarter of women in the sex industry in the United States are women of color (Quoted in Hunter, 1993, p. 18; see also in this context Nelson, 1992, pp. 81–89). Virtually every study acknowledges that poverty drives most women into prostitution, although women's poverty is harnessed by the sex industry through the active recruiting of pimps, procurers, traffickers, and a system that preys on the poverty of women and children.
 10. Weisberg, 1985 (pp. 91–93, 165–166) contains a review of literature and research on childhood sexual abuse as a prelude to prostitution in the United States. These statistics are confirmed by Genesis House in Chicago; the Center for Prostitution Alternatives in Portland, Oregon; and WHISPER in Minneapolis, to cite only three of the institutions doing direct service work with survivors of prostitution. Other studies also cite the centrality of sexual abuse as "the predominant life experience" of both juvenile and adult females in prostitution and the ways that incest, in particular, prepares girls for prostitution (see Compagna & Poffenberger, 1988, pp. 83–84).
 11. This has become the accepted term in much of the literature on prostitution. A primary example of the currency this term has gained is the recent report from the United Nations on *The World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics*, p. 162, where "forced prostitution" is used as the heading of a category of violence against women. This usage serves as a linguistic endorsement and is particularly disturbing in light of the fact that official and widely-circulated reports such as this tend to reify, through the terminology they employ, the view that "forced" can be separated from "free" prostitution.
 12. These links are multiple. COYOTE's annual "Hookers Ball" is a COYOTE fundraiser that brings together prostitutes, pimps and customers and creates "business" links and capital. COYOTE spokespersons have testified at trials for well-known pornographers and pimps, such as the Mitchell brothers in San Francisco. In 1982, Margo St. James, one of COYOTE's founders, testified as an expert for the defense when the Mitchell brothers had been charged with contempt of court for violating a judicial order that women working in their sex emporium, the O'Farrell Theatre in San Francisco, not engage in acts of prostitution. St. James testified that oral sex and digital penetration performed for money did not constitute prostitution (see Hubner, 1992, pp. 333–334). COYOTE advocates the decriminalization of prostitution, including the decriminalization of customers and pimps whom it refers to as necessary third party agents and business managers for women in prostitution. A COYOTE offshoot, CAL-PEP (California Prostitutes Education Project), was run by former pimp, Ralph Washington, after he finished serving time on racketeering charges (see Marucci & Williams, 1994, p. A1).
 13. I thank writer and survivor of prostitution, Jane Anthony, for originally researching and documenting the

- miscasting of COYOTE as a standard bearer for women in prostitution and for making this work, to be published in her forthcoming book on prostitution, available to me (see also Anthony, 1992).
14. This was the view expressed by the Human Rights Caucus in explaining why it lobbied strongly for the deletion of prostitution per se as an example of violence against women. "Among other results, this might exacerbate the stigmatization and marginalization of women working in prostitution, rather than create an environment in which women in prostitution are assisted with their own empowerment, which should be supported in the Platform" (Center for Women's Global Leadership, 1995, p. 16).
 15. One example is a Spanish-language comic book. *Maritza*, developed by the organization, COIN in Santo Domingo and distributed to women in prostitution in various parts of Latin America. *Maritza* is a simple "how-to" picture book that, among other things, very much objectifies women in the sex industry. Its purpose is to instruct women in getting customers to use condoms. It depicts women skilled at coaxing, cajoling and flattering their customers into condom use. Accompanied by minimal text, pictures and prose together school women in the sex industry's philosophy and practice of "safe sex"—negotiating commercial sex with clients by integrating condoms into the sex act at strategic sexy points [No one is opposed to condoms, but such efforts constitute for many NGOs, their primary response to the sex industry's spread of exploitation, disease and violation of the human rights of women and children].
 16. In one scenario, prostitution becomes a necessary sexual service that preserves marriages "by providing men with a non-binding sexual outlet"—a kind of venereal safety valve. Another scenario depicts men as victims who can't perform with their wives but can achieve sexually with women in prostitution. Another variant on this theme of male victims is men with disabilities. Fred Cherry who heads a New York group called Johns and Call Girls United Against Repression speaks of prostitution as a form of healing. "Because of a serious disability, Cherry says that for nearly three decades he has relied solely on prostitutes for sex" (see Clark, 1993, pp. 519–522).
 17. These charges are based on oral testimony from both women in prostitution who know their customers, and also the testimony of other human rights activists who are privy to their colleagues commercial sexual exploitation escapades. There is, however, ample documentation on the use of women and children in prostitution by United Nations peacekeeping troops in various parts of the world (see Meisner, 1994, p. A11), for an account of UN troops in Mozambique who used young girls as prostitutes; 22,000 UNTAC troops in Kampuchea were reported to have created a prostitution industry there by recruiting Vietnamese women by the truckloads and bringing them across the border into Cambodia (see de Dios, 1993, p. 16). And the most well-known of these examples is the sexual assault of women in the rape camps in Bosnia who were treated as women in prostitution by troops of the United Nations Protective Forces (UNPROFOR). Reported quite widely, see for example Gutman, 1993 (pp. 7, 26).
 18. This proposed Convention Against Sexual Exploitation, launched by the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women with the support of UNESCO, is presently being circulated in draft form. It is a product of ongoing consultations, meetings and conferences of nongovernmental organizations, human rights and women's rights groups in major world regions. For a copy of this Convention and a list of the Network of Organizations in Support of a New Convention Against Sexual Exploitation, contact the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, P.O. Box 9338, N. Amherst, MA USA.

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