

Demand and the Debate

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It is a tremendous honor to be speaking here. And a little daunting. When I looked at the list of participants, I saw the names of so many people I have worked with since the '70's and 80's in the movement against prostitution and pornography. So many people who have raised my consciousness and taught me unforgettable lessons—Meg Baldwin, Twiss Butler, Melissa Farley, Ruchira Gupta, Norma Hotaling, Donna Hughes, Laura Lederer, Linnea Smith, Morrison Torrey, and many others here. It is a privilege to be here with you. And what a pleasure and relief not to have to try to convince another audience that trafficking and prostitution harm women.

I'd like to talk about our history—the journey, politically speaking, that has brought us to this conference. It's a collective history, but we've had different experiences— we have different battle scars, different successes. I'd like to speak personally, about my experience in this movement and in the debate that has brought us to this conference. And I'd like to explain how, in my view, the subject we are focusing on at this conference—the demand for commercial sexual exploitation— helps resolve the debate and enables us to make a real difference in stopping the commercial sexual exploitation of women and children.

I first encountered the debate in 1978. I was part of a little cadre of feminist activists in New York City that made up the NYC groups of Women Against Violence Against Women. WAVAW, as it was called, was working against images in the popular media that eroticized and promoted violence against women. I was also working with New York Women Against Rape.

In the fall of 1977, there was an incident that stunned and galvanized us. A young woman was thrown out of the window of a building onto the pavement below. She was brutally murdered. But because she was in prostitution and the window was that of a brothel, the police were not taking her murder seriously. She was, as the media put it, “a hooker.” We were outraged. We called an emergency meeting. We spray painted signs that communicated our anger. I typed up a leaflet and used the xerox machine of the publishing company where I worked to run off hundreds of copies. This woman was our sister, we declared, and her murder was a crime against all women. We sent out a press release to announce that we would be picketing in front of the brothel.

WAVAW and New York Women Against Rape were not the only groups to show up, however. Members of another group were there. They were British-based and called themselves Wages for Housework. Whereas our message was simple and feminist; theirs was more sophisticated and complex. The media turned out in droves, and our Wages for Housework comrades hogged the mikes.

“Prostitution is a job like any other job,” they insisted. “Some women prostitute their fingers as secretaries; others prostitute their minds as college professors.” “It’s all the same.” “If we unionized brothels and recognized sex work as a job, this never would have happened.”

“There’s no difference between prostitution and marriage: hookers and housewives unite.”

I was impressed by the glibness of the Wages for Housework activists, I admired their media savvy, and I was more than a little intimidated by their aggressiveness. They took over our protest and drowned out our message. But their basic argument didn’t ring true to me. I had never heard of a single instance in which a secretary or college professor had been flung out of a window of her workplace to her death on the streets below. And while married women were leaving abusive homes in droves, their prostituted sisters often didn’t have homes to leave. It would be six years before I would encounter the Canadian Report on Prostitution and Pornography with its finding that prostituted women in Canada suffer a mortality rate 40 times the national average. But it was no secret that prostituted women were the special targets of serial killers. How many jobs had murder as a frequent workplace safety hazard?

The Wages for Housework advocates had borrowed their philosophy from the San Francisco-based organization, COYOTE, an acronym for “Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics.” Founded in 1973, COYOTE was made up of a mix of libertarian activists and sex industry profiteers. In 1974 they organized the First Hookers Ball and two years later the first

Hookers Convention. Both were promotional events backed by the San Francisco sex industry. The public face of COYOTE was Margo St. James, who began her public appearances with the announcement, “I’m a whore.” The pimps and pornographers behind the venture laid low. The term “sex worker” was coined by COYOTE stalwart Priscilla Alexander, who argued, with a straight face, that her four years at Bennington College qualified her to claim that label.

St. James and Alexander traveled through Western Europe, promoting their philosophy and nomenclature. COYOTE provided the increasingly lucrative European sex industry and the other interests that benefited from it with just the rationale they needed. COYOTE solidified its European base through The First and Second International Whores’ Congresses, held in Amsterdam in 1985 and Brussels in 1986.

At the same time that Coyote was promoting the sex industry, American feminists were organizing to fight it. The 1978 Hustler Magazine cover showed a woman’s body being fed through a meat grinder. It forced feminists to confront the sex industry’s public relations arm-- pornography. Significantly, the feminist movement against pornography was a movement against demand. We made connections between men’s demand for and socialization through pornography and the rape, woman battering, and sexual harassment we had a decade earlier begun to mobilized against. We took to the streets with signs that declared, “Pornography is Rape on Paper.”

Although many of us believed that we were protesting *images* of violence, in reality we were protesting violence documented. The rape was not only on paper. The images were mostly photographs of actual women, with histories of horrific abuse, whose bodies were bought, sold and violated for the benefit of sex industry profiteers. I learned this when, as a spokesperson for Women Against Pornography, I responded to media requests for debates. Usually it wasn't the pornographers we were asked to debate but the women who fronted for them. The media preferred "cat fights," and the pornographers were happy to accommodate them.

In the December 1984 issue of Film Comment, I wrote about three of these women: a former "porn star" and so-called producer of a pornography magazine who struggled to support her daughter and confided in me that her career in the sex industry had been precipitated by a brutal gang rape; a 23-year-old centerfold model with a shattered nose (shattered by a baseball bat), married to a pornographic film director who always kept her in his sites; another "porn star" who deviated from her script on the air to mention that her husband beat her. I later learned he also pimped her. It was a sobering revelation: the sex industry defenders we were pitted against on TV talk shows were the most brutalized sex industry victims.

Linda Marchiano, pimped, threatened, and beaten by the vicious Chuck Traynor, who in classic pimp fashion renamed her Linda Lovelace, was handed a script by her captor: "Q: Does it bother you to suck cock in front of so many people." "A: Oh no, I love it. I guess I'm what you

call an exhibitionist.” Anneka DiLorenzo, a Penthouse Pet, was sent out on the road by Guccione as a “Woman for Pornography.” She later successfully sued Guccione for sexual harassment after she proved that he pimped her to a business associate.

But for me the most profound revelation came not from our opponents but from one of the women in our group. She was a bundle of contradictions: a brilliant feminist theorist and a working class housewife from Queens, trying without success to have a baby. She rose to a leadership position in WAP, and we became close friends. Then I learned why she couldn’t have a baby. She had been in prostitution from the time she had run away from her sexually abusive stepfather at age 14 until, her body ravaged by heroin, she was no longer a marketable commodity. Repeated bouts of venereal disease had destroyed her reproductive system. She had scars on her thighs from the time one of her pimps beat her with a coat hanger. She had teeth knocked out from another beating. I had taught Sarah about feminist theory; now she taught me about the lives of women and girls in prostitution. They were lessons that changed my life.

I began to understand, through my work with Sarah, that prostitution was not a job at all. The money it generated rarely ended up in the pocket of the prostituted girl or woman. It usually was confiscated by one of a series of men who pulled her into prostitution and kept her there, often at first through coercion but later by the creation of an environment that made the batterer’s dominion of power and control look like child’s play. Worn down by abuse and degradation, she finally

submitted to her fate—and that submission was called consent or choice.

As a young feminist in the early 1970's I had worked as a rape crisis counselor. Now I began to understand that what those women had endured as a one-time assault was the ongoing condition of women and girls in prostitution—a prolonged, numbing series of sexual violations carried out by multiple violators. And this was being done to women and girls, the vast majority of whom had already endured sexual abuse as children. Sarah called prostitution “bought and sold rape.” But in reality it was gang rape, and not just a single gang rape, but gang rape carried out day after day, for years. The money exchanged—which the sex industry defenders pointed to as proof that prostitution is work—only deepened the violation to the woman or girl and her feelings of culpability. I became convinced that the labor paradigm COYOTE and Wages for Housework were promoting was wrong, and that, like rape, prostitution was a practice of gender-based violence.

Sarah left Women Against Pornography to found the first organization of prostitution survivors to fight the sex industry. I wanted also to challenge it—not just the pornography it produced—but, working now with Kathleen Barry, the author of Female Sexual Slavery, I was thinking globally.

In 1987, colleagues from Women Against Pornography, the Minneapolis-based WHISPER, and I began to organize a conference entitled, “Trafficking in Women.” I articulated the primary goal of the

conference in a letter to Twiss Butler in January 1988: “What we hope to accomplish is to get feminists and others to rethink the pornography and prostitution issues from the vantage point of the women who are most victimized by the institutions and simultaneously flaunted and made invisible.”

The conference took place in October 1988, one week short of fifteen years ago, in Martin Luther King, Jr. High School in NYC. It was the first international conference on “Trafficking in Women.” Laura Lederer, a leader in the anti-pornography movement, was now a program officer at the Scaggs Foundation. Laura provided the seed money that made the conference possible. It was organized on a shoestring, but without Laura’s critical support, it would not have been possible.

Speakers included the founding mothers of the global movement against the sexual exploitation of women, in addition to Kathy Barry and Diana Russell, international leaders like Yayori Matsui, the Japanese feminist extraordinaire and founder of the Asian Women’s Association, who tragically died this year; Jyotsna Chatterji, the director of the Joint Women’s Programme in New Delhi, India; Agnete Strom of the Women’s Front in Norway; Aurora Javate de Dios, the director of the Women’s Resource and Research Center in the Philippines; Rosa Dominga-Trapasso, founder of the Movimeiento el Pozo in Peru; British lesbian-feminist author and anti-pornography activist Sheila Jeffries; and Zimbabwe’s leading women’s rights scholar Rudo Gaidzanwa. Survivors participated on panels and in a three-hour speak out.

The conference organizers understood trafficking in women as a broad, umbrella concept that encompassed all practices of buying and selling women's and children's bodies. Trafficking as we understood it included American pornography, temple prostitution in India, military prostitution in the Philippines, street prostitution in Peru, sex tourism from Europe to Asia. It moved from the micro—"Trafficking within the Family"—to the macro—"Trafficking in Women: A Global Perspective." It exposed mainstream institutions that support and benefit from prostitution: "Military, Government, and Corporate Trafficking in Women." The conference looked at the sex industry as an instrument of the socialization of both men and women: "The Social Production of Prostitution"; "'On Sale Everywhere: The Social Reconstruction of Women's Bodies." It exposed connections between sex trafficking and surrogacy, marriage, and adoption. It focused on violence against prostitutes, called for services and shelter for victims and survivors, and examined international legal strategies on trafficking in women.

Please forgive me if I dwell on the content of the conference, but I just received a program for a conference on "Human Trafficking" that will soon take place in New York City. You would never know that trafficking has anything to do with gender, sex, or women.

It was clear by the end of the conference that an international feminist organization combating trafficking in women in all of its forms was desperately needed. We began organizing the Coalition Against

Trafficking in Women. Many of the conference participants took on key roles. Aurora Javate de Dios from the Philippines became our President.

We conceived of the Coalition as an umbrella with connected but autonomous networks in each world region to address its unique challenges. Within the next five years, there was a strong Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, Asia-Pacific, with Aurora at the helm; a newly formed Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, Latin America, coordinated by Zoraida Ramirez Rodriquez in Venezuela, whom we lost to breast cancer last year; and an incipient African Coalition being developed by Fatoumata Diake in Mali.

Not everyone was happy with the inclusive and feminist understanding of trafficking that was promoted at the 1988 Conference and embraced by the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women. Representatives from the Center for Women's Global Leadership observed the proceedings without participating, whispering among themselves. Representatives from the Dutch Foundation on Trafficking in Women arrived uninvited and did their best to foster dissent among the participants. However, it was not until 1991 during a seminar on trafficking in women in Strasbourg, France, sponsored by the Council of Europe and the Dutch government, that the opposition's agenda and strategy fully surfaced.

I flew into Frankfurt on my way to Strasbourg, and used that opportunity to study, up close, legalized prostitution, European-style. The Frankfurt city fathers had created a system of legal, regulated

brothels, hoping to stamp out an array of evils, including street prostitution, control of the sex industry by organized crime, and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. It was obvious that their strategy was a colossal failure. Street prostitution was flourishing; organized crime groups were running underground brothels filled with Asian, Latin American, and Eastern European women and girls. Only the few legal brothels (grossly outnumbered by their underground counterparts) cared whether buyers used condoms.

What had emerged in Frankfurt was a two-tiered system of prostitution. I later realized that this was the face of legalized prostitution in the western world. Women and girls who had been trafficked from poor countries were propelled into a competition with Western-born women for local prostitution customers and a growing number of sex tourists. It was apparent that the quotient of suffering was the most acute for the undocumented women and girls in the illegal brothels. They were forced to endure unwanted sex with half-a-dozen customers each night, were unable to protect themselves from HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, and were deprived of travel documents, threatened with violence and deportation, and required to work off exorbitant debt that locked them into conditions of slavery.

While not as dire as that of their internationally trafficked sisters, the lot of the legally prostituted women was also dismal. Posing as an American newspaper reporter, I was welcomed by the madam into a legal brothel in the heart of Frankfurt. It resembled a four-star hotel in the United States. I was soon surrounded by a group of women eager

for a distraction from their late afternoon wait for their “clients.” Several of the women’s husbands were also their pimps, most of the women were from poor, rural areas of Germany, and all faced bleak futures with few employment skills. The sex of prostitution was an unwanted invasion they had developed a series of strategies to avoid—their favorite, they confided, was to get the men so drunk that they didn’t know what they were penetrating. The women seemed bored and depressed. Their depression deepened when I asked them what they hoped to be doing in five years. Aside from one woman who said that she hoped to help manage the brothel, they were at a loss for words.

The effects of trafficking and prostitution were not confined to the brothels in Frankfurt. I was told by Asian women working to assist trafficking victims that they couldn’t publish their names in the telephone books or they got calls all night long from prostitution buyers. They were constantly solicited for sex. The mainstream media was saturated with prostitution imagery.

When I boarded the train to Strasbourg, it seemed indisputable to me that prostitution and sex trafficking were interrelated phenomena. Once I arrived at my destination, however, the conference organizers—the Dutch government-funded Foundation Against Trafficking—announced that they thought otherwise. All of the participants were instructed that the conference was about trafficking; prostitution was not to be discussed. As the conference proceeded, it became clear that the organizers had developed an extremely narrow definition of trafficking: the coerced transport of people across national or regional

boundaries. The fact that women were trafficked for the purpose of prostitution was, to the organizers, irrelevant. It was irrelevant that the women were trafficked into brothels and strip clubs; their focus was exclusively confined to international criminal networks forcibly moving people across borders.

It became evident that the conference organizers' circumscribed definition of trafficking and their censorship of the topic of prostitution was a deliberate strategy. The Dutch government, which had funded the conference, was convinced that the sex industry can be a safe and lucrative source of income for countries and women alike if prostitution is legalized and regulated. All of the abuses apparent in local and global sex industries, they argued, derive from their illegal status, which drives them underground and under the control of organized crime. Prostitution, if made legal and cleansed of its stigma, can be a job like any other job, echoing the words of COYOTE.

A decade after the conference the Dutch government fully implemented its agenda by legalizing and licensing 2,000 brothels and registering as prostitutes the women and girls in them. Once prostitution was legal in the Netherlands, brothel owners began to recruit women into prostitution through government-sponsored job centers for unemployed workers.

The conference organizers' efforts to censor discussion about prostitution backfired. Several of the participants insisted on addressing it. One of the dissenting voices was that of Swedish social

work professor Sven Axel Manson, who had conducted studies of male prostitution customers and was convinced that trafficking could not be curtailed without strong measures to confront and eliminate the demand for prostituted women and girls. To my immense relief, a handful of us, including an intrepid octogenarian abolitionist, Denise Pouillon, spoke out, pointed to the connections between prostitution and trafficking, and, if only for the moment, derailed the conference organizers' agenda.

The pro-prostitution lobby regrouped. By October 1994, there was an international organization working on the issue of trafficking from “a prostitution is work” perspective—the Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women or GAATW for short. Today if you go to the GAATW website, based in Thailand, and follow the chain of links, you end back at the very place our journey began—the San Francisco sex industry and COYOTE. By the latter half of the 1990's, GAATW was joined by the International Human Rights Law Group.

Where the Coalition defined trafficking to encompass the widest array of practices of commercial sexual exploitation, GAATW and its allies narrowed “trafficking” to the movement of forced or deceived people across borders. As Evelina Giobbe declared in a 1999 debate between the Coalition and GAATW: “You would think from what that the problem isn't trafficking—it's traveling.”

The Coalition made connections: between the private violence of incest, rape, and spousal abuse and the public violence of commercial sexual

exploitation; between local prostitution businesses and the global sex industry; between the condition of prostituted women and the status of all women. GAATW and its allies eschewed such analysis. In its lexicon, the term prostitution was replaced by “forced prostitution,” which suggested that prostitution is problematic only when coerced. Then—perhaps in an effort to shield the institution of prostitution from any unpleasant associations, the word “prostitution” disappeared from their discourse entirely, replaced by “sex work.” “Sex trafficking” was replaced by “facilitated migration” or “human trafficking.”

Soon references to “women and girls” and “gender and sex” began to disappear. In March of this year, I participated in a panel, in which a representative from a GAATW-affiliated NGO gave a presentation on “human trafficking.” You would never know from her remarks that women are trafficked in the millions for exploitation in prostitution. She never once referred to sexual exploitation. Indeed, you would think from her remarks that women and men suffer identical, gender-neutral harm in trafficking: the harm of being deceived or forced into exploitative labor.

In 1998, the International Labor Organization published a pamphlet entitled, “The Sex Sector,” that called for the legitimization of the sex industry and argued that sex industry profits should be factored into national accounting schemes. When the Coalition slammed the ILO for promoting prostitution as work, the agency took a different tack. This year ILO has a new report on trafficking that insists that labor

trafficking is the real problem and that sex trafficking is of comparatively minor significance.

Clearly, being trafficked into exploitative farm or factory work is incompatible with fundamental human rights and is harmful to those who subjected to this form of trafficking. But is that harm really as severe as the harm to women and girls trafficked into prostitution in brothels and over and over again subjected to intimate violation—to rape? Also ignored is the fact that trafficking for purposes of labor exploitation is different for men and women--is gendered. Women who are trafficked into exploitative factory or domestic work often suffer sexual exploitation by employers and their agents. It is supremely ironic that at a time when international agencies are hiring gender consultants to conduct gender analyses that organizations ostensibly fighting trafficking in an effort are deliberately ignoring the uniquely gender-based harm of trafficking in women. It is more than ironic—it represents a backlash against feminism and makes mockery of human rights activism!

The drafters of the United Nations' Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of Prostitution of Others (the "1949 Convention") did not find it necessary to define trafficking. They understood trafficking to be a cross-border practice of "the exploitation of the prostitution of others" and drafted a treaty that addressed both human rights violations equally. Together, as they understood it, "trafficking in persons and the exploitation of the prostitution of others" encompasses the activities of an increasingly

global sex industry whose activities were “incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person” (Marcovich, 2002). In 1979, the drafters of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women embraced the language of the 1949 Convention, its Article 6 requiring States Parties to “take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of the prostitution of women.”

A perceived need to define trafficking and to distinguish it from prostitution came only much later in the 1980’s. The goal was to confine both the scope of domestic and international laws addressing the sex industry and activism against it. The 1949 Convention criminalized the profit-making activities of local and global sex industries without penalizing those exploited in prostitution. Had the Convention been equipped with implementing mechanisms that enforced its provisions, it would have posed a serious threat to sex industry businesses. An international movement to abolish prostitution, founded by Josephine Butler at the end of the Nineteenth Century was still active in the 1980’s, and feminists speaking out against the sexual exploitation of women in prostitution were beginning to join forces with the “abolitionists” to strengthen the 1949 Convention and to pass and implement national and local laws consistent with it. Media reports of the suffering of trafficking victims and the increasing globalization of the sex industry were fueling support for a campaign against the sex industry. Eager to ward off such a danger, pro-sex industry forces developed a strategy.

Ignoring or denying the harm of the sex industry was not an option, for that harm was well documented. A more pragmatic approach was to focus on the most brutal and extreme practices of the sex industry—transporting women from poor countries to rich countries using tactics of debt bondage and overt force—while legitimizing its other activities in the name of worker’s rights.

The battle over definitions of trafficking came to a fore in 1999 in the drafting of the Trafficking Protocol to the Transnational Convention Against Organized Crime. Several mainstream human rights organizations led by the International Human Rights Law Group supported a definition of trafficking that required proof of force and deceit. Explicitly feminist human rights groups—most prominently the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, Equality Now, and the European Women’s Lobby—called for a definition of trafficking that at a minimum included trafficking carried out by the abuse of a position of power or a situation of vulnerability. In this international context, where developing countries grappling with the devastation wrought by the sex industry were active participants, the arguments of the pro-prostitution lobby foundered, and the more inclusive and protective definition won.

In contrast, that same year Congress passed the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. Its provisions governing the penalization of traffickers and the protection of victims were limited to cases of “severe trafficking,” requiring proof that the trafficking was carried out by force or deceit. Although such a restrictive definition creates an often

insurmountable burden for prosecutors, who must establish beyond a reasonable doubt not only that the victim was trafficked but that she was deceived or forced, the restricted definition prevailed. Two years after its passage, only four prosecutions had been brought under the new law.

What is the relation if any between prostitution and sex trafficking?

The truth is that what we call sex trafficking is nothing more or less than globalized prostitution. Sex industry profiteers transport girls and women across national and regional borders and “turn them out” into prostitution in locations in which their victims are least able to resist and where there is the greatest demand for them. Ironically, the demand is greatest in countries with organized women’s movements, where the status of women is high and there are relatively few local women available for commercial sexual exploitation. The brothels of the United States, Canada, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, and Australia are filled with women trafficked from Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. No less than 50% of German prostitutes are illegal immigrants and a staggering 80% of Dutch prostitutes are not Dutch-born (Owen, 2002; Louis, M., 1999).

Conversely, what most people refer to as “prostitution” is usually domestic trafficking. The bulk of the sex industry involves pimps and other sex industry entrepreneurs controlling women and girls, often by moving them from places in which they have family and friends into locations in which they have no systems of support. Movement is also essential because customers demand novelty. In the United States, for

example, there are national and regional sex industry circuits in which prostituted women and girls are rotated among cities, ensuring customers variety and sex industry entrepreneurs control.

Sex trafficking and prostitution overlap in fundamental ways. Those targeted for commercial sexual exploitation share key characteristics: poverty, youth, minority status in the country of exploitation, histories of abuse, and little family support. Sex industry customers exploit trafficked and prostituted women interchangeably, for the identical purpose. The sex industry businesses in which trafficked and prostituted women are exploited are often one and the same, with trafficked and locally prostituted women “working” side by side. Local brothels and strip clubs are usually traffickers’ destinations and key to their financial success. The injuries that prostituted and trafficked women suffer are identical: post-traumatic stress disorder, severe depression, damage to reproductive systems, damage from sexual assault and beatings, and sexually transmitted diseases.

Certainly international trafficking intensifies the dynamics of power and control that characterize domestic prostitution: the isolation of the victims; their dependence on their abusers; their difficulty in accessing criminal justice and social service systems; and their fear of exposure to the authorities. But the dynamics of trafficking and prostitution are the same dynamics, and their commonalities far overshadow their differences. In spite of efforts to differentiate and separate prostitution and trafficking, the inescapable conclusion is that the difference between the two, at most, is one of degree of, not of kind.

If sex trafficking and prostitution were distinct and separate phenomena, and if prostitution were as innocuous as trafficking is injurious, a logical response would be to direct criminal sanctions against sex traffickers and legalize and regulate prostitution. This is the position that the Netherlands, Germany, and others following the “Dutch” example have embraced. But the Dutch and German experience—along with those of other jurisdictions that have legalized prostitution—have demonstrated just what happens when prostitution is legitimized and protected by law: the number of sex businesses grows, as does the demand for prostitution. Legalized prostitution brings sex tourists and heightens the demand among local men. Local women constitute an inadequate supply so foreign girls and women are trafficked in to meet the demand. The trafficked women are cheaper, younger, more exciting to customers, and easier to control. More trafficked women means more local demand and more sex tourism. The end result looks a lot like Amsterdam.

The Swedish government, in response to the massive movement of trafficked Eastern European women into its borders, developed an antithetical policy response. In 1999, it passed and implemented legislation that stepped up measures against prostitution not only by directing strong penalties against pimps, brothel owners, and other sex industry entrepreneurs but by also directing criminal sanctions against customers. (The law also eliminated penalties against prostitutes, such as the penalty for soliciting.) After the passage of the new law, Sweden

spearheaded a public education campaign warning sex industry customers that patronizing prostitutes was criminal behavior. The result was unexpected. While there was not a dramatic decrease in the incidence of prostitution, sex trafficking to Sweden declined while neighboring Scandinavian countries witnessed a significant increase. The danger of prosecution coupled with a diminished demand made Sweden an unpromising market for global sex traffickers.

The antithetical Dutch and Swedish legislative approaches to prostitution and trafficking hold important lessons for social change activists and policy makers. Legalizing and legitimizing domestic prostitution throws out a welcome mat to international sex traffickers. Curtailing the demand for prostitution chills sex trafficking.

Prostitution and sex trafficking are the same human rights catastrophe, whether in local or global guise. Both are part of a system of gender-based domination that makes violence against women and girls profitable to a mind-boggling extreme. Both prey on women and girls made vulnerable by poverty, discrimination, and violence and leaves them traumatized, sick, and impoverished. Both reward predators sexually and financially, strengthening both the demand and criminal operations that ensure the supply. The concerted effort by some NGO's and governments to disconnect trafficking from prostitution—to treat them as distinct and unrelated phenomena—is nothing less than a deliberate political strategy aimed at legitimizing the sex industry and protecting its growth and profitability.

The obvious fact that the demand for prostitution and the demand for trafficked women are one in the same demonstrates the fallacy of this false division. It also reveals our best hope for ending and trafficking and prostitution. As Norma Hotaling has demonstrated in her work to educate and deter buyers and as the Swedish government has shown in arresting buyers, while demand is essential to sex industry success it also represents the weak link in the sex industry chain. Unlike prostituted women and girls, prostitution customers do have choices to make. And when they see that choosing to buy women devastates lives and threatens their own freedom and social standing, they make different choices. We've seen what works. The domestic violence movement has witnessed a dramatic decline in repeat domestic violence and the incidence of intimate partner homicides following a decades-long program of education, support and services for victims, and, crucially, accountability for abusers through a pro arrest, pro prosecution approach. Curtailing the demand for prostitution through accountability for prostitution buyers is the essential next step in our fight to end trafficking and prostitution.

