

## Myths and Facts about Trafficking for Legal and Illegal Prostitution (March 2009)

These myths and facts are adapted from 5 sources by Melissa Farley:

- 1) S.M. Berg "Frequently-Asked-Questions" on Genderberg  
[http://www.genderberg.com/phpNuke/modules.php?name=FAQ&myfaq=yes&id\\_cat=2&categories=Prostitution+FAQf](http://www.genderberg.com/phpNuke/modules.php?name=FAQ&myfaq=yes&id_cat=2&categories=Prostitution+FAQf)
- 2) Melissa Farley "Legalization Fact Sheet" from Nevada Coalition Against Sex Trafficking  
<http://www.nevadacoalition.org/content/blogsection/1/2/>
- 3) National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. "Female Juvenile Prostitution: Problem and Response" © 1992 Available at  
[http://www.operationlookout.org/lookoutmag/11\\_Myths\\_About\\_Prostitution.htm](http://www.operationlookout.org/lookoutmag/11_Myths_About_Prostitution.htm)
- 4) Janice G. Raymond "Ten Reasons for Not Legalizing Prostitution And a Legal Response to the Demand for Prostitution" in Prostitution, Trafficking, and Traumatic Stress (M Farley (ed) 2003) Also available at <http://action.web.ca/home/catw/readingroom.shtml?x=32972>
- 5) Sexual Violence Policy Monitoring Sub-group of the Women's National Commission – U.K. February 2008  
<http://womensphere.wordpress.com/2008/02/27/sexual-violence-policy-monitoring-sub-group-of-the-womens-national-commission-february-2008-prostitution-q-a/>

### **1. MYTH: Legalizing prostitution gets rid of its criminal elements - pimps and traffickers.**

**FACT: Legalizing prostitution *benefits* pimps and traffickers. It also benefits johns.**

What does legalization of prostitution mean? In the Netherlands, legalization amounts to socially and legally sanctioning all aspects of the sex industry: the women themselves, the buyers, and the pimps who are transformed into third party businessmen and legitimate sexual exploitation businessmen. Legalization of the sex industry converts brothels, sex clubs, massage parlors and other sites of prostitution into legitimate venues where commercial sex acts flourish take place with few legal restraints.

Some people believe that legalizing prostitution would offer dignity and professionalism to women in prostitution. But legitimizing prostitution by legalizing it does not change the actual experience of prostitution nor does it dignify prostituted women who still experience stigma and other harms in legal prostitution.

Once prostitution is legalized, pimps become legitimate businessmen, and the predatory purchase of another person for sex is now a legitimate business transaction.

Women in prostitution should not be punished for their own exploitation. The seller of sex should be *decriminalized*, as in the Swedish law on prostitution. But governments should not decriminalize pimps, buyers, procurers, brothels or other sex businesses.

### **2. MYTH: Men need sex therefore prostitution must exist. Prostitution is a natural form of human sexuality**

**FACT: The sex of prostitution is not "sex" for women in it. Most men who use women in prostitution have other sexual partners.**

This statement justifies the existence of prostitution, and supports the myth that men have uncontrollable sexual urges that must be fulfilled. The act of prostitution is structured

by the desires and fantasies of the buyer, which have nothing to do with the sexual desires of the person who is being bought.

No one ‘needs’ sex like they need food, water and air, and no one has the right to purchase access to another person’s reproductive organs in order to masturbate themselves. Men do not have the right to unlimited sexual access to women.

In a sexual exchange of equal partners there is always the risk of refusal, disagreement and the need for compromise. Buying women and children in prostitution is less about sexual gratification than power gratification, 85% of US johns have regular female sexual partners. 60% are married.

### **3. MYTH: Prostitution is sexual liberation**

#### **FACT: Prostitution is sexual exploitation.**

The sex acts performed in prostitution may be liberating to the john (although over the long term, it is likely that prostitution harms johns). However, women in prostitution tell us that the sex acts of prostitution are not sex for her. They tell us that prostitution involves acting and usually also dissociating the mind from the body. One of the long-term effects of prostitution is the destruction of women’s sexuality.

### **4. MYTH Women choose to enter prostitution. It’s better to choose to make lots of money as a prostitute than to choose to work at a minimum wage job like McDonald’s.**

#### **FACT: It is profoundly unjust to declare that prostitution is an acceptable job for some women - those who are mostly poor, mostly women of color, mostly young. Prostitution is an intrinsically abusive institution and women stay poor in prostitution (although lots of cash passes through their hands on the way to pimps, stripclub managers, bartenders, taxi drivers, casino hosts and other predators).**

Women deserve equal pay for equal work. There is a lack of adequate housing, and educational opportunity in the US and elsewhere. Racism limits educational and job opportunities for people of color, leaving prostitution as the only sustainable alternative for some young women.

Yet prostitution is an activity unlike any other “work,” which is why we should see it as the Swedish do: as institutionalized sexual oppression or as a human rights violation.

Women are in legal prostitution for the same reasons they’re in illegal prostitution – a lack of alternative survival options. Most women in prostitution did not make a choice to enter prostitution from among a range of other options. They did not decide that they wanted to be prostitutes instead of doctors, lawyers, website developers, or politicians. Instead, their “options” were more in the realm of how to get enough money to feed themselves and their children. If prostitution were really a choice it would not be those people with the fewest choices available to them who are disproportionately in prostitution. Such choices are better termed survival strategies.

Few laws make clear what choice and coercion are. An exception is a 2006 Florida state law that permits women who are coerced into prostitution via exploitation of their social and legal vulnerability to sue johns and pimps for damages. According to this law, coercion is defined as restraint of speech or communication with others; exploitation of a condition of developmental disability, cognitive limitation, affective disorder, or substance dependence; exploitation of prior victimization by sexual abuse; exploitation during the making of pornography; and *exploitation of the human needs for food, shelter, safety, or affection.*

Prostitution is about *not* having a range of educational and job options to choose

from. Most women in prostitution end up there only because other options are not available. They do not have stable housing, they urgently need money to support children or pay for school, and they often have limited or no education. Prostitution is not labor, it is paid sexual exploitation. It is often paid rape. It is intrinsically harmful and traumatic.

As a society, we do not allow the sale and purchase of body parts, such as kidneys. This is because we know that it would be the poor and disadvantaged who would exercise their 'choice' to sell body parts for cash. Others would be likely to 'choose' to live a healthier and longer life. A john described prostitution as "renting an organ for 10 minutes." Why should we assume that anyone really chooses to rent out her sexual organs?

Women involved in prostitution almost always have backgrounds of abuse, neglect and disadvantage. Sexual and physical abuse in childhood, running away, poverty and homelessness, are factors that precede entry into prostitution. These vulnerabilities make it very difficult for women to escape prostitution. In order to survive, they may have learned maladaptive behaviors that place them in harm's way. Accessing public benefits, especially housing, is very difficult for women who are socially isolated, who may have criminal records and prison time, and erratic lifestyles.

When prostituted women are asked, consistently around 90% say they want out of prostitution immediately, but the decision is out of their hands and in the hands of their pimps, their husbands, their landlords, their addictions, their children's bellies. A study of women in street prostitution in Toronto found that about 90% wanted to escape but could not and a 5-country study found that 92% of women, men and transgendered people in prostitution wanted immediate help to escape prostitution. If they are there because they cannot leave, then prostitution is not a freely made choice.

While there are a few women who apparently earn large amounts of money in prostitution, these women are in an extreme minority. An economic analysis showed that over the life course, prostitution is a route into poverty for most women. Even women in legal brothels report having to pay extortionate sums for rent and food. They also pay pimps inside and outside the brothels. They are not free to come and go as they wish.

Women in prostitution must continually lie about their lives, their bodies, and their sexual responses. Lying is part of the job definition when the customer asks, "did you enjoy it?" The very edifice of prostitution is built on the lie that "women like it." Some prostitution survivors have stated that it took them years after leaving prostitution to acknowledge that prostitution wasn't a free choice because they had to lie to themselves in order to survive.

There is no doubt that a small number of women *say* they choose to be in prostitution, especially in public contexts orchestrated by the sex industry. It is not clear how many of these women perform sex acts with many buyers each day as opposed to being protected (often because of race and class privilege) from the usual life of women in prostitution. It's also not clear how many of these spokeswomen are actually pimping other women. Some sexworker advocates have themselves been arrested for pimping: Robyn Few, Maxine Doogan, Norma Jean Almodovar and Margo St. James. Nonetheless, they continue to present themselves as sexworkers and not pimps. COYOTE member Carol Leigh acknowledged in a 2004 debate at UC/Berkeley (with Angel Cassidy and Melissa Farley): "95% of my friends want out of prostitution."

Some people choose to take dangerous drugs such as amphetamine. However, even when some people consent to use dangerous drugs, we still recognize that is harmful to them, and most people do not seek to legalize amphetamine. In these situations, it is *harm* to the person, not the *consent* of the person that governs how we understand the activity.

When a woman remains in an abusive relationship with a partner who batters her, or even when she defends his actions, most people now understand that she is not there voluntarily. They recognize the conditions under which she acquiesced. Like battered women, women in prostitution may deny their abuse if they are not provided with safety or meaningful alternatives.

**5. MYTH : Prostitution is a victimless crime. Legal prostitution protects women in prostitution.**

**FACT: All prostitution harms those in it. Legal prostitution does not protect women in prostitution from harm.**

It's not the legal status of prostitution that causes the harm, it's the prostitution itself. The longer she is in prostitution – legal or illegal - the more she is psychologically harmed and physically endangered.

Women who sell sex report high levels of physical and sexual violence, including verbal abuse, threats and intimidation - one UK study found that 63% of women in street and indoor prostitution had experienced violence. Selling access to her body parts and faking pleasure has a very negative psychological and emotional impact on women. A study of prostituted women from nine countries found that two thirds met criteria for posttraumatic stress disorder which how profoundly stressful prostitution was for them.

In two studies of 186 victims of commercial sexual exploitation, women consistently indicated that prostitution establishments did little to protect them, regardless of whether the establishments were legal or illegal. One woman said, "The only time they protect anyone is to protect the customers."

One of these studies interviewed 146 victims of trafficking in 5 countries. Eighty percent of the women suffered physical violence from pimps and buyers and endured negative health consequences from the violence and sexual exploitation, regardless of whether the women were trafficked internationally or were in local prostitution.

Research on legal brothels in Nevada shows that legalisation does not protect prostituted women from the violence, abuse and psychological and physical injury that occur in illegal prostitution. In many senses the opposite might be true. A pan-European study also found that levels of violence were high in both indoor and outdoor settings and where brothels are regulated. In the Netherlands, where prostitution has been legal since 2000, the government is rethinking its approach as it is seeing more and more signals that abuse of women is continuing.

Legal prostitution in the Netherlands, Nevada, and in Australia has been connected with organized crime. Two-thirds of the legal brothels in Amsterdam's red light district have been closed down because it was impossible to control organized crime, according to the mayor.

Contempt and ill treatment of those in prostitution stays the same whether prostitution is legal or illegal. Women are frequently raped in escort and brothel prostitution. And almost everyone in prostitution was raped as a child *before* she got into it. Incest and rape are boot camp for prostitution. While women can report rapes and assaults to the police under current laws, many women in prostitution do not report rapes and assaults because their experience is that police also treat them badly.

Legalized systems of prostitution may mandate health checks, but only for women in prostitution - not for male buyers. Health examinations for women but not for men make no sense from a public health perspective. Women are not protected from HIV contracted from johns. In one study, the longer women were in brothel prostitution, the more likely they were to be infected by HIV.

Throughout the world, study after study documents that about half of all johns request or insist that condoms are not used when they buy sex. Many factors militate against condom use: the need of women to make money; older women's decline in attractiveness to men; competition from places that do not require condoms; pimp pressure on women to have sex with no condom for more money; money needed for a drug habit or to pay off the pimp; and the general lack of control that prostituted women have over their bodies in prostitution venues.

Even though sex businesses had rules that required men to wear condoms, men nonetheless attempted to have sex without condoms. According to an economic analysis of condom use in India, when extremely poor women used condoms, *they were paid 66%-79% less by johns.*

"Safety policies" in brothels did not protect women from harm. Where brothels allegedly monitored the buyers and employed "bouncers," women stated that they were injured by buyers and, at times, by brothel owners and their friends. Even when someone intervened to momentarily control buyers' abuse, women lived in a climate of fear.

#### **6. MYTH: Most prostitution does not involve pimps.**

**FACT: Most prostitution involves pimps. Health service providers, shelter staff, survivors of prostitution, and law enforcement sources estimate that 65%-85% of all prostitution is pimp-dominated.**

Pimps are the people that johns pay to outsource the violence necessary to keep women in prostitution obedient. While it is difficult to obtain accurate percentages of women who have pimps, consider that pimps are not named "pimps" by women in prostitution. They are named boyfriends, husbands, friends, sometimes girlfriends. Pimps are also taxi drivers, casino hosts, strip club owners, valets, massage parlor managers, bartenders, and many others who earn money by selling or helping to sell women in prostitution. Legal pimps own brothels, and legal pimps control legal prostitution the same way illegal pimps run their businesses.

#### **7. MYTH: Legalizing prostitution would protect sexually exploited children. When prostitution is legal, licensed brothel owners do not hire minors or trafficked women.**

**FACT: Legal prostitution increases the sexual assaults of children in prostitution.**

Legalization of prostitution increases the number of minors who are prostituted. Legal prostitution means that there are more locations for children to be sold for sex. And wherever there is a legal sex business, there are likely to be 5 times as many illegal sex businesses as well. Therefore, it is good business practice for traffickers to sell children in or near a legal sex business. That's where the buyers are.

In the UK, approximately 50% of women in prostitution began selling sex under the age of 18. The average age of entry into any kind of prostitution in the US is 13-14 years of age. There are a range of precipitating factors including family disruption or dysfunction, sexual or physical abuse, alienation from school, running away and homelessness and substance misuse. There are well-established links between foster care experiences and routes into prostitution. These experiences render young women vulnerable to grooming by older predatory men and being pimped into selling sex. Sometimes it appears as if young women and girls are 'choosing' to enter prostitution. The UK children's charity Barnardos refers to this as 'constrained choice,' recognizing that sexually exploited young women have histories that create vulnerability to pimp manipulation. A Florida state law

crafted by Margaret Baldwin recognizes that coercion to prostitution exists whenever the human needs for affection and protection are exploited.

Pimps want to make money. They don't care if someone is illegal, age 16, or whether she was trafficked. There has been inadequate protection for children against prostitution in New Zealand since decriminalization of prostitution in 2003. According to the New Zealand decriminalized prostitution law, the police have no right of entry into brothels, and have no right to ask for age-identification papers of those in prostitution – thus investigation of suspected youth prostitution is extremely difficult, according to police officers, who asked that the law be revised.

An argument for legalizing prostitution in the Netherlands was that it would help end child prostitution. Yet child prostitution in the Netherlands has increased dramatically during the 1990s. The Amsterdam-based ChildRight organization estimates that the number of children in prostitution has increased by more than 300% between 1996 (4000 children) and 2001 (15,000 children).

Prostitution of children increased in the state of Victoria compared to other Australian states where prostitution has not been legalized. Of all the states and territories in Australia, the highest number of reported incidences of child prostitution came from Victoria. ECPAT (End Child Prostitution and Trafficking) conducted research for the Australian National Inquiry on Child Prostitution, and found that there was increased evidence of organized commercial exploitation of children in Australia.

#### **8. MYTH: Prostitution is the world's oldest profession.**

**FACT: Slavery and pimping and agriculture are the world's oldest professions.**

Prostitution is not the oldest profession, slave trading is. This statement suggests that we can do nothing to abolish prostitution so we might as well give up – even though that's the same thing people said about the US slave trade when it was at its height. The misogynist notion that prostitution will always be with us also hints that men have no responsibility or choice for their predatory behaviors in buying women for sex because prostitution is ultimately the fault of those wily, seductive, evil women who victimize men.

#### **9. MYTH: Social stigma is the most harmful aspect of prostitution.**

**FACT: The worst thing about prostitution is not social stigma, it is rape, strangulation, beatings, toxic verbal abuse, and other violence from johns and pimps.**

Women don't want to be prostitutes and the shame and stigma of prostitution persists despite legalization. Although they would have been earning retirement benefits if they registered, women in Dutch prostitution did not register as legal prostitutes because they are ashamed to be publicly known as prostitutes. Regardless of its legal status, women would prefer to get out of prostitution and usually feel ashamed of it. Does any woman in prostitution deserve to be treated disrespectfully or stigmatized? Of course not. But prostitution inevitably means that you're treated like an object to be masturbated into.

In Germany, the service union *ver.di* offered union membership to Germany's sex workers. They would have been entitled to health care, legal aid, thirty paid holiday days a year, a five-day workweek, and Christmas and holiday bonuses. Out of an estimated 400,000 sex workers, only 100 joined the union. That's .00025% of German sex workers. The same phenomenon (not joining prostitute unions) is true in the Netherlands. Legalisation does not erase the stigma of prostitution and could even make women more vulnerable because they must lose anonymity.

**10. MYTH: If you try to abolish prostitution, it will go underground.**

**FACT: There is no evidence for that extortionate attitude.**

This myth assumes not only that men have a right to buy sex, but that if they are denied that right, then they will make things a whole lot worse (meaning rape) for “good” women who are not prostituting.

This myth also hints its converse: that we can “control” prostitution by legalizing or regulating it. This is also not true. Once socially tolerated or state-sanctioned, both legal and illegal prostitution increase. Trafficking increases and johns feel justified in seeking out and buying sex.

Basing public policy measures on the extortionist threat of increased violence in an already violent environment is no way for a civil society to operate. Furthermore, legalization of prostitution has not stopped the violence in prostitution. Legalization has made it more difficult for victims to 'prove' they were coerced and it has increased the number of people in illegal sex businesses.

**11. MYTH: Prostitution is a deterrent to sex crimes.**

**FACT: Research indicates that prostitution is associated with increased rates of rape.**

The sex industry has been cited as a public service that reduces rape. However, there is no evidence for this. First, consider the rapes of women involved in prostitution. Women in prostitution have been described as the most raped class of women in the world. Women in prostitution tell us that prostitution is “paid rape” to them. Even though money is paid, the sex acts of prostitution are unwanted, often humiliating and degrading.

Evidence from Nevada and Australia, where prostitution is legal, indicates that legal prostitution fosters a ‘prostitution culture’ that affects all women and children. This results in increased sexual harassment. The province of Victoria, Australia (with legalized prostitution) has the country’s highest rates of both domestic violence and prostitution of children.

Legal prostitution does not decrease the rapes of women in Nevada. Quite the opposite. Nevada’s women are raped at rates that are twice that of New York and a fourth higher than the U.S. average. Women are three times as likely to be raped in Las Vegas as compared to New York City.

College-aged men in Nevada are much more likely than college men in other states to use women in prostitution, to go to strip clubs and massage parlors. Nevada college students tend to justify sexual exploitation and considered it acceptable that their future sons would use women in prostitution. They found it acceptable that their future daughters might become prostitutes.

**12. MYTH: Pornography and stripping are not prostitution.**

**FACT: Pornography, stripping/exotic dancing/lap dancing are almost always prostitution.**

If being paid to perform sex acts is prostitution, then using a camera to record people getting paid to perform sex acts is recording prostitution. People may name those whose images appear in pornography as ‘porn actresses’ to distance themselves emotionally from the truth that they pay a third party for recording acts of prostitution. Pornography actresses have much in common with others in prostitution such as their poverty, history of sexual abuse and drug addictions.

Strip clubs, pornography, Hooters, mail order brides, online escorts, and other prostitution are sexual exploitation not sex work. 100% of women at a strip club in one

study said they had been propositioned as prostitutes by strip club johns. Thus men who go to strip clubs consider women in strip clubs to be prostitutes. In strip clubs, the job definition of what it means to be a stripper would be called sexual harassment in any other location.

**13. MYTH: Legalization of prostitution is an entirely separate issue from human trafficking.**

**FACT: Prostitution is the destination point for trafficking. Legalization of prostitution promotes sex trafficking.**

Prostitution and sex trafficking are linked. Sex trafficking happens when and where there is a demand for prostitution and a context of impunity for its customers. Legal prostitution sanitizes prostitution, making the harms of trafficking for prostitution invisible. Suddenly, dirty money becomes clean. Illegal acts become legal. Overnight, pimps are transformed into legitimate businessmen and ordinary entrepreneurs, and men who would not formerly consider buying a woman in prostitution think, “Well, if it’s legal, now it must be O.K.”

Governments that legalize prostitution as sex work tend to have an economic investment in the sex industry because they earn taxes from prostitution. This will foster governments’ increased dependence on sex businesses for revenue. If women in prostitution are considered workers, then governments can abdicate responsibility for making decent and sustainable employment available to women.

In Nevada, women are trafficked primarily into the state’s illegal prostitution venues: strip club prostitution, escort prostitution, and massage parlors that function as illegal brothels. But there also a number of reports of women trafficked into Nevada legal brothels.

Trafficking of women into the sex industry is a direct consequence of men’s demand for sexual access to women and girls in prostitution. In countries where prostitution is legal, sex industries are larger and create a demand for more women to sell sex, attracting traffickers and others who exploit women for financial gain. The legal sex industry then acts as a magnet for traffickers, increasing the number of women who are being exploited. Legalization also results in the growth of a parallel illegal sex industry as has been extensively documented in Australia.

Since 1999, there have been reports that at least 80% of women in Dutch legal prostitution had been trafficked. In 2009, the Dutch government has closed approximately 2/3 of the legal brothels in Amsterdam because of its inability to control traffickers and other organized crime.

By the mid-1990s, 75% of women in legal German prostitution were from other countries, a majority trafficked from Eastern Europe. Trafficking of Asian women into Australian prostitution has been noted by the US State Department.

**14. MYTH: Even if it’s not perfect, legalizing prostitution would at least make prostitution a little bit better.**

**FACT: Legalization of prostitution increases illegal prostitution. It does not improve the lives of women in prostitution.**

Prostitution can’t be made “a little better” anymore than domestic violence can be made “a little better.” Women in prostitution tell us that they want the same options in life that others have: a decent job, safe housing, medical care including psychological counseling. They deserve that, not just an HIV test to make sure that they are “clean meat”

for johns or a union to ensure that they get an extra dollar or two for being paid to be sexually harassed, sexually exploited and often raped.

In theory it sounds OK to state that sane, reasonable people should have the right to sell a kidney for \$500 or more if they choose to. But opening the door to body organ selling would not lead to nearly as many middle class white men selling organs as other people whose social circumstances does not permit a free, uncoerced choice. Organ sales would open the door to brokers who exploit poor people. While a few body organ sellers may make a free choice to do that, prohibition of organ sales prevents widespread exploitation of less privileged people.

A truly progressive law promotes women's equality, not women's prostitution. A 1999 Swedish law describes prostitution as a human rights violation against women. Understanding the massive social and legal power difference in the prostitution transaction, Sweden arrests johns but not the women in prostitution. Trafficking and prostitution have plummeted in Sweden since the law was introduced.

If *you* don't want to get paid for having sex with 10-20 strangers a day that pimps send your way, why do you think anyone else does? [For men who don't understand: the parallel for them would be having a pimp while you're in prison] Women in prostitution do not want to be in legal brothels: 81% of the women in the Nevada legal brothels urgently want to escape prostitution

A goal of state-sponsored legal prostitution was to move prostituted women indoors into brothels and clubs where they would presumably be less vulnerable than in street prostitution. And where they'd be socially invisible. However, many women are in street prostitution because they want to avoid being controlled and exploited by pimps (transformed in legalized systems into sex businessmen). Other women do not want to register or submit to health checks, as required by law in some countries where prostitution is legalized. Arguing against an Italian proposal for legalized prostitution, Aghatise suggested that brothels actually deprive women of what little protection they may have on the street, confining women to closed spaces where they have little chance of meeting outreach workers or others who might help them escape prostitution.

In the Netherlands, women in prostitution point out that legalization or decriminalization of the sex industry does not erase the stigma of prostitution. Because they must register and lose their anonymity, women are more vulnerable to being stigmatized as "whores," and this identity follows them everywhere. Thus, the majority of women in prostitution still operate illegally and underground. Some members of Dutch Parliament who originally supported the legalization of brothels on the grounds that this would liberate women are now seeing that legalization actually reinforces the oppression of women. In December 2008, 50% of Amsterdam's legal brothels were closed down. Why? Because Dutch legal prostitution created an environment that was so attractive to organized crime that the Dutch could not control the traffickers and pimps. International organized criminals began to take over the city. A report by Karina Schaapman, a former prostitute and a member of the Amsterdam city council, described a police file of 80 violent pimps, of whom only three were Dutch-born. 75% of Amsterdam's 8,000 to 11,000 women in prostitution were from Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia.

Chief Inspector Nancy Pollock established Glasgow's street liaison team for women in prostitution in 1998. Pollock stated that legalization or decriminalization of prostitution is "...simply to abandon women to what has to be the most demeaning job in the world." Countering the argument that legalized prostitution provides safer venues for women,

Pollock noted that women in sauna prostitution, for example, “have even less control over what services they will perform.

The argument that legalization was supposed to take the criminal elements out of sex businesses by strict regulation of the industry has failed. The real growth in prostitution in Australia since legalization took effect has been in the illegal sector. Legalization of prostitution in the State of Victoria, Australia, resulted in massive expansion of the sex industry. In one year, illegal brothels in Victoria tripled in number. Along with legalization of prostitution, other forms of sexual exploitation, such as tabletop dancing, bondage and discipline centers, peep shows, phone sex, and pornography, have developed in much more profitable ways than before legalization. Prostitution has become an integral part of the tourism and casino boom in Victoria with government-sponsored casinos authorizing the redeeming of casino chips at local brothels.

**15. MYTH: Legalized prostitution would control the sex industry.**

**FACT: Legalization/decriminalization of prostitution expands the sex industry.**

Over the last decade, as pimping was legalized, and brothels decriminalized in the year 2000, the sex industry increased by 25% in the Netherlands. Similar increases have been documented in Australia, since prostitution was legalized.

Once prostitution is legalized, men who previously would not have risked buying women for sex now see prostitution as acceptable. When legal barriers disappear, so do the social and ethical barriers to treating women as sexual merchandise. Legalization of prostitution sends the message to new generations of men and boys that women are sexual commodities and that prostitution is harmless fun.

**16. MYTH: Legal prostitution brings tremendous tax benefits to cash-strapped regions. Nevada’s rural counties reap economic benefits from legal prostitution.**

**FACT: Regions with legal prostitution experience adverse economic impacts.**

Pimps tell women in prostitution: You’ll get rich! You’ll make \$15,000 a week? They also lie to Nevada’s citizens, telling them that rural counties are supported by brothels. It’s actually the other way around: the counties are supporting the brothels. By the time licensing, policing, and other state-paid tasks are performed, most counties with legal brothels barely break even.

The money that might be raised by taxing prostitution is offset by the need to police prostitution and the fact that organized crime is attracted to areas with legal prostitution also necessitating increased police activity. Pimps are known to launder money, and they avoid reporting the cash revenue from prostitution. Pimps do not suddenly become law-abiding taxpayers because prostitution is legalized and taxed. Mustang Brothel in Nevada was shut down because of the legal pimp/owner’s conviction for tax evasion. Pimps are simply not going to hand over the enormous profits that they make from the business of sexual exploitation.

Major corporations have avoided setting up businesses in Nevada because of many counties’ proximity to legal prostitution.

Legal prostitution almost always results in expensive legal challenges to zoning of prostitution because no one wants prostitution zoned into their neighborhood or near their children’s schools. Prostitution often ends up zoned into the neighborhoods of poor people who can’t afford the legal battle to keep it away from their homes.

**17.MYTH: If you oppose legalization of prostitution, you're saying that prostitutes should be arrested.**

**FACT: The abolitionist Swedish law, which is a model law, decriminalizes women in prostitution but arrests their predators: johns, pimps, and traffickers.**

Being desperately poor, abused or sexually exploited is not a crime. But johns, pimps and other sexual predators perpetrate criminally abusive behaviors and should be appropriately charged with those crimes.

While legalization is a failed social experiment, Sweden has had excellent success both criminalizing sexual predation while at the same time assisting people in getting out of prostitution. Since the 2000 Swedish law on prostitution was implemented (arresting johns), trafficking into Sweden has almost completely stopped.

**18. MYTH: If you oppose legal prostitution, you're a moralistic, judgmental, prudish person who is pushing your value system on people who think differently from you.**

**FACT: While people are entitled to their moral and religious beliefs, our opposition to the institution of prostitution is based on evidence of the harms of prostitution documented by researchers, health service providers, and law enforcement.**

Legalizing prostitution is a failed experiment and we now have much evidence that it does not work to benefit individuals or communities. Regardless of prostitution's legal status and regardless of its indoor or outdoor location, prostitution is a violation of women's human rights that results in massive harms.