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Op-ed: Prostitution can be a Choice

 “A Wild Weekend in Florida” the story circulating all forms of social media, told by Zola of her crazed weekend as a striper and stint as a madam securing men willing to pay thousands to have sex with a prostitute she was pimping. In the story Zola claims in one night she was able to make $800 at the strip club and $5,500 being a madam for her ‘friend’. The idea of performing sexual acts for money seems like something only someone in dire situations would do. But, for some women and let’s not forget about the men out there, being a prostitute is a choice and considering the possible money you could make; a good choice. But, the U.S government has promoted this view that all forms of prostitution should be made illegal and all out eliminated.

Now, if this was a view was constructed through their own investigations into sex work that the world’s ‘oldest profession’ is inherently and morally wrong, then I could stand behind policies. But, this idea that all sex for pay is wrong originates from conservative Christian theology that views sex, especially sex that can be bought and sold as a sin. The U.S. government has increased funding to combat prostitution, which is often conflated with sex trafficking to faith-based organizations. The problem is these organization aren’t really solving anything or helping anyone, especially in their attempts to combat prostitution overseas.

The problem with American faith-based led organizations is that they are (shocker) culturally insensitive and imperialistic. U.S. anti-trafficking policies aligned with these conservation Christian organizations view sexual relations in very heteronormative western way. This idea of sex is not shared universally and their poor attempts to rescue and help these women in foreign countries and here in America, often leaves the women in worse conditions. What’s ironic for these raid and rescue missions, the people sent to help often end up becoming perpetrators to the physical and sexual abuse they are sent to stop and months after the ‘successful’ rescue mission most of the prostitutes are back turning tricks.

 But, the worst part is that the U.S. anti-trafficking policies influenced by conservative Christian ideology are repressive and discriminatory towards women. This denies women of their agency, their ability to make decisions in their best interest. If a woman wants to perform sex work and make a career out of it that is her business. As women if we were able to command our own bodies, even in something like prostitution it would disrupt the patriarchal norms. Women should be able to become the owners of brothels, set the prices and control the cliental. In the U.S. and in other countries women are more likely to be subjected to arrest and prosecution then the Johns, men who are paying for the sex. There is a market out there for sex work, regardless of your personal feelings towards prostitution. Attempts to eliminate prostitution and other forms of sex work has been useless and very unsuccessful. I believe allowing room for understanding and regulation would go a lot furtherer than persecution and criminalization.

Citation:

Peach, Lucinda. 2011. “Sin, Salvation, or Stravation? The Problematic Role of Religious Morality in U.S. Anti-sex Trafficking Policy.” Pp. 66-82 in Confronting Global Gender Justice: Women’s Lives, Human Rights, edited by D. Bergoffen, P. Gilbert, T. Harvey and C.L. Mc Neely. New York: Routledge.