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LETTERS

To End Prostitution, Start With the Demand Side

Published: February 25, 2012

To the Editor:

In "[As Other Crimes Recede, Street Prostitution Keeps Its Wily Hold](#)" (news article, Feb. 13), you report that New York City's police commissioner, Raymond W. Kelly, is directing law enforcement to arrest those who buy prostituted human beings for sexual exploitation.

Commissioner Kelly, by adopting this human-rights, women's-rights-based approach, joins the growing ranks of leaders in law enforcement who have made ending sex trafficking their priority.

For too long, prostitution laws have been enforced in a gender-discriminatory manner. Those being sold and arrested are overwhelmingly women and girls. Those who buy the prostituted, or sell them, are overwhelmingly male, and face far fewer, if any, legal consequences for their actions.

If we are to stand a chance at ending sex trafficking, we must deepen our understanding of the end point of sex trafficking, which is prostitution. Those of us who reject the notion that prostitution is sex work (when did human sexuality become work anyway?) and see it as an end result of some of the worst social conditions possible (sexual abuse in childhood, poverty, gender inequality, racism) must fashion remedies that address those conditions.

Rather than make social injustice more tolerable, we must work to end it — in our lifetime and forever.

NORMA RAMOS

Executive Director, Coalition Against Trafficking in Women
New York, Feb. 14, 2012

To the Editor:

That other crimes recede but prostitution persists is no surprise to those who work on sex trafficking.

Focusing on demand is the right approach and needs to be tried for more than two days, as it was in New York City recently, before judging its efficacy.

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And this must be accompanied by an explicit policy that treats those who sell as sex as victims of crime and not criminals

Those of us who have met with women and children in prostitution — from India to New York City — know that these women and children are far from criminals. They are often the most marginalized, vulnerable people in our society. They are in prostitution not because of choice, but because of lack of choice.

The reason countries like Sweden have successfully reduced prostitution is that they have recognized that those who buy sex should be held accountable, and those who sell sex should be treated as victims of violence and given the services (education, mental and physical health services, drug and alcohol treatment, and job training) that any victims need and deserve.

PAMELA SHIFMAN
Director, Initiatives for Girls and Women, NoVo Foundation
New York, Feb. 14, 2012

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