

## Queering the trafficking discourse 2: false consciousness?

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### FALSE CONSCIOUSNESS?

- Why do people, usually girls or women from impoverished areas, but also students, queers, anarchists, drug users – need to be forced or tricked [original definition of 'trafficking'] into sex work, when the pay is good and they have dependents, dependencies, degrees to support?

- Don't we [I'm finding the 'we' and 'they' thing confusing here, since I am both a sex worker and writing about sex work, but I am using 'they' to indicate the *mythical pool of trafficking victims*] need to hear more from the trafficked victims themselves to clarify this?

- But, when sex workers are 'rescued' by anti-traffickers, if they have any voice at all, it is often to object to the rescue, and what comes after [forced into 'rehab' and back into poverty]. This is then dismissed as 'false consciousness': a term that came up in socialism, where the lumpen-proletariat's views are irrelevant to the intellectual led revolution. Which is a problematic line to support, leading anti-traffickers to veer off onto the track that ALL sex work is horrible and degrading, so it is ALL 'trafficking', even if you don't see yourself as a victim [thus, a different take on false consciousness: we have already decided that you have been trafficked. So shut up]

-OK, new definition of trafficking = any kind of sex work. <http://www.amazon.com/Not-Choice-Job-Exposing-Prostitution/dp/161234626X> - check out the infamous rad-fem Janice Raymond, on how sex work can never be a 'choice' or a 'job'. Meanwhile you can get a reality check from a sex worker's perspective, on why sex work is work at Born Whore | just another angry revolutionary hooker, check out Ronald Weitzer's critique of the flawed theory and method and general absurdity of sex work-as-trafficking, <http://pas.sagepub.com/content/35/3/447.abstract>, and Norma Jean Almodovar <http://www.faiobserver.com/article/matter-choice-part-1>; <http://www.policeprostitutionandpolitics.com>

- But since the sex worker voices are silenced with this new definition, bear with me as I move on to consider the clients -what's their story? When all sex work is bundled as trafficking, there end up being enormous numbers of 'victims'. Suggestions that they are 'forced' to see 7-10 clients a night, then add up to thousands of clients per victim per year [which therefore extrapolates to MILLIONS of clients, in total, in surprisingly small areas].

- I don't just want to rely on exposing shonky maths to question the anti-trafficking line though: whether they are thousands or many millions, the suggestion is that these clients are taking advantage of brainwashed victims, which is a pretty terrible accusation to make of a significant number of men, if not the majority of men [if the higher figures were to be credible].

- So, who are the clients? They are regular Joes, mostly, in my thirty-odd years of experience in sex work, in Australia and less developed countries. They are homosocial groups going out after drinking; young men having initiation rituals; people who have sexual interests beyond the

hetero-monogamous; business men away from home being indulged by clients; and many others. The sex industry is part of social, business and power relationships and it transfers wealth from rich to poor. Clients are also law makers and pillars of society, even including religious leaders who decry sex work. Clients are clearly complex: they cannot be assumed to be stupid.

- But for the anti-trafficking position to hold up, in addition to the sex workers having 'false consciousness', we must believe that the clients also have false consciousness? Since for most clients, it is important that the worker also enjoys the experience. The appearance of sexual satisfaction is a key skill that involves accomplished faking. It can certainly be true that sex workers enjoy seeing their regular clients, but it's not a given. The sex worker's own gender, sexuality and preferences are not necessarily relevant.

- According to the anti-traffickers, ALL sex workers are trapped in a hideous situation needing rescue. And yet these forlorn victims are so convincing in their work, that their clients believe they are enjoying it? How come none of these millions of clients are aware of that?

- OR, are we going to extrapolate further and say that all clients are actually rapists after all? I have to object to that, based on my own experience with thousands of clients. Only two were rapists.

- Oh right! I have 'false consciousness'.

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