

the **guardian**

# 'Men buy girls, not sex' and other myths of anti-prostitution moralists

The messaging of anti-sex trade campaigners casts sex workers as enslaved victims. In reality, it's a service industry job



**Melissa Gira Grant**

guardian.co.uk, Friday 23 September 2011 12.17 EDT



Ashton Kutcher at a TechCrunch conference in San Francisco, California; his 'Real Men Don't Buy Girls' campaign perpetuates a myth that men buy and own women in sex trade transactions, argues Melissa Gira Grant. Photograph: Araya Diaz/Getty

According to the documentaries running on near-constant repeat on CNN and MSNBC, men all around America are just waiting to buy women for sex, fuelling what is referred to as a "multibillion dollar industry". In [CNN's latest sex trade special, \*Selling the Girl Next Door\*](#), we're told that girls are "routinely bought and sold for the pleasure of grown men". [Attorneys general](#), mayors and sheriffs across the [United States](#) are using the same tabloid statistics and rationale to set public policy. They claim that the way to end exploitation in the sex trade is to "end demand" for the sex trade – that is, end men's desire for sex they can pay for. The notion that men's desire to buy actual people fuels the sex trade has gone so mainstream that when aspiring celebrity philanthropist Ashton Kutcher launched a public service campaign against [prostitution](#) this year, he called it "[Real Men Don't Buy Girls](#)".

The problem is, real people buy sex, and real people sell sex. The numbers on how many people are involved in the sex trade are notoriously hard to gather, or trust, but there is one constant: buyers are not buying people. When politicians, social service providers and celebrity philanthropists insist that sex workers are selling ourselves, they engage in the same kind of dehumanisation that they claim johns do to us. When they claim that men can buy us, they rob us of our power and our choices.

If you're someone whose understanding of the sex trade is patched together from cable specials like these, with their endless reels of women in miniskirts and fishnets and

boots leaning into cars, it's probably impossible to imagine that sex workers have power or choices. From reading prostitution advertisements online, or from recalling the kind of carnival sideshow pitch you might hear at a strip club, it's tempting to imagine that sex workers will do whatever men pay them to do, and that sex workers exist to cater to male desire. What sex workers are actually selling is our ability to make our customers think they are getting what they want, and we try to sell that with as little strain on our time and our bodies as possible. You wouldn't be able to tell this from sex trade ads because it would be incredibly bad marketing, but it's the illusion around which sex work turns.

Combined with the myth that all prostitution involves men buying women, the "end men's demand" rhetoric in the media and anti-prostitution campaigns plays into some of the most damaging attitudes toward sex workers. There's nothing feminist or new in the current wave of anti-prostitution reformers, who claim, as does the [Demand Abolition Coalition](#), which is led by former US Ambassador Swanee Hunt and actress Ashley Judd among others, that all sex work is "sexual enslavement". Sex workers know that what creates demand for the sex trade is not men "enslaving" us for sex, but the exigencies of survival. The demand for the sex trade lies in the demands of childcare, loan officers, debt collectors, landlords and dependant family members – in short, the demands most working people struggle to meet.

Given the gravity of these real, systemic demands that sex workers face, to focus only on ending men's demand for sex is a cheap way out. In this way, sex workers' needs are reduced only to what happens during the sex transaction; it ignores the rest of our lives outside the sex trade. By advancing this myth of male demand and sex workers being powerlessly enslaved in catering to it, the media and politicians fixate on the power of male desire more than sex workers ever do.

This is the problem with outsiders to the sex trade attempting to control it. People who have such limited experience of the sex trade are left governing with their fears. Worse, we know from the example of former New York Governor Eliot Spitzer that elected officials may have another source of sex trade expertise to draw on: their own patronage. When they base their campaigning not on the reality of the sex trade, but on their fantasies, it is sex workers who most suffer.

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Cannonmountain

23 September 2011 5:22PM

This article says it all eloquently and correctly.

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**C**



JenniferAbel

23 September 2011 5:27PM

I've never understood why so many people believe sex, alone among all forms of human interaction, spawns some malignant magic whenever money changes hands.

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rationalistx

23 September 2011 5:29PM

An experiment was once performed in Germany, where one hundred prostitutes were taken off the streets, given food, accommodation and employment, but after six months over three quarters of them had voluntarily returned to their previous life.

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pintofplutonium

23 September 2011 5:32PM

Maybe these men are just desperate. A problem Ashton Kutcher probably hasn't experienced.

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primusinterspares

23 September 2011 5:36PM

JenniferAbel has it right.

I would add that this emphasis on sex and sexuality as being unique forms of human

interaction is endemic in some strands of feminism which seek to control (and, ironically given their obsession with rape and sexual crime, coerce) men and women's natural sexuality.

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[JenJen2](#)

23 September 2011 5:36PM

A great piece, thanks. Sex work has always been with us and the truth is that it probably always will be.

Admitting this is not the same as denying that there are elements of exploitation in the sex trade as it currently exists, or condoning them. And certainly whatever can be done to tackle such exploitation should be done; but calls for a flat-out abolition of prostitution do nothing to tackle this reality. It's much simpler to adopt a one-size-fits-all ideology than to attempt to address complex social issues.

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[savale](#)

23 September 2011 5:39PM

there is one constant: buyers are not buying people

That is not a "constant". There is at least some prostitution in which women, girls and boys are enslaved against their will and are sold by others.

Defend the part of the sex trade that you agree with by all means, but do not attempt to airbrush out of it the nasty stuff that goes on. You might as well go around pretending that all cocaine meets 'Fair Trade' kitemark standards in its production.

When they claim that men can buy us, they rob us of our power and our choices.

Do you sell sex yourself? This seems to suggest that you do, but your profile only describes you as a writer. It would be helpful to have this clarified.

The demand for the sex trade lies in the demands of childcare, loan officers, debt collectors, landlords and dependant family members – in short, the demands most working people struggle to meet.

There are wage slaves doing multiple cleaning jobs, or subminimum wage work under gang maasters, that are stuck in the same bind. This is hardly proof of a free and fair choice for those in the sex trade is it? You are just identifying those in the sex trade with other people who are also being exploited.

You also overlook those for who 'the demand of the sex trade' lies in the demands of addiction.

And once again you overlook those who have been forcibly enslaved. Why is being tricked into travelling from Albania, then kept under lock and key between clients who rape you in some grim room in London any different to being kept in an Austrian cellar by some nut and raped regularly? Just because this may not be the mainstream of

prostitution, you cannot and must not ignore it. You cannot and must not ignore those victims.

I am prepared to accept that free choice exists for some in the sex trade, but you should not be accusing your opponenets of myth -making with their black and white stance when you are doing the same yourself.

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[JenJen2](#)

23 September 2011 5:40PM

**primusinterspares**

this emphasis on sex and sexuality as being unique forms of human interaction is endemic in some strands of feminism which seek to control (and, ironically given their obsession with rape and sexual crime, coerce) men and women's natural sexuality.

True, but this should not be over-stated; I would say that anti-prostitution feminism is certainly on the wane, along with anti-porn and anti-stripping feminism. And I think people forget (or like to ignore) that many feminists (usually the less sensationalist ones who don't provide good sound bites) will have different and sometimes conflicting views on all three.

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[JenniferAbel](#)

23 September 2011 5:43PM

**savale**

*there is one constant: buyers are not buying people*

That is not a "constant". There is at least some prostitution in which women, girls and boys are enslaved against their will and are sold by others.

There are also some farms and plantations, even today, where farm workers are enslaved against their will, bought and sold, and forced to work in appalling conditions for no pay. But the way to eradicate such evil is to speak out against *slavery*, not against agricultural workers who charge money for their services.

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[savale](#)

23 September 2011 5:43PM

**@primusinterspares**

I would add that this emphasis on sex and sexuality as being unique forms of human

interaction is endemic in some strands of feminism which seek to control (and, ironically given their obsession with rape and sexual crime, coerce) men and women's natural sexuality.

That's rather odd primus, as the feminist literature I have read is generally concerned with sexual liberation, which in part includes liberating sex from the limited, and often negative, version of it presented in pornography.

There's plenty of good cause for that old slogan: feminists have better sex!

Which feminists do you mean? Can you give any citations?

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[CongestionCharge](#)

23 September 2011 5:44PM

It is an article of faith in the Guardian that women only engage in prostitution due to poverty, discrimination and threats of violence. Nothing will change their mind, but well done for trying.

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[MrGrumps](#)

23 September 2011 5:44PM

JenniferAbel: Maybe it's because some people believe that sex is something to be shared with someone special who you have a deep connection with, and the inclusion of money changing hands undermines this? Although at the same time you can have a casual sexual encounter and that being fine too. It's a funny one.

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[Phud](#)

23 September 2011 5:45PM

I've never understood why so many people believe sex, alone among all forms of human interaction, spawns some malignant magic whenever money changes hands.

Because organised religion has screwed us all up to such an extent that a mundane bodily function has become more of a threat to mankind than war and cancer.

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[Arapas](#)

23 September 2011 5:47PM

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[zaphthecrap](#)

23 September 2011 5:47PM

Is there an industry that in some form or other around the world that does not enslave its victims?

Picking on the sex industry conveniently deflects attention from many other forms of exploitation and enslavement.

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[savale](#)

23 September 2011 5:49PM

@JenniferAbel

There are also some farms and plantations, even today, where farm workers are enslaved against their will, bought and sold, and forced to work in appalling conditions for no pay. But the way to eradicate such evil is to speak out against slavery, not against agricultural workers who charge money for their services.

This presumes that the causes are not inherent in prevailing social and economic structures.

Just as Marx did not simply speak out against slavery, but spoke out against the whole social and economic structures of capitalism, so feminists speak out against the structures involved in the production of gender, sexual economy and related power hierarchies.

If you don't seek that kind of sophisticated understanding then all you have is a motherhood and apple pie campaign that everyone agrees with, but that changes nothing.

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[JenJen2](#)

23 September 2011 5:49PM

**savale**

And once again you overlook those who have been forcibly enslaved. Why is being tricked into travelling from Albania, then kept under lock and key between clients who rape you in some grim room in London any different to being kept in an Austrian cellar by some nut and raped regularly? Just because this may not be the mainstream of prostitution, you cannot and must not ignore it. You cannot and must not ignore those victims.

I think the point that Grant is trying to make is that those calling for the flat-out

abolition of prostitution are not addressing these issues either. Exploitation undoubtedly exists within the sex trade; as you yourself pointed out, it also exists in many other spheres of work. But we don't abolish cleaning positions because some doing these jobs are being exploited; instead we try to create sensible legislation that will end the exploitation rather than the job itself.

Moreover, casting moral and ideological judgements against prostitution as a whole will not tackle these issues. The people exploiting vulnerable individuals will not stop doing so because of a celebrity campaign; they don't care enough about social attitudes or conventional morality (which is already pretty firmly negative towards prostitution) as it is. More needs to be done to protect individuals, and less on making generalised ideological judgement.

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[AllyF](#)

23 September 2011 5:51PM

When politicians, social service providers and celebrity philanthropists insist that sex workers are selling ourselves, they engage in the same kind of dehumanisation that they claim johns do to us. When they claim that men can buy us, they rob us of our power and our choices.

Excellent and important point, and excellent article.

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[stomachtrouble](#)

23 September 2011 5:51PM

The incidence of drug addiction/usage among prostitutes is high if any of the stats are to be believed. Doesn't suggest that they are enjoying their lives that much, or have that much 'power'. The other curious omission in this piece is the impact of dysfunctional family background, sexual abuse, neglect, etc., on the 'choice' of prostitution as a employment. It isn't normal or healthy for any person, male or female, to submit to being effectively raped several dozen times a day. The world is a bit more psychologically and emotionally complex than this piece recognises.

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[magicmidget](#)

23 September 2011 5:53PM

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[inn1t](#)

23 September 2011 5:53PM

JenniferAbel

23 September 2011 5:27PM

I've never understood why so many people believe sex, alone among all forms of human interaction, spawns some malignant magic whenever money changes hands.

Not just sex. There's also housework and child-rearing.

I was born just after WW2, so my mother found herself obliged to raise my brother and I herself.

As far as I can discover, every other child in the family has for the last hundred and fifty years been raised by staff employed for that purpose. But even my mother had a cleaner. I don't draw water from the well, grow any of my own food, or collect firewood from the forest. What's so special about sweeping carpets, rearing children and doing the ironing?

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[expatstu](#)

23 September 2011 5:53PM

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[GrayArea](#)

23 September 2011 5:54PM

They claim that the way to end exploitation in the sex trade is to "end demand" for the sex trade – that is, end men's desire for sex they can pay for. The notion that men's desire to buy actual people fuels the sex trade has gone so mainstream that when aspiring celebrity philanthropist Ashton Kutcher launched a public service campaign against prostitution this year, he called it "Real Men Don't Buy Girls".

When politicians, social service providers and celebrity philanthropists insist that sex workers are selling ourselves, they engage in the same kind of dehumanisation that they claim johns do to us.

I don't know, I think you're making too much of the distinction between 'buying sex' and 'buying girls'. Is it really plausible that people *think* they are buying people - in the semi-literal sense you continually use? Isn't it more likely that it's a turn of phrase?

Surely the objection to prostitution has to put in terms of the power relationship between the participants to the transaction (two, or more).

1) At one end of the scale, I see little reason why anyone should object (or why it should matter if they object) to a woman secure and free in her personal choice to exchange sex for money in safe circumstances *precisely because* the man (or pimp) has no power to compel her.

2) At the other end, of course, there is the woman or girl literally enslaved - and who is

in completely and undeniably objectionable position, with no power at all.

As we move from 1) to 2), it seems to me at least that the objections become compelling in virtue of the woman's relative power.

And isn't that what is meant by "real men don't buy girls"? Real men shouldn't want to have sex with someone who does it just because they have to. We don't have to think that is always true - see 1) - to agree with the sentiment.

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[WestTexan](#)

23 September 2011 5:57PM

@ JenniferAbel

I agree.

It seems like when it comes to matters of human sexuality, we have embraced Classical ideology which ended with a dualism in which it saw the universe as an evil material world opposed to a good spiritual sphere.

So sex and marriage can't be about money, politics or survival, it has to be about love and romance.

Nothing wrong with the romantics, but a world without money, politics and survival seems to be incomplete and bowdlerized, and quite a departure from objective reality.

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[JenJen2](#)

23 September 2011 5:57PM

**stomachtrouble**

It isn't normal or healthy for any person, male or female, to submit to being effectively raped several dozen times a day.

I do not think it is particularly helpful to describe all prostitution in this manner. It is perfectly possible for a prostitute to be raped, of course, but in the course of a more typical transaction the individual selling will have given their consent.

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[lucidator](#)

23 September 2011 5:57PM

Damn good piece. Anyone with a little experience and compassion knows that the mismatch in libido between couples is a basic problem in relationships. What do you expect a man whose partner's libido has been quiet for years to do? (a) spend the rest of his life wanking (b) throw away his relationship and maybe family life in the vain hope

that a younger partner will solve the problem or (c) occasionally visit a woman who is clearly independent and offering sex, probably via the internet? This won't stop him being a loving partner -- quite the opposite in fact, as it will remove a source of resentment. Together with economic differences, this is why prostitution will always be around. Who cares if money changes hands? It's not a crime.

Distaste for sex-with-money is just bourgeois priggishness, and that goes for feminists too. Of course, coercion of women for sex is criminal and the police should crack down, but the solution is absolutely not to try to stamp out male desire for sex. What, forever? It's laughable, and just anti-biology stupidity.

Feminist or fundamentalist attempts to ban sexuality are really creepy. We should be as liberal as we can be and leave people alone provided there is no harm done. If anything, change the law the other way: allow women to work together and protect each other.

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[behemot](#)

23 September 2011 5:58PM

Combination of sex and trade is morally repugnant and should not be encouraged. In fact everything should be done to stop it.

The fact that this young woman does not see that is very worrying. We are heading towards trivializing of human relations and into making them a commodity. That is a mentally unhealthy state of affairs and will cause endless pain and psychological trauma to countless people. No one who buys sex should consider himself normal. And no one who sells sex can trust to be psychologically normal after that.

Sex should not be combined with the word work, either. Sex should never become work. It is essentially a play activity. Making it work will kill its essential pleasure nature and make it into something destructive. Buying sex is also destructive to the psyche of the buyer and it leads into hatred of women and contempt for them. For this reason women who do not do it have right to demand from the ones who do that they stop.

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[primusinterspares](#)

23 September 2011 5:58PM

JenJen2

Hence-

some strands of feminism

However, it does seem that there is something about heterosexual sex and the image of penetration in particular which is "problematic" (as they love to say) for *many* (by no means all) of the feminist authors I have read. The frequency of words like "phallocracy" illustrate this point rather well.

The ubiquitous slogan "rape isn't about sex, it's about power" also shows the problems *some* feminists have historically had in dealing with sex and human sexuality in their

complexity. Sure rape is about power, but sex is often about power too, and power can be about sex. Most sex is good, some is bad, and sometimes what looks really bad is actually really good (e.g. stringing somebody up and whipping them could either be the cruelest torture or consensual S&M springing from a deep trust and mutual respect).\*

You're right that these issues have many feminist (and non-feminist) advocates, but they certainly get less air-time on places like CiF compared to your Julie Bindels.

\*On the other hand, by bringing to light issues such as marital rape, some feminists have equally shown how normality can conceal the worst type of abuses, so it's not all negative from me.

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[AllyF](#)

23 September 2011 5:59PM

**GrayArea**

Isn't it more likely that its a turn of phrase?.

Of course it is a turn of phrase. The point is that it is an emotive rhetorical trick that serves to create a false impression of the issue and dehumanises those involved and robs them of their agency.

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[Wanchai](#)

23 September 2011 6:00PM

**@savale** well put. China is evidence you can't suppress prostitution. It was one of the first and probably the fastest growing market to emerge when Deng Xiao Peng took the brakes off the market economy. It is now an almost obligatory part of business hospitality and it has given many chinese women the opportunity of wealth and independence but it has also seen the markets for the buying and selling of girls and women re emerge, as well as international trafficking. It is a significant segment of the activities of the gangsters who have also reemerged as a powerful force in Chinese Society.

This is a service industry, not a charitable mission, and a largely unregulated one at that and one in which women can be commodities as well as empowered, and which provides considerable opportunity for profit to the unscrupulous . As you say you need to ensure the focus remains on the need to tackle the appalling abuses of human rights that go on in the industry.

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[behemot](#)

23 September 2011 6:01PM

lucidator

What do you expect a man whose partner's libido has been quiet for years to do?

It's not my business really -why should I solve his problems- but now that we're at it how about growing up?

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[lucidator](#)

23 September 2011 6:03PM

@Savale

*feminists speak out against the structures involved in the production of gender, sexual economy and related power hierarchies.*

I'm sorry but this is not *sophisticated thinking* at all. It just academic abstraction that comes nowhere near understanding the reality of sex and relationships, as most ex-feminists realize when they leave academia and start living.

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[JenJen2](#)

23 September 2011 6:12PM

**behemot**

**We are heading towards trivializing of human relations and into making them a commodity.**

**But prostitution, "the oldest profession" is hardly a new phenomena.**

**You're talking about a form of work and trade that has existed for centuries, frequently at times of far greater spiritual dedication and religiosity than today. Renaissance Italy, for example. Moreover, if you reduce prostitution to an exchange of a physical action for material goods or the means of survival, many historians have postulated that far more women have over the centuries been involved in prostitution than is strictly comfortable to think about. I do think that our modern attitudes towards sex and personal relationships are frequently portrayed in the media as trivial, commercialised and sometimes misogynist, but prostitution cannot be blamed for this; even if exploitative prostitution is on the rise (and that's the subject of another article altogether), that would be a symptom, rather than a cause of what you describe.**

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[JenJen2](#)

23 September 2011 6:13PM

Arggh, apologies for the terrible formatting above. That'll teach me not to use the preview button!

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[primusinterspares](#)

23 September 2011 6:15PM

savale

That's rather odd primus, as the feminist literature I have read is generally concerned with sexual liberation, which in part includes liberating sex from the limited, and often negative, version of it presented in pornography.

There's plenty of good cause for that old slogan: feminists have better sex!

Which feminists do you mean? Can you give any citations?

Are you kidding me? Google "sex-negative" and "sex-positive" feminism. Or Catherine MacKinnon. If you don't believe that many feminists hold these beliefs I'd suggest you've been reading quite narrowly. Note: some/many, not all, nor necessarily a majority.

This strand was definitely most powerful in the 1980s and 1990s, but its effects are still strong today. Example: Mary Koss's study for Ms. Magazine which found that 1 in 4 college women in the US were raped. She arrived at that statistic by describing sexual encounters as rape which the women surveyed themselves believed to be consensual. This statistic, which attempts to lump complicated and vague areas of human sexuality under the rubric of man raping woman in order to make a political point, is commonly sold as a fact.

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[kizbot](#)

23 September 2011 6:16PM

JenniferAbel: Maybe it's because some people believe that sex is something to be shared with someone special who you have a deep connection with, and the inclusion of money changing hands undermines this?

That's fine when people are applying it to their own personal lives but why do people feel they should have the right to apply those morals to others?

What consenting adults do with their own bodies should be for them to choose.

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[Ghostworld](#)

23 September 2011 6:17PM

behemot

23 September 2011 6:01PM

lucidator

What do you expect a man whose partner's libido has been quiet for years to do?

It's not my business really -why should I solve his problems- but now that we're at it how about growing up?

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-----  
As regular as clockwork with your responses behemot

Recommend? (3)

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[JenniferAbel](#)

23 September 2011 6:17PM

**stomachtrouble**

The incidence of drug addiction/usage among prostitutes is high if any of the stats are to be believed.

The incidence of drug and alcohol abuse is also pretty high (pun intended) among professional actors and musicians, if any of the stats (or tabloids) are to be believed. So the solution is -- what? Make it illegal for entertainers to be paid for their services?

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[Ghostworld](#)

23 September 2011 6:19PM

JenniferAbel

23 September 2011 6:17PM

stomachtrouble

The incidence of drug addiction/usage among prostitutes is high if any of the stats are to be believed.

The incidence of drug and alcohol abuse is also pretty high (pun intended) among professional actors and musicians, if any of the stats (or tabloids) are to be believed. So the solution is -- what? Make it illegal for entertainers to be paid for their services?

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Fantastic retort

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[behemot](#)

23 September 2011 6:21PM

When politicians, social service providers and celebrity philanthropists insist that sex workers are selling ourselves, they engage in the same kind of dehumanisation that they claim johns do to us. When they claim that men can buy us, they rob us of our power and our choices.

Rubbish. When you start to sell sex, you rob yourself of power and agency. When you sell sex, you are in fact selling a little piece of your humanity. It is not that they are taking it-- it's that you're letting them have it. There is no easy way out. Stop doing it.

These **so-called** sex positive feminists are doing a great disfavour to the ones they are supposedly defending. By telling them their solutions are alright they encourage them in self-destruction and egg her on to pretend everything is fine, when things are drastically wrong. It is not **sex-positive** to foster an attitude to sex in which prostitution is the normal thing to do. I cannot understand these women's course of action. They have been swayed by the criticism of couple of bordello regulars and are now bending over backwards not to be called sex-negative. Meanwhile, they are harming the women they're supposed to be helping. Telling them the truth and treating them as human beings responsible of their own fate would be kinder.

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[Ghostworld](#)

23 September 2011 6:22PM

behemot

23 September 2011 5:58PM

Buying sex is also destructive to the psyche of the buyer and it leads into hatred of women and contempt for them. For this reason women who do not do it have right to demand from the ones who do that they stop.

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Really? Seriously?.....Any interesting ( and credible ) linkys to that ?

Does this also apply to women who buy sex?

A right to demand?

Recommend? (13)

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[RichieRich66](#)

23 September 2011 6:23PM

[Jennifer Abel](#) writes

I've never **understood** why so many people believe sex, alone among all forms of human interaction, spawns some malignant magic whenever money changes hands. First, sex is not the only thing that some people object to being bought and sold. Body parts, votes and blood are examples of other things some regard as not suitable for market exchange. Second, whilst one may not agree with arguments as to why certain things should not be subject to market exchange, these arguments are not difficult to **understand** when there is a large and accessible literature on "commodification" - see [here](#) for one example.

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[kizbot](#)

23 September 2011 6:23PM

Do we have a new born?

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[BackAndToTheLeftist](#)

23 September 2011 6:25PM

behemot;

Combination of sex and trade is morally repugnant and should not be encouraged. In fact everything should be done to stop it.

The fact that this young woman does not see that is very worrying. We are heading towards trivializing of human relations and into making them a commodity. That is a mentally unhealthy state of affairs and will cause endless pain and psychological trauma to countless people. No one who buys sex should consider himself normal. And no one who sells sex can trust to be psychologically normal after that.

Sex should not be combined with the word work, either. Sex should never become work.

It is essentially a play activity. Making it work will kill its essential pleasure nature and make it into something destructive. Buying sex is also destructive to the psyche of the buyer and it leads into hatred of women and contempt for them. For this reason women who do not do it have right to demand from the ones who do that they stop.

Well that's your opinion. My experience is that you are wrong.

A mentally unhealthy state of affairs? Why exactly? People have sex. In my experience its people like you who try to turn it into something else who have the problem.

No one who buys sex should consider himself normal. Love the way you focus on one gender. Here is some news for you. Women buy sex as well.

You are not going to stop people having sex. People have tried plenty of times before.

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[JenniferAbel](#)

23 September 2011 6:26PM

**behemot**

Sex should not be combined with the word work, either. Sex should never become work. It is esentially a play activity. Making it work will kill its essential pleasure nature and make it into something destructive.

I feel much the same way about writing: telling jokes on my blog or in discussion fora with my friends is lots of fun, but writing professionally can often be the biggest pain in my ass since the invention of the hemorrhoid: I have to worry about deadlines, word counts, what the editor will and won't allow in print; I have to do actual verifiable research rather than merely say "I remember this thing I read once, many years ago" ... making writing work kills its essential pleasure nature and makes it into something destructive. WE MUST OUTLAW PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM. Writing for free is fine, but writers-for-pay must be arrested and imprisoned to protect us from brutal editorial exploitation and a life of joyless words.

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[behemot](#)

23 September 2011 6:27PM

But prostitution, "the oldest profession" is hardly a new phenomena.

But it has never been considered normal or socially acceptable - but now it seems feminists are doing that! Great!

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[KenBarlow](#)

23 September 2011 6:28PM

This comment was removed by a moderator because it didn't abide by our [community standards](#). Replies may also be deleted. For more detail see [our FAQs](#).



[JenJen2](#)

23 September 2011 6:28PM

**behemot**

It is not sex-positive to foster an attitude to sex in which prostitution is the normal thing

to do.

I don't think anyone is trying to do this.

What they are trying to do instead is end the stigmatising of women who make a free and informed decision to exchange sex for money. That is not the same as normalising it.

When you start to sell sex, you rob yourself of power and agency. When you sell sex, you are in fact selling a little piece of your humanity.

But surely, for this to be the case, you have to link a woman's power, agency, and humanity as heavily or exclusively reliant on her sexuality? Surely this is in opposition to the aims of feminism, which has struggled for decades to get women to be seen as more than sexual objects and the sum of what she's packing down below?

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[behemot](#)

23 September 2011 6:31PM

Jennifer Abel

Good try but, sex is more intimate than writing; more, sexuality is an intrinsic part of human personality, something that cannot be cut out. Selling you sexlife is like selling an arm or a leg or a kidney--do you find that acceptable?

Recommend? (17)

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[hawkwoman](#)

23 September 2011 6:35PM

It seems to me that the author of this article has a vested financial interest in presenting the sex worker as an independent woman making no different a choice than someone who chooses to get an MBA or go into journalism.

The "independent" sex worker is indeed filling a market need in a service industry, but the fact is, a high percentage of the workers in that industry come from abusive childhoods, either are introduced to drugs at an early age by men on the lookout for young vulnerable girls fleeing home, and are often at risk of violence by their johns as well as their pimps.

No one is seeking so absurd and unrealistic goal as ending desire for emotionally detached sex that is simply a financial transaction. The problem is, is it really all that simple?

It's naive to suppose that money for sex is no different than money for a quart of milk or an oil change for the car, just as it is to suppose that the (overwhelmingly male) desire for bought sex is going to go away.

I am against the criminalization of prostitution, but the college girl making ends meet by serving as a high-priced evening "escort" for a couple of years is the exception. The more common reality is the 12 year old runaway snapped up at the bus station, gang-raped, and then shot full of heroin to keep her addicted and inline.

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