

# Norma Jean Almodovar

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Norma Jean Almodovar is a well known and highly respected international sex worker rights activist and is a popular speaker and published author, including articles in law journals and academic publications. She is currently engaged in researched for a book which exposes the unfortunate and harmful consequences of arbitrary enforcement of prostitution laws.

From 1972 to 1982, she was a civilian employee of the Los Angeles Police Department, working as a traffic officer primarily in the Hollywood Division. There she encountered serious police abuse and corruption which she documented in her autobiography, *Cop to Call Girl* (1993- Simon and Schuster). In 1982 she was involved in an on-duty traffic accident, and being disillusioned by the corruption and societal apathy toward the victims of corruption, she decided not to return to work in any capacity with the LAPD. Instead, she chose to become a call girl, a career that would both give her the financial base and the publicity to launch her crusade against police corruption, particularly when it involved prostitutes.

Unfortunately, she incurred the wrath of the LAPD and Daryl Gates when it became known that she was writing an expose of the LAPD, and as a result, she was charged with one count of pandering, a felony, and was ultimately incarcerated for 18 months. During her incarceration, she was the subject of a "60 Minutes" interview with Ed Bradley, who concluded that she was in prison for no other reason than that she was writing a book about the police. That book, her autobiography, was finally published after the police abuse was exposed in the beating of Rodney King, thanks to a video taken by a bystander, George Holliday.

She had never been in trouble prior to her 1983 arrest and was never in trouble again after her release. Upon her release from prison, she continued to fight for the rights of sex workers and lived a life above reproach. On September 16, 2010, she was granted a Certificate of Rehabilitation.

## Organizational Experience

### COYOTE Southern California

1983- present

- She has been the executive director of COYOTE Los Angeles/ Southern California since 1983. COYOTE is an internationally recognized sex worker rights organization.
- In that capacity, she was an NGO delegate to the 1995 UN Women's Conference in Beijing, where she and four fellow sex worker rights activists were successful in lobbying for a significant change in a paragraph of the Platform for Action which completely altered the meaning of the paragraph. By inserting the word "forced" before the statement relating to prostitution and pornography, the new paragraph reflected the reality of the lives of sex workers, the majority of whom are not forced into either prostitution or pornography, and allowed for a more clear direction for UN member countries to take on this issue and implement this change into current prostitution laws.
- Upon her return from China, she was invited to co-chair and co-organize the 1997 International Conference on Prostitution (ICOP) with California State University, Northridge. Due to her national and international contacts in the sex worker rights movement, the conference brought together sex workers, sex worker rights activists, researchers and academics in an unprecedented event that laid the groundwork for other sex worker rights organizations to sponsor mixed (sex workers and academics) conferences.

### ISWFACE

August 1997- present

- After the 1997 conference, Norma Jean and fellow retired sex worker Steve Greenberg discussed the need for a non profit organization run by and for sex workers as a way to utilize the academic research on sex work

that would actually benefit sex workers rather than sit on dusty shelves after the research was published. Additionally, they wanted to sponsor a permanent forum for sex workers to be able to exhibit their artwork, documentaries, books and other creative efforts. Thus, the 501 (c) 3 non profit International Sex Worker Foundation for Art, Culture and Education (ISWFACE) was established.

- The goal of the organization was to serve as an educational resource center for serious research and other information about prostitution and sex work in order to provide the public with access to these academic reports and studies; to foster, perpetuate and preserve an appreciation of the art and culture created by and about sex workers; and to contribute or otherwise assist corporations, organizations and institutions in the fields of health care, law enforcement and education through the dissemination of accurate, timely information relating to this important social and political issue.
- Since its inception, ISWFACE has sponsored and co-sponsored a number of sex worker cultural events which has allowed the public to interact with sex workers in a non work and therefore non threatening environment. By promoting the creative efforts of sex workers, it is our objective to engage the public in a dialogue with sex workers so that the public becomes aware of the harm done to sex workers as a consequence of the enforcement of bad laws, and eventually results in a change in the laws so that resources are available to help those who are truly in need of assistance.

## Speaking Engagements and Lectures

Norma Jean Almodovar has been an invited speaker to numerous conferences, colleges and universities as well as judicial forums and was **the only sex worker invited by former US Surgeon General David Satcher to participate in the 2000 Conference on Promoting Responsible Sexual Behavior in Arlington, VA.** She was a presenter at **the 1999 AIDS Conference in Geneva, as well as a keynote speaker at a recent conference in Las Vegas at which Dr. Joycelyn Elders was also a presenter.** She has been a guest on thousands of radio and television shows, and the subject of a "60 Minutes" piece, interviewed by the late Ed Bradley during her incarceration in 1988-1989 for writing a book critical of the Los Angeles police.

The following list are a few of her many, many lectures or conferences in which she was an invited speaker/presenter. There are a number of colleges and universities at which she lectures annually.\*

- **University of California Riverside** **April 27, 2010**  
Professor Amalia Cabezas- Labor Studies program- 'Decriminalizing sex work'
- **American Medical Students Annual Conference** **March 11, 2010**  
At the Disneyland Hotel, Anaheim- 'Making Sex Work Safe'
- **Pomona College** **March 3, 2010**  
Professor Ralph Bolton- Human Sexuality Class- 'What is sex work?'
- **Judicial Forum Think Tank "Resources for Teenagers Involved in Prostitution."** **February 11, 2010**  
Judge Donna Quigley Groman- Alternatives to incarceration for Juvenile Prostitutes
- **California State University, Long Beach** **February 11, 2010**  
Sex Positive Week sponsored by Feminist Organization Reclaiming Consciousness and Equality - 'Sex Work and Feminism'
- **Sex and the City- Travel class from New York** **January 6, 2010**  
State University of New York at Potsdam - class of 30 in NJ home - "Making Sex Work Safe"

\* In 2007, her husband became disabled and by 2010 could no longer be left alone. She is no longer able to travel to speak at conferences or give lectures at colleges and universities. However she does occasionally give Zoom lectures.

## Published Articles and Books

In addition to her 1993 autobiography, Norma Jean has published numerous articles and book chapters through the years as a sex worker rights activist. She has been invited to contribute to numerous law journals which publish special editions on women's issues. In the 2003 letter of invitation to submit an article to the Texas Journal of Women and the Law, the Solicitations Director wrote "The Texas Journal of Women and the Law is announcing its 2004 Call for Papers. *Given your impressive standing the field of legal scholarship, we would like to include you in our efforts.*" Unfortunately her time constraints working on her own projects give her little opportunity to contribute to every publication which solicits material from her.

The list below represents but a few of those articles and book chapters and includes her yet unpublished book:

### **Cop to Call Girl- Why I Left the LAPD to Make an Honest Living as a Beverly Hills Prostitute**

**Simon and Schuster, 1993**

- A book that had previously received 250 rejections due to publishers' fear of retaliation by law enforcement agencies before the Rodney King beating, finally found a willing publisher in Simon and Schuster, which had issued four rejection letters before the exposure of the LAPD brutality. This was a book that cost the author 7 years of her life in litigation, pain, stress and horror, from the time of her arrest in 1983 until the end of her parole in 1990.

### **Cops, Hos, Preachers and Politicos- Commercial Sex Scandals in America**

**Unpublished Manuscript**

- From the time prostitution was criminalized to the present, the vagueness of the laws has allowed for selective and arbitrary enforcement, resulting in corruption and hypocrisy. On occasion high profile culprits are caught and scandals have resulted. Usually the culprit escapes punishment while the prostitute spends time behind bars. This book examines the numerous scandals involving, among others, law enforcement agents, judges, mayors, presidents, governors, preachers, priests, sports personalities and TV and movie stars - all caught with their pants down in a 'do as we say and not as we do' moment. As late night TV personality Jay Leno so succinctly asked Hugh Grant, "*What were you thinking?*"

### **The Consequences of Arbitrary and Selective Enforcement of Prostitution Laws**

**WAGADU, 2011**

- Examines the serious and hopefully unintended consequences of arbitrary and selective enforcement of laws prohibiting prostitution, where police agents are given opportunities to be intimate with suspected prostitutes and are allowed to pick and choose which 'victims' they will arrest.

### **Porn Stars, Radical Feminists, Cops and Outlaw Whores- The Battle Between Feminist Theory and Reality, Free Speech and Free Spirits**

**Prostitution and Pornography Edited by Jessica Spector, Stanford University Press, 2006**

- Porn and prostitution- one is legal, the other is a crime- how this creates harm to those left outside the protection of the law and allows for abuse. The identical activity treated differently by society and law enforcement has caused a rift between sex worker rights activists who are fighting for those still considered outlaws, and left an already vulnerable population even more vulnerable.

### **For Their Own Good: The Results of Prostitution Laws as Enforced by Cops, Politicians and Judges**

**Hastings Womens Law Journal Volume 10, No. 1 Winter, 1999**

- Bad laws make bad cops: while most cops really are honest and want to do the right thing, the laws which allow for abuse tend to create abuse. But police are not the only ones who take advantage of these laws- judges and politicians also use the laws to extort sexual favors from prostitutes. So, even if the intent of the law is to protect women from exploitation, the result of the laws is to cause harm to those supposedly being exploited by their work.

## Working It

**Whores and Other Feminists, Routledge 1997**

- Using the media to make our (politically incorrect) opinions known.

## Cop, Call Girl and COYOTE Activist

**How I Got Into Sex, Prometheus Books 1997**

- The metamorphosis of a once highly religious, Philadelphia College of the Bible bound woman who left behind her dream of becoming a missionary to the 'heathens' in Puerto Rico, moved to California and joined the Los Angeles Police Department, filled with a sense of righteousness and purpose- to enforce the law in a lawless society, and finally, to outspoken 'outlaw' whore who saw the reality of enforcement of laws prohibiting consensual adult behavior and made it her crusade to expose the abuse and corruption that such laws engender.

**"How to Build a Hookers Army: Essays on Sex Work and Survival"  
Feminist Press 2021**

"Undercover Agent" Chapter in anthology from Feminist Press: edited by Natalie West, with Tina Horn  
Uncovering the unsavory practices of vice cops to have sex with suspected prostitutes before making an arrest. Practices also allow "civic minded men" to go "undercover" and get paid to have sex with a suspected prostitute so cops can make an arrest.

## Talk Show Appearances and Interviews:

Since her departure from the LAPD in 1982, Norma Jean Almodovar has been a guest on over twenty five hundred radio and television shows around the world and been interviewed by everyone from Larry King to Ed Bradley. The following is a list of some of her most memorable interviews:

- THE O'REILLY FACTOR 2007
- HISTORY OF PROSTITUTION - DISCOVERY CHANNEL 2000
- A&E- PROSTITUTION IN AMERICA 2000
- SEX DRUGS AND CONSENTING ADULTS ABC 20/20 with John Stossel 7/98
- VHI-FASHION TV- What is ISWFACE 3/98
- COCHRAN AND COMPANY- cable-July 29 1997
- CNN- Crossfire cable National 5/16/97
- A&E- Documentary Prost. April 1997
- GERALDO SHOW TV 2/97
- CNN- Burden of Proof cable National 8/30/96
- GERALDO SHOW National TV 8/21/96
- CNBC REAL PERSONAL Bob Berkowitz 12/5/95
- NACHTSHOW German Variety show 10/11/95 (Hamburg, Germany)
- AM PHILADELPHIA WPVI TV Phil. PA. 12/2/94
- A&E AMERICAN JUSTICE cable TV 10/19/94
- FOX DENNIS PRAGER SHOW TV 9/29/94
- AMERICA'S TALKING cable 9/8/94
- BBC TV Glasgow, Scotland 11/3/93
- FLASH POINT Daryl Gates Gloria Allred Loc-LA Ch 9 10/17/93
- POLICE BEAT TV Nat-Canada 10/2/93

- 0137- PREMIERE Hamburg, Germany 9/8/93
- GOOD MORNING AMERICA (ABC) TV 8/9/93
- GOOD DAY LA (FOX) TV local. 8/11/93
- KCAL Crosstalk(ch 9) TV local. 8/6/93
- E-Entertainment (cable) TV Nat. 8/16/93
- AM PHILADELPHIA (ABC) TV local. 8/13/93
- CNN CABLE NEWS national TV 8/9/93
- INSIDE EDITION national TV 8/9/93
- HARD COPY TV National 5/3/93
- JOAN RIVERS TV national 5/4/93
- HBO World Ent. NEWS cable TV 5/93
- MONTEL WILLIAMS TV National 5/4/93
- KELLY & CO. WXTZ- TV Detroit 5/6/93
- THE LAW AND YOU Cable L.A. 3/20/91
- DONAHUE 11/21/89
- GERALDO 11/21/89
- A CURRENT AFFAIR . 6-28-89
- MORTON DOWNEY SHOW TV 5-16-89
- SALLY JESSIE RAPHAEL TV Syn. 2-23-89
- GOOD DAY SHOW TV Boston, Mass. 2-10-89
- A CURRENT AFFAIR FOX Network 2-6-89
- MORTON DOWNEY SHOW TV 5-23-88 (from prison)
- 60 MINUTES Interview TV 2-28-88 (re-aired 9-25-88)
- DONAHUE SHOW National TV 8-7-87
- HEADLINES ON TRIAL NBC TV 6-7-87
- CNN cable SONYA FREEMAN SHOW TV 5-1-87
- CBS NIGHTWATCH 4-1-87
- JOAN RIVERS SHOW 4-2-87
- DONAHUE SHOW 3-9-87\*
- NBC NGHTLY NEWS TOM BROKAW 12-10-86
- KCBS TV MICHAEL JACKSON 12-29-86
- JOAN RIVERS SHOW 12-31-86
- OPRAH WINFREY SHOW 11-6-86
- JOAN RIVERS SHOW 11-13-86
- CANADIAN BROADCASTING CO. "The Democracy Project" PBS 1988
- PBS TV "LATENIGHT AMERICA" De, Mi. 10-85
- CNN LARRY KING LIVE (cable TV) 9-85
- NBC TV FREE FOR ALL L.A. Ca. 10-85
- TODAY SHOW TV Woman to Woman Seg. 9-85