

Border Thinking on Migration, Trafficking and Commercial Sex

from Laura Agustín

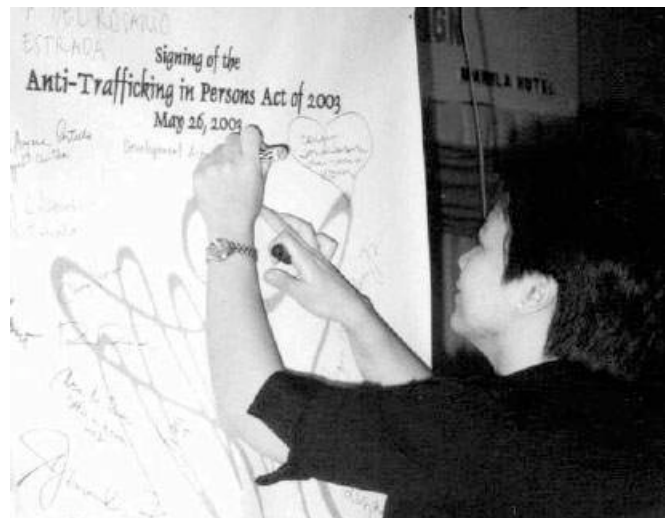
How 'Rescue' from trafficking yet again means police detention and rehabilitation: this time in the Philippines

20 July 2010 by [laura agustin](#) | [2 comments](#) | [print](#)

(<http://www.lauraagustin.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/signingactphil.jpg>)

The sequence of events goes like this:

1. US government issues annual report card threatening to cut off aid from countries that don't make the right efforts to combat trafficking
2. Threatened countries comply by passing legislation
3. And then instructing local police to carry out raids in order to 'rescue' victims
4. Police go to sex businesses, pick up all the workers and claim to have rescued them
5. Police say victims (sex workers) will be 'rehabilitated' via detention and forcible participation in an 'alternative work' programme, whether rescued people want this or not
6. Threatened national governments point to these actions to show US that they are fighting crime
7. US gives them a better grade on the next report card



Campaigners sign the Act (Photo: PMRW)

Problems? Well yes, several, including the overtly neocolonialist coercion. In the following story which pointedly uses the word *rescue*, the police try to blame foreign devils for the existence of sex businesses, make sure to point out that some of those rescued were 'only waitresses' (which perfectly shows what they think about prostitutes), and, most important, if compliance with US aims to 'convict' traffickers is what's needed, **how does detaining and forcibly rehabilitating 200 victims help?** What we've learned over and over is that some large number of the detained women do not want to be rescued, or not by the police, or not from sex work but possibly from poverty or the fear of disappointing their parents. I have unfortunately had to comment repeatedly on such stories, including recently on [Cambodia](#) (<http://www.lauraagustin.com/rescues-that-punish-those-theyre-meant-to-save-cambodia-again>). *There are other ways to help people.*

Anti-human trafficking agency rescues 200 women from Malate (<http://www.abs->