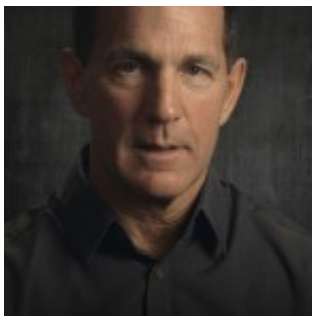


Did 8 Minutes Lie to Sex Workers?

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by suzyhooker on April 27, 2015 · 9 comments

Of all the professions to produce potential sex work interventionists, law enforcement and clergy are at the very top of the Unsuitable list. Behind those two are literally every single other profession, because sex work interventions are vile exercises in the hatred and shaming of sex working individuals and shouldn't exist.

Supposedly, women who want to leave sex work will be given help. From A&E's website: "*8 Minutes* follows Pastor Kevin Brown and his Lives Worth Saving team as they help sex workers and victims of sex trafficking leave their dangerous situations behind to start over." And how do they do that?

Last week, one woman, who goes by Kamylla, came forward on Twitter to hold the show's producers accountable for promising her assistance in exchange for her appearance on the show, then leaving her twisting in the wind when she was arrested soon after, having returned to work from economic necessity when they didn't provide the promised help in exiting the industry.

Kamylla received a call on her work number from the producers of the show, who immediately identified themselves as such (this is in contrast to the premise of the show, which implies that the women believe they are coming to a normal appointment, only to be met by Brown). She agreed to tape a segment for the show, in which she said she wanted help getting out of the business, and after the taping was told she'd soon hear back with more information and assistance.

She never heard back from them, and instead reached out herself, but no meaningful help was to come. Kamylla found herself broke and needing to work again. She posted an ad, using the same number the *8 Minutes* producers had contacted her on, and was arrested in a sting. Now she was broke, frightened, and facing criminal charges, and when she reached out for help from *8 Minutes*, Brown offered to pray for her.

In search of more practical support, she began to contact writers who had been critical of the show. Kamylla wrote to Dan Savage after seeing a mention of the program on *The Stranger's* blog, and Savage put her in touch with prominent Seattle sex worker activist Mistress Matisse. Matisse leapt into action and began soliciting donations from trusted friends to help Kamylla with her immediate crisis. Other members of the community soon followed: Domina Elle and Tara Burns helped create a website to tell her story. It's heartbreaking and heartwarming at the same time: where she was ill-used by television producers, the sex worker community stepped in to help her. Once Kamylla was ready to talk, her fundraiser went public.

Kamylla's own description of her experience in this Storify and the following excerpt from her website make it clear how little help she received in exchange for being fodder for reality TV:

The next day, no one called.

Days are passing, a week later still no call.

Now it's two weeks later and rent is way passed due, she trusted their word and therefore had not posted an ad. Now she's even deeper in the red. She decided to call the advocates to see what was going on. "No one has called you yet?" They said.

Let the buck passing begin. She is given a list of local resources that have nothing to do with the show or anyone participating in it. The resources turn out to be the same old exhausted resources and some were even discontinued all together! Some resources she couldn't access for one stipulation or another. The usual story- because services are few to none despite the many millions being given to various anti trafficking organizations. The money apparently goes towards 'raising awareness' rather than programs and services.

Frustrated and desperate she goes back online with an ad.

What happens next?

What happened next is that she was arrested. Kamylla speculates that using the same number the show's producers had might have endangered her, and reports have surfaced of at least one other arrest of a woman who had dealings with the show. She has warned other women who may have been in contact with *8 Minutes* to change the phone numbers and photos in their ads.

Following Kamylla's timeline on Twitter from the beginning is at once heartbreaking in revealing the damage that rescue missions do to sex workers facing hardship and instructive of how sex workers come to identify with our rights movement. While looking for help after appearing on *8 Minutes*, she came into contact with current and former sex workers who, despite coming from very different sex work experiences, immediately understood the dual burdens of stigma and financial need that Kamylla faced and sprung into action with a fundraiser and the creation of a social media campaign to highlight both her personal story and her immediate needs. She has since come out in enthusiastic praise of sex workers' rights within only a few weeks of encountering the movement.

Imagine if A&E had given even a fraction of the production costs to crowdfunding campaigns for sex workers, sex worker-run organizations, or even job training programs that would enable sex workers to enter the formal economy. Now imagine if state and local governments gave that kind of funding instead of supporting diversion programs and law enforcement imperatives that fail sex workers over and over again. Then imagine State Department funding research that addressed the problems of poverty, access, and discrimination that sex workers have repeatedly told government officials are at the root of many negative experiences of the sex industry. Kamylla's story is one that sits at the messy intersection of failed rescue ideologies, misguided and often violent law enforcement, the reality of profoundly unhappy sex work experiences, and a sex

worker rights' community that is at times removed from the realities of criminalization and survival sex work. But this community that anti sex work activists love to shriek about being "not representative!!!!" was there to support Kamylla when others discarded or ignored her reality.

What the story has demonstrated in real time to those outside the industry and the movement is something that sex workers and a handful of woefully under-reported studies about leaving sex work have said for years: sex workers themselves are most capable of helping a fellow sex worker leave sex work under financially secure and physically safe conditions. We cannot trust rescue organizations to believe us. We cannot trust law enforcement to help us. We cannot hope for a sympathetic media to amplify this message. We can only rely on each other.

Stories like Kamylla's can find their way into mainstream consciousness as indicators not of our brokenness but of our resilience, courage, and wholeness. Despite pathological determination by many to dehumanize us, these are the stories where we reveal the remarkable generosity, grace, and empathy that are the precious currency of our community. They are regrettably undervalued elsewhere, but they mean the world to us in a world where we still mean so little.

This post was coauthored by Lane Champagne and Bubbles.

Tagged as: , , , ,

Thus pisses me off to no end. Mainly because this is exactly what I expected to happen. Don't give them your ratings. Its a shitty show anyhow. Only in one show did they even pay for the women's time.

Reply

Wow. Cop-turned-pastor not practicing what he preaches. Who would have thought? Surely not all the critics informed, educated, and more sympathetic...

I hope someone sues him. I really, really do. A verbal contract is still a contract.

Reply

Very good job exposing the truth behind the so called rescuers who are just exploiting sex workers.

Reply

Now can the #prostitutenation finally run not walk away from engaging this 'trafficking' BS and get on with the serious business of educating ourselves with actual trainings that will further our right?

Reply

We are now discovering that numerous people did NOT agree to have their faces shown, but their faces were shown anyway. Contracts were not voluntarily given to the ladies either from what has been found out, and sadly they did not insist upon getting copies (shouldn't have had to!) which in my mind is another clear indication that the 8 Minutes team was not sincerely advocating for those women!

Reply

” Since when does persecuting and abusing sex workers stop human trafficking. ”

Services to prevent? Services which are voluntary? ZERO. Services to help people get back on their feet after arrest? When you find them, let us know.

#8minutes should have to have a disclaimer that says “We have no housing, no jobs that pay a living wage, and no higher education without debt, but what we do have is some shame based bullshit that will help introduce you to the justice system so you can be stamped whore.

“...When you say that you “rescued” someone, that statement is about empowering and aggrandizing yourself while disempowering the person you think you rescued. This is because “rescuing” creates an uneven power dynamic where the “rescuer” (read: hero) has all of the power in the relationship and the “rescuer” (read: helpless victim) has no agency or role in the exit of his or her abusive.”

Here is how you can help sex workers fight for their rights, Please help support this expansion of sexual privacy rights.

<https://liberatetoemancipate.tilt.com/liberatetoemancipate>

“Kamylla’s story is one that sits at the messy intersection of failed rescue ideologies, misguided and often violent law enforcement, the reality of profoundly unhappy sex work experiences, and a sex worker rights’ community that is at times removed from the realities of criminalization and survival sex work.”

Amen. Really well written post. Thank you for it.

Reply

I suspected there were problems from the very beginning and called out the producer Tom Forman on it. He was very sketchy (no surprise) with his answers. He even turned around and had catty remarks to say about the sex workers and regular folks asking him questions. I’m extremely upset that something like this has happened and that it’s being eaten up by regular audiences at home (check the hashtag ... warning it’s a bit nauseating) who watch this tragedy-porn.

Thank you for writing this!