



# Speak Up! Media Training for the Empowered Sex Worker

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April 2009

For more information visit us online at <http://sexworkawareness.org>

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## EVALUATING MEDIA REQUESTS – REACTIVE MEDIA



**Reactive Media** – when a reporter reaches out to you or your organization about a story. It's called “reactive media” because you must *react* to a situation that is being thrust upon you; you aren't creating a story or creating your own media.

### **Why and When Do Reports Call?**

Obviously, reporters can call for a myriad of reasons and we can't predict them all. But there are a number of specific types of situations which are common that have certain characteristics.

#### **1. Scandals Involving VIPs – When someone famous gets caught with their pants down.**

##### Example

Former New York Governor Eliot Spitzer was revealed to be a client of an escort agency on March 10, 2008.

##### Why is the Reporter Calling You?

- To get background about how the industry works for the news coverage;
- To get salacious personal information about you for a sidebar fluff piece about the industry.

##### Characteristics of the Press Cycle

- Story moves quickly and depending on the celebrity, politician, or other VIP involved, tends towards national or even international coverage;
- Story can cycle for weeks or months;
- Fierce competition between all media markets;
- Getting information about the sex worker(s) involved in the scandal is a high priority;
- Getting information about how the industry functions for background or sidebar stories is a secondary priority, often assigned to more junior writers;
- There is often a “discovery” element to these stories, when the press covers the sex industry in terms of its actual mechanics everything is newsworthy: who chooses this work, who patronizes sex workers, how advertising works, who transactions work, what is done, where, and why;
- It is often possible to use these opportunities to raise policy issues.

##### Things to Think About:

- Is there an angle to this story that I can focus on that will draw out sex worker rights issues?

#### **2. Crime Stories – When clients, managers, or sex workers are arrested because of their involvement in with the sex industry.**

##### Example

In July, 2008, 21 people were arrested when a midtown Manhattan strip club was busted because dancers were providing extras in the club.

##### Why is the Reporter Calling You?

## EVALUATING MEDIA REQUESTS – REACTIVE MEDIA



- In general the reporter is probably not calling you, if they are, the reporter hopes that you are involved in the crime, as a witness, a victim, a conspirator, or that you know something about it;
- People with good lawyers don't talk to the press when they are involved in a criminal matter, but maybe you will.

### Characteristics of the Press Cycle

- Typically a short press cycle punctuated by the occasional resurrection of the story when the situation changes (trial, sentencing, etc.);
- Naming/describing/getting photos of the sex workers involved is a high priority;
- Getting vivid details of the crime(s) is a high priority;
- Tabloids are always the most interested in these stories, but some community-based media and local television will also bite;
- Few (if any) opportunities to raise other issues.

### Things to Think About

- It is unlikely to be beneficial to an individual sex worker to be involved in a story about a specific crime or arrest. What are you getting out of this?
- If your organization wants to take on criminal justice reform issues, it is even more important to be careful and selective about which stories you decide to be publicly on the record about.

### **3. Dead Sex Worker/Client Stories – When someone working in the sex industry or a client of the sex industry is murdered or dies in that context.**

#### Example

In November, 2008, the bodies of four street prostitutes were found behind a motel near Atlantic City's boardwalk. The murders are believed to be the work of a serial killer.

#### Why is the Reporter Calling You?

- In general, the reporter is probably not calling you, but if they are it's likely because you are a sex worker from the same stroll, escort website, brothel, strip club, dungeon, etc;
- The reporter wants to hear that people are scared and angry and what they are doing to protect themselves or retaliate (in the case of sex worker murders) or to get a sense of how the client died (in the case of a client death);
- The reporter may be doing a human interest story about what it's like to work in the industry you work in.

### Characteristics of the Press Cycle

- As long as the body count continues, the press is covering this as front page news;
- If there is a large body count but little police action the press often covers that;
- If a client is dead the press coverage is hostile towards sex workers;

## EVALUATING MEDIA REQUESTS – REACTIVE MEDIA



- If sex workers are dead the press coverage tends towards sympathy for sex workers, but leans heavily towards the inherent evils of sex work as it victimizes the people working in the industry.

### Things to Think About

- If members of your community are at-risk of violence, make sure you know what their needs are before speaking to the press. If you are not of that specific community, ask someone who is, or refer the call to someone else.
- Certain reporters will be looking for a tourist-style story (What is life in a strip club really like?, etc.). Can you or your organization provide that and use the opportunity to raise your issues?
- If a client has died, the press is casting for the role of villain when they call, be wary about getting involved.

### **4. The Discovery Story – When a news outlet reports on the seemingly obvious.**

#### Example

Sex workers file taxes!

#### Why is the Reporter Calling You?

- You are the story, and without you or a colleague of yours, they have nothing.

#### Characteristics of the Press Cycle

- Cyclical and predictable, the existence of the sex industry and any changes it undergoes will continue to be recycled as tantalizing news for as long as sex work is not a part of mainstream dialogue;
- Almost every outlet and media format will do these types of stories because sex sells and people are curious about sex work;
- While most outlets will not allow their reporters or market to cover the same story twice, it is common for these stories to break those rules;
- Flash cycles: the reporter prints or posts a story and a few media outlets may copy them and do similar pieces in the following 1-2 days;
- Sometimes reporters look to answer a hypothesis with these stories, like with all the stories about the recession causing more women to take up stripping;
- Standards of evidence for these stories are very low: one sex worker is enough to announce a trend or to make assumptions about the rest of the industry;
- Very good opportunities to raise issues, the reporter is usually happy to be led anywhere you want to take them.

#### Things to Think About

- Make sure you understand the reporter's hypothesis or what kind of story they think they want to tell; often reporters are after an *angle* and that is particularly true with these types of stories.



### **5. Legislation/Policy Stories – When a legislator, government agency, major advocacy organization or other entity proposes legislation or policy action that will impact the sex industry.**

#### Example

In 2006, US Senator Charles Grassley of Iowa moved legislation authorizing the creation of a \$2 million special office of the IRS criminal investigation unit to prosecute unlawful sex workers for violations of the tax law, purportedly to combat trafficking.

#### Why is the Reporter Calling You?

- With these kinds of stories the reporter is probably not calling you, it is all too common to see stories of this type where there is no effort made to ask sex workers who are impacted what they think of the legislation or proposal;
- If the reporter is calling you it is usually for an up or down opinion on the issue: Do you like this proposal or bill? Why or Why not? It is unlikely that the reporter will assume that you or your organization have a real political agenda.

#### Characteristics of the Press Cycle

- Usually short-lived, these sorts of stories usually have a life of one day in the press before they are old news (with the exception that if a bill is introduced the passage of the bill may justify a second press cycle);
- Policy and legislation that can be construed as a trafficking measure has slightly longer shelf-life;
- Often the proposal is not realistic and will never be implemented but unlike the thousands of other measures that are proposed and not implemented, this one is news-worthy because of its sexy topic;

#### Things to Think About

- While these sorts of press stories are the ones that you are least likely to be called about, they may be the stories that you most want to be called about, considering the short cycle, if you or your organization has something to say on the topic, it pays to be proactive;
- The person behind the policy idea or the legislation (if the proposal will negatively impact sex workers) usually has a simple motivation of self-interest. Politicians want to generate press about themselves and nothing does that faster than proposing a sex industry related bill or policy, regardless of how realistic it is.



**The New York Times**  
nytimes.com

March 16, 2008

## **The Double Life of a High-Priced Call Girl**

By CARA BUCKLEY and ANDREW JACOBS

*Editors' Note Appended: This article has been revised to remove errors, in accordance with the appended Editors' Note.*

Ava Xi'an sells real estate on Long Island, and turned to selling herself when her father, who lacks health insurance, needed heart surgery. She started with how-to books from Amazon.com, raised her rate upon realizing it might make men treat her better, and is currently on a \$45,000 weeklong "date."

She is a young woman practicing the 21st-century version of the oldest profession, inhabiting the a secret world thrust into the spotlight last week when Gov. Eliot Spitzer was identified as a client of the Emperor's Club V.I.P. caught on a federal wiretap. She is not involved in the case — though she said she was once rejected by the Emperor's Club — but her experience provides a glimpse into the rapidly growing prostitution industry, which in the last decade has almost wholly migrated online.

Streetwalkers in fishnet stockings may be the most visible, but they are estimated to account for perhaps one in five sex workers, said Ron Weitzer, a sociology professor at George Washington University. Most, he said, work at massage parlors, brothels, escort agencies or, increasingly, on their own.

These days, men can pore through Web sites filled with client reviews and user ratings, sorting selections by hair color, age, body type or behavior -- someone offering "GFE," or girlfriend experience, for example, will act adoringly.

It is a world of double lives and fake names; Ms. Xi'an told her story on the condition that she be presented by the name she uses in the sex world, but provided her real identity so details could be verified — and they were. Undoubtedly, her willingness to speak publicly came with unusually upbeat perspectives; even the highest-paid prostitutes face physical abuse and risk disease.

While it is impossible to know exactly how such a shadowy enterprise operates, what is clear is that sex is being sold for high prices.

And when it comes to price, Ms. Xi'an shared a secret. When someone pays her \$1,250 an hour, he gets exactly what he would for \$200, her rate when she started out. The difference is psychological, she explained, "Tell a guy you're \$100 and they'll treat you one way -- tell them you're \$1,500 and they'll treat you better.

## SCANDAL STORY EXAMPLE



“I’ve heard a lot of girls saying, ‘Is this girl getting \$5,500 an hour because she’s more beautiful? Is she doing something I don’t?’ ” Ms. Xi’an said in a telephone interview. “The answer is no. But that girl is able to look a guy in the eye and say, ‘This is what I’m worth, and this is what you have to pay if you want me.’ And you have to be able to do that, and believe it.”

Ms. Xi’an, who tells clients she is 26 but admits to having shaved a few years off, grew up in Queens and earned degrees in psychology and finance at a prestigious university in the South. She was a “club kid,” dancing and partying into the wee hours, poured into shiny black bondage wear. Eventually, the offers to hire out as a dominatrix became too rich to resist.

After graduation in 1999, she moved back to New York and became a real estate broker, while also working in various dominatrix “dungeons.” “There was really, technically, no sex involved,” she said. “But it is a sexual experience.”

Four years later, as her uninsured father faced a triple bypass — the operation cost \$95,000 and the hospital demanded a \$35,000 deposit — Ms. Xi’an concluded that selling actual sex would be more lucrative. She told her parents the money came from real estate holdings.

“It was a desperate moment,” she said. “But I made peace in my mind with what I had to do.”

She bought books on being an Internet escort, and pored over manuals about innovative sexual techniques, though she found most customers wanted run-of-the-mill activities.

Her first agency farmed her out on Craigslist for \$200. Her first client lived in a project on the Upper East Side, and afterward refused to pay.

Within a week, she signed up with a higher-priced agency and also started booking clients on her own. Within a year, her price was \$1,250 an hour, or \$8,000 a day. She said she earns \$200,000 a year, claiming the income as real estate proceeds on her tax returns.

Sex, Ms. Xi’an insisted, is a small part of the service; she is attentive, compassionate, a keen listener. She does not entertain at home, and arrives at each rendezvous in nondescript business-casual wear, a tote filled with lingerie, whalebone corsets and spiked heels tucked under one arm.

“It sounds kind of crazy, but I didn’t realize how much fun it was going to be, and how much I’d like my clients,” Ms. Xi’an said.

## SCANDAL STORY EXAMPLE



Still, she is terrified that her parents will discover the real source of how she has paid their medical bills, and said she hoped to retire very soon. For hers is an isolated life, with few friends knowing how she spends her working hours, and no unpaid sex or romantic relationships.

“When I’m out of the office,” she said, “I really don’t want to think about the office.”

Editors' Note: March 30, 2008

*An article on March 16 profiling three sex workers in the wake of Gov. Eliot Spitzer’s resignation after revelations that he patronized prostitutes misconstrued how two of the women, identified by the pseudonyms Faith O’Donnell and Sally Anderson, said they earned a living. The resulting misrepresentation of the two women’s work included a headline that referred to them as “high-priced call girls” and a paragraph that said they practiced “the 21st-century version of the oldest profession.”*

*The reporter who interviewed them, one of two who worked on the article, never explicitly asked the women whether they traded sex for money or were prostitutes, call girls or escorts; he used the term “sex workers,” a term they used themselves that describes strippers and lap dancers as well as prostitutes. Though Ms. Anderson advertises herself as a “dominatrix with a holistic approach,” he did not ask her whether that meant she also performed sex acts for money, nor did he ask Ms. O’Donnell what her work actually was before characterizing it. He and the editors should have explored whether he had determined these things precisely.*

*After the article was published, both women contacted The Times and said they do not perform sex for money; Ms. O’Donnell refused to be specific about what she does.*

*Because of an editing error, the article misstated the political work of the New York chapter of the Sex Workers Outreach Project, a group in which Ms. Anderson is active; it advocates the decriminalization of prostitution, not its legalization, arguing that sex work should be regulated through labor law like other jobs but not subject to additional restrictions. Another editing error changed the meaning of Ms. Anderson’s observation that “no one” had come to an event she had helped plan to highlight difficulties faced by prostitutes; Ms. Anderson meant that no journalists had attended.*



# BOSTON Herald.com

## Hookers fear 'who's next?'

Brutal killing shocks trade

By O’Ryan Johnson | Friday, April 17, 2009 |  
<http://www.bostonherald.com> | Local Coverage  
Photo by Lisa Hornak



“Sue,” a sex worker who advertises on craigslist.org, was staying in an upscale Copley Square hotel when masseuse Julissa Brisman was murdered. The Boston native travels coast to coast selling sex, and stays in close touch with other upscale sex workers, who tell her Brisman’s violent death has sent shockwaves nationwide.

“Sue” told her story to the Boston Herald’s O’Ryan Johnson.

“There’s a sense of outrage because he targeted her, because she was a provider. People think we’re disposable. Then there’s the moment of ‘Oh my God, I could be next.’ Let me make sure I do whatever was necessary (to be safe). But I don’t want to downplay the outrage. He picked her

## CRIME STORY EXAMPLE



because he thought either no one is going to care or she's not going to tell police.

"I know it's a dangerous business . . . but there are ways to reduce your risk and I'm very careful. I've been doing it five years, and I can't think of any scary clients. I've never been ripped off. I've had some men whose fantasies are — I don't want to say disturbing — just made me not so comfortable.

"In general I only go to cities that I have some knowledge of. I decide on 3 1/2 – or four–star hotels. The general thought is that they're safer. Also, it's a way to justify prices. If I'm staying at a motel and they think it's costing me \$40, why would I be charging \$300 or \$400 dollars.

"One of the reasons this is so nerve–wrecking is you'd like to think if she knows enough to stay in a nice hotel, then she knows enough to do screening. So then the question becomes, 'How did he manage to fool her and get past her screening?'

Those of us who do screen are wondering what sort of extra security measures do we need to take? . . .

I have decided not to work for a couple days. I want to make sure I'm coming from a place of serenity and calm . . . If I'm trying to take appointments and I'm feeling jittery I may make poor choices.

"There are also certain lists that women keep. We call them BCLs or Bad Call Lists or Bad Client Lists, and so I have access to some of those. Someone gives me their number, I check it against one of those.

"He (the killer) had to have contacted her in some sort of way that leaves a trail . . . He sent an e–mail . . . Or he called her. Still they have some information they can trace.

"He looks like your normal average everyday client . . . If I saw him through the peep hole there's nothing that I would go, 'Oh, something might be wrong.'

"I'm just hoping that other women who are in this business are taking this incident to heart. It's not always about the money."

# BOSTON Herald.com

Did online killer strike in Rhode Island?

Cops cite attack on dancer

By Joe Dwinell and O’Ryan Johnson | Saturday, April 18, 2009 |

<http://www.bostonherald.com> | Local Coverage



The Craigslist killer’s hunt for hookers and escorts to attack may have led him into Rhode Island, where police cite “very significant” evidence he tried to rob a lap dancer who arranged their hotel room tryst over the Internet.

Cops compared surveillance tape from the Holiday Inn Express in Warwick, where the attack occurred Thursday night, with clips from cameras at Boston hotels where the suspect also struck, shooting a masseuse to death Tuesday night, police said.

“Boston police are very impressed with what we saw on the tapes,” Warwick police Chief Stephen McCartney told the Herald.

“It has very significant evidentiary value,” he added.

## CRIME STORY EXAMPLE



The 26-year-old erotic dancer was tied up Thursday night in the Warwick hotel by a man matching the description of the wanted killer believed to have attacked two Boston beauties who may have been bartering their bodies for cash.

Police said the dancer described the armed assailant as a white man with blond hair dressed in a dark jacket and jeans - the exact garb worn by the “person of interest” in the murder of Julissa Brisman, 26, at Marriott Copley Place on Tuesday night.

The same suspect is wanted for the robbery of a 29-year-old Las Vegas hooker at Westin Copley Place on April 10. Both victims posted their steamy solicitations - as a masseuse in Brisman’s case and a hooker in the other - on craigslist.org.

The Rhode Island victim told police she, too, advertised her private “lap dances” on the classified ads site, which is polluted with come-ons, from “sexy wild freak” to “stimulus package right here.”

The dirty dancer told police her husband broke into the room as she was being tied up in plastic strips and robbed at gunpoint. The husband chased the creep out of the hotel but quickly lost him in the dark at about 11:30 p.m.

McCartney said he’s worried the Craigslist killer is now prowling Rhode Island - where prostitution is legal as long as the illicit deal is negotiated indoors.

“He might be concerned it’s too hot in Boston,” the chief said. “But we want to make it too hot here, too.”

He said he does not know what type of vehicle the suspect is driving.

Boston police spokeswoman Elaine Driscoll said cops would not release the new surveillance images “because detectives have additional investigative steps to take.”

McCartney said the images are the “strongest” evidence they’ve had yet, according to what Boston detectives told him.

The FBI is now assisting in the case.

The latest possible Craigslist killer attack comes as a grand jury interviews witnesses in the horrifying murder of Brisman, a recovering alcoholic and aspiring actress whom friends said was “embarrassed” by her gigs going topless for some quick cash.



## Murders Strike Fear in Atlantic City

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. (AP) - November 22, 2006 -- The women who cater to sex-hungry men in the shadows of Atlantic City's glitzy casinos say they are living in fear.

They are worried a serial killer preying on street walkers is responsible for the deaths of four women whose barefoot bodies were found this week in a drainage ditch behind a row of seedy motels.

Several prostitutes interviewed Wednesday told The Associated Press they have since armed themselves with pepper spray and are no longer going with "dates" to the same busy road that passes close to where the bodies were found.

"It scares the hell out of me," said Christine, a prostitute eyeing cars driving by a cheap motel on Pacific Avenue near several casino entrances. "We're all talking about it, and I'm still ready to jump in the first car that comes along. But I got anxiety, bad."

Like all the streetwalkers interviewed Wednesday, Christine would only speak if her full name was not made public.

Meanwhile Wednesday, authorities were awaiting the results of an autopsy on the final victim. Two others were determined to have been murdered: one by strangulation with a rope or cord, one by smothering. A third body was too badly decomposed to determine a cause of death, prosecutors said.

Christine, 37, who has been working Atlantic City's streets since arriving from Washington, D.C. in 1998, said she has carried a canister of pepper spray in her purse since she learned of the killings, and has changed her work routine. She's particularly worried that three of the four victims were blonde, like her.

"I won't go on dates to the Pike," she said, referring to a seedy stretch of Route 40 in Egg Harbor Township known locally as the Black Horse Pike, near where the bodies were found Monday afternoon. "I'm sticking closer to home base now."

Bunny, a prostitute and drug dealer who works out of the same Pacific Avenue motel, said she is terrified by the killings, and is concentrating this week on peddling drugs instead of flesh.

"Money is money," she said. "But how can you not be scared ... over this?"

She, too, said she will no longer accompany clients to motels on the Black Horse Pike.

"That's just too dangerous," she said. "You can't let your guard down, even for a minute."

Authorities would not say whether they believe the killings were carried out by the same person, but noted several commonalities among the victims. Each was left in the same ditch within a few

## DEAD SEX WORKERS/CLIENTS EXAMPLE



hundred feet of each other, and each woman's head was facing east, toward Atlantic City's casinos.

Atlantic County Prosecutor Jeffrey Blitz said there are indications the women may have been placed in the ditch at different times, based on varying degrees of decomposition of the bodies.

The only woman authorities have been able to identify thus far, 35-year-old Kim Raffo, died from strangulation.

Relatives said Raffo got involved in drugs and prostitution about six years ago. Christine said she knew Raffo, who she said used to work street corners about a mile from where Christine usually works.

"She was a sweet person; she'd do anything for anybody," recalled another prostitute, Khadijah, who said she knew Raffo as well. "Maybe they took her kindness for weakness."

Bill Southrey, president of the Atlantic City Rescue Mission, said Raffo stayed at the mission for one day last year, and two days in January.

It was not enough time for the shelter to get to know much about her. But Southrey said files show she had struggled with drug addiction and came to the mission because she had lost her place to stay with a friend. She talked of trying to get a job and moving to Florida. Records show she had lived in Broward and Miami-Dade counties in that state.

Southrey said the people he helps are upset, even if they did not know the one victim who has been identified.

"It's very shocking when there's a horrific crime committed in their backyard," he said.

Khadijah, 38, said she also is frightened by the killings, and will only "date" regular clients in a motel she knows. Meetings in cars are out for now.

"I'm afraid to do anything right now after what happened," said Khadijah, who said she has been a prostitute since 1992. She said she is considering retrieving the knife she used to carry, something she stopped doing because she feared being charged with a weapons offense if police arrested her on vice charges.

Bunny said she thinks she knows another of the victims, a woman she knew only as "Jen," but can't be sure because the other women have yet to be publicly identified.

"She just got out of jail, and she's pregnant," Bunny said of that woman. "She's very loving, very trusting."

Christine said word of the killings has been slow to circulate among her fellow streetwalkers.

"We don't exactly read a lot," she said. "Even dates, not a lot of them know about it. Last night, the guy I was with, I started crying, and he asked me why I was crying. I told him, and I got him all freaked out."

Khadijah said she will rely on her boyfriend to scout out clients for her, at least until things cool down.

"I'm only out here on the days I absolutely need to," she said.

How often was that, she was asked.

"Every day," she replied.

The New York Times

## An Old Profession That's New to Doing Taxes



Sarah Patterson, a foot fetish model who has not previously reported her income, is eligible for help from a Manhattan tax workshop.

**By COREY KILGANNON**

**Published: April 5, 2006**

At 22, Sarah Patterson has already spent several years in the working world, but she has yet to report her income to the government.

For one thing, Ms. Patterson, of Manhattan, works in a cash business, with no withholding tax. But she is also worried about how to list her profession on a 1040 form — she is a foot fetish model.

"What I do is not commonly considered work," explained Ms. Patterson, who said she earns more than \$100 an hour for letting men ogle or stroke her shapely feet. "When they ask for your occupation, I can't imagine there would be a little box to check describing my job." She can take home up to \$400 for working a foot-fetish party where clients take turns enjoying her feet, she said. Private sessions can be even more lucrative.

She told all this to a screener last Thursday night at an unusual tax workshop held at the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center on West 13th Street. As at other tax workshops being held these days leading up to the mid-April filing deadline, there were workers on hand to explain things like the earned-income-tax credit. And yes, there were computers providing information about children as deductions.

But hanging on the wall was pornographic art, including a collage with the words: Hustling IS work. Tip Well."

## DISCOVERY STORY EXAMPLE



The event was organized by a group called Prostitutes of New York, a support and advocacy group, and by a sex industry magazine called Spread. Prostitutes of New York advocates the legalization of prostitution and meets clandestinely to avoid the police and pimps.

Members of the group helped Ms. Patterson and other sex workers — including pornography actors, strippers, nude models, peep show performers, phone sex workers and madams — who want to begin filing tax returns.

Like many sex workers, Ms. Patterson said she no longer wants to be considered a tax evader. She wants to be a legitimate taxpayer and to begin paying into Social Security and build a good credit history.

But how to list her various revenue streams? Ms. Patterson is self-employed — getting her own private clients through word of mouth — but also receives regular payment when booking a foot massage session through her booking agency, the Foot Worship Palace, a Manhattan company that employs fetish models. On top of that, she is an English tutor for immigrants.

A screener told her that she could get free help from one of several tax preparation centers in the city and introduced her to representatives from Citizens for N.Y.C., which, using a grant from the Robin Hood Foundation, finances 40 local advocacy groups, including Prostitutes of New York, to offer tax help to marginalized workers who might not otherwise file, including street vendors, dishwashers and illegal immigrants who work at hotel, restaurant and cleaning jobs.

A spokesman for the Internal Revenue Service said that it had a number of civil and criminal tax compliance programs in place to detect and deal with noncompliance by people who receive income in cash.

Jane Vincent, 23, of Queens, another foot-fetish model, said the workshop would "do a lot to remove some of the shame and illegitimate nature of the industry."

One screener, a 26-year-old woman from Manhattan, said she worked as a prostitute under the name Eve Ryder. She said she had kept strict track of her earnings and listed them on an Excel spreadsheet and on tax forms she sent to the I.R.S. "I just write down that I'm self-employed and leave it at that," she said. "The form doesn't ask and I don't tell. Just because I work as a prostitute, I still want to be a taxpaying member of society."

She said most of the working-girl clichés — either the glamorized glitz of the high-priced call girl or the depraved danger of the strung-out street walker — applied to only a minority of prostitutes.

"Most of them are supporting children or paying rent and college loans, things like that," she said.

The tax outreach program "helps sex workers who don't know they can and should file taxes," said Audacia Ray, 26, of Brooklyn, an executive editor at Spread magazine, a quarterly publication based in New York, who also reviews pornography for a Web site — and pays her taxes, she said.

"A lot of prostitutes are making just enough to get by and can qualify for certain tax credits, so filing can help them as well as make them feel like part of society," she said.





## Senator seeks tax on pimps, prostitutes

*Grassley: 'It's a no-brainer to have the IRS go after sex traffickers'*

By Jonathan Schienberg for CNN

NEW YORK (CNN) -- Republican Sen. Charles Grassley of Iowa is hoping to stamp out the sex trade by taxing pimps and prostitutes, then jailing them when they don't pay.

The Senate Judiciary Committee Wednesday morning approved a bill sponsored by committee chairman Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, authorizing at least \$2 million toward the establishment of an office in the IRS criminal investigation unit to prosecute unlawful sex workers for violations of tax laws.

The bill's approval gives the IRS harsh new criminal penalties for use against those in the underground criminal economy. According to Grassley's office, the majority of the victims of sex trafficking -- those who are often smuggled in from other counties and virtually imprisoned in a house set up for prostitution -- are girls ages 13 to 17.

'A no-brainer'

"It's a no-brainer to have the IRS go after sex traffickers," Grassley said. "Prosecuting tax code violations can get these guys off the street and yank from their grasp the girls and women they exploit. This crime is right under our noses in the United States, and it's especially horrible when under-age girls are being held prisoner. The thugs who run the trafficking rings are exploiting society's poorest girls and women for personal gain."

Asked Tuesday about whether taxing sex workers would somehow lend legitimacy to them, a spokesman for Grassley said that the goal of the legislation would not be to legitimize the individuals but rather to find "yet another alternative to track the money flowing in this industry to get at potential criminals."

The bill also calls for more jail time for sex workers. According to Grassley's office, in the past, the IRS has been saddled with having to prove how much income a sexual worker earned in order to show that he or she has not been paying enough income tax. Grassley's proposal will help overcome those obstacles. For example, if a trafficker has failed to file W-2s for five women (employees), the maximum penalty would be 10 years in prison per failure to file, a total of 50 years.

Grassley used the example of gangster Al Capone, who was eventually jailed on tax evasion charges. The bill, according to a spokesman for Grassley, will use the federal tax code to shut down illegal sex workers who are hard to get by way of other federal criminal laws and are not targeted by state law enforcement.

"For the first time ever, the tax code would help put behind bars the criminals who are making money in the underground economy by selling sexual access to girls and women," the spokesman said in an e-mail statement.

## LEGISLATIVE/POLICY STORY EXAMPLE



Strip clubs a target?

Carol Leigh, a representative of BAYSWAN, a San Francisco Bay area sex worker advocacy network, criticized the legislation as being shortsighted.

"Forced labor, kidnapping should be targeted, but this legislation broadly targets the sex trade in general, and could target your local strip club," Leigh said. "Those of us who work in the industry understand that this does nothing to improve conditions in our industry."

"We want laws enforced against those who abuse us, against those who are violent, and enforcement of labor regulations. That is the only truly effective way to protect the welfare of the women who work in the industry."

The sex trafficking bill proposed by Grassley was part of a scheduled Senate Finance Committee good government tax bill.

## DECIDING TO BE PART OF A STORY



Deciding whether or not to be interviewed for a story can be difficult. Compounding this difficulty is the fact that reporters must move quickly and you may miss a vital opportunity by being too cautious. Often the initial contact is hours if not minutes away from the reporter's deadline.

This list of questions can help you think through this important decision. The *italicized* words are concepts we will discuss further.

### General Questions to Ask the Reporter

What is your name, outlet, when are you writing for, and what is your *deadline*?

What were you thinking I would contribute to your story?

What is the *angle* of your story?

Are you looking for *background* for your story or a direct quote?

Can you provide me the questions and give me some time to think about them?

Optional: Can I be quoted using a *pseudonym*? Will you be including information about me beyond what I tell you (what I look like, any online material you have found, etc.)?

### General Questions to Ask Yourself

What will you achieve by being quoted in this story or spending time giving the reporter background information?

If you gain nothing, is this a reporter worth helping out to develop a good relationship for the future, or is the story likely to be harmful?

Are you the best person to give information or a quote to this reporter, or is there someone that would be better for this role?

Has the reporter satisfied your privacy concerns?

Is there anything about your role in this you still don't understand?

## SAMPLE MEDIA REQUESTS DURING THE SPITZER SCANDAL



Hi Audacia-

This is ----- with the CBS Early Show.

We are looking to do a piece for tomorrow morning about the call girl industry.

Wondering if you're around tonight for a quick interview? We are looking for some details on how things work.

I found you quoted in an AP article about how technology is used now... and find that interesting.

Let me know what you think. I can be reached all evening at -----

Thanks,

-----

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Hey,

This is ----- from CBS--we just spoke a few minutes ago. I have been perusing your website, it's really good. I would be happy to talk to you on whatever makes you comfortable. I feel your voice is an important aspect to this story.

Please call me back as soon as you can. Thanks so much.

---

Hi Audacia,

I produce The Tom Sullivan Show, a nationally syndicated program broadcasted on the FOX News Radio Network. I stumbled across your blog and was curious if you'd like to come on the air speak with Tom about Eliot Spitzer and the sex industry.

I know this is short notice but we would possibly want you on ASAP.

Best,

-----

---

Hi Audacia,

I got your contact information from ----- for an article I'm doing about the sex industry; although the news hook is the Spitzer situation, I was hoping to use the moment to explore the business, and the issues, from a pragmatic, non-salacious standpoint. Let me know if we could talk...

Andrew

[The New York Times]



Message is the theme that runs through all of your individual talking points and comes directly from your overall agenda. You will be asked different questions, but your message must run through them. A message is a complete thought, not one word. For example: *Sex workers are human beings, deserving of human rights.*

Talking points are short, specific, and prepared statements that address the issue at hand. You will be asked questions that will not fit these talking points, but whenever possible, you will return to them. It's best to only have 2 or 3 good talking points; you never need more. For example: *New York's criminal statutes contribute to a situation where prostitutes are routinely denied basic labor rights because of the illegal status of their work.*

Your agenda is your goals; the things or status that you and your organization want to achieve. This is the reason you do media work. If a story does not give you an opportunity to further some part of your agenda, it's rarely worth your time (or a good idea). For example: *Our agenda is to further the human rights of sex workers.*

Before thinking about how to craft your message, it's a good idea to start out thinking about the messages that you are up against. "Messaging" is always a battle between competing ideas, and reporters often feel compelled or are compelled by their editors to "balance" viewpoints within an article or a media cycle.

## Common Media Messages About Sex Workers

- Sex workers are the victims of perverted men and abusers;
- Sex workers are emotionally damaged and manipulated;
- Sex workers lead double lives filled with duplicity;
- Sex workers are routinely trafficked;
- Most sex workers are drug users/incest victims/mentally ill;
- Sex workers are addicted to sex;
- Sex workers enable adultery and contribute to the breakdown of the family;
- Sex workers are vectors of disease.
- Sex workers hate their work, but have no other options;
- Sex workers love their work because they are sexually loose.
- Others:
- Others:
- Others:



## What's the "right" message, politically?

Sex workers are a diverse community from many backgrounds and with varying experiences and opinions on their work. A difference in experiences means that perspective and opinion will change from person to person. Not only do journalists assume that sex workers are a monolith, but sex workers often forget that our opinions are not always the same, nor are our politics or goals.

It's easy to get overwhelmed by the responsibility that comes with doing media as a sex worker when the expectation exists that you speak for the entire community. It's also easy to go too far in the other direction. Many other people who are not part of the sex industry speak on behalf of sex workers without our consent, so it's important and crucial that the voices of individual sex workers are heard.

How do we strike this balance?

- Be aware of your bias and how your own background and experiences color your opinions;
- If you know that there are valid and different sex worker opinions out there, say so if you can do it without undermining yourself;
- When in doubt don't qualify your opinions as "just my opinion," or anything like that, state your position affirmatively and in the active voice;

## What's the right message, audience-wise?

Messaging is all about audience because your agenda is all about achieving some sort of change.

- Your first question is: who has the power to give us what we want?
- Your second question is: who influences that person or those people?

The answer to the first and second questions are your audience, the people you are trying to reach.

- Often your audience is primarily people in positions of governmental power who are influenced by voters.
- Tackling "the general public" (i.e. all voters) is very hard, so it's best to concentrate on segments of the population where we have a tactical advantage, that is, where the values of the general American public intersect with goals that sex workers want to advance.
- Typical American values that are useful to us include:
  - Individualism
  - Entrepreneurship
  - Human rights
  - Control over your own body
  - Less government intrusion
  - Privacy



- Not wasting tax money
- Other:
- Other:
- Other:

### What are some things to avoid?

- Sex workers are expected to be out of control, hypersexual, inappropriate objects of ridicule. Don't give it to them.
- Don't preach the revolution. It's okay to state ideals in a way that shows you have a political viewpoint, but actually calling for the overthrow of the money system/patriarchy will sound crazy to 99% of the population.
- An agenda with unrealistic goals. You are far more likely to effectively "win" something for your community by setting an agenda that is within reach. This doesn't mean diluting your overall, long-term goals from your message, but what it does mean is having a concrete and pragmatic short-term goal.
- It is highly dangerous to allow yourself to have the appearance that you condone underage prostitution or trafficking. Unless you are working specifically on these issues, avoid the topics and words associated with them except to point out how these are not your topics when raised.
- Do you believe in the Goddess? That milk is rape and meat is murder? Other issues have no place in your message, they confuse your audience and have the potential to alienate people who might otherwise be amenable to what you have to say about sex work.



## **Sex Workers, Murder, and False Securities**

-- Audacia Ray, Waking Vixen

This evening while I was at the grocery store stocking up on food to feed the sex workers who will convene at my apartment on Friday night for a pre-Speak Up night of eating, socializing, and analyzing media, I was checking my email (as I do, obsessively) and read this message:

**Urgent: Masseur Advertising on Craig's List Murdered**

Yesterday a sex worker from NYC was brutally murdered here in Boston. Police are saying they think its the second attack by the same guy (first was not killed). He makes appointments with people on Craig's List to come to Boston and meet him in nice hotels. There are surveillance photos of the guy being posted now, at this link.

PLEASE spread the word to anyone you think needs to know about this. Feel free to post on list servers. I'm thinking that people outside of Boston may not know this is happening — and those are the people he's preying on.

I actually clutched my chest and said, "Oh no," out loud - and probably looked stricken.

I've been thinking about this all night and it's cast such a pall over my thoughts. I've seen a few comments on Facebook and Twitter about it, and a few ruminations like, I wonder what her screening process was like, or admonitions like, Girls, do your screening! And I hate to say it, because I do believe in screening and check in calls and doing whatever you need to feel safe with a client, but what if her screening was great? What if she was conscientious and did things by the book? A woman getting killed is not her fault. This doesn't mean women are completely powerless against bad things happening and shouldn't take steps to protect themselves, but part of what needs to happen for sex workers -for WOMEN- to be safe with men (clients or otherwise) is that the men need to not kill women.

It used to be that, whenever I saw news of a bust or a series of arrests, I would scrutinize the stories (a little obsessively) to see where the sex workers went



## CRAFTING YOUR MESSAGE EXAMPLE



wrong. Did they not pay their taxes? Did they boast about their work in public? Did they piss off someone who would turn them in? Did they make it explicit that they were offering sex for money in their advertising? There's always something.

But here's the thing: if you are a prostitute, your job is illegal. Doing illegal work that is stigmatized (especially if you're also young, female, queer, or already disenfranchised) makes you part of an undesirable part of society. And undesirables are vulnerable - if you're on the wrong side of the law you're vulnerable to arrest and other harrowing forms of abuse and exploitation by the cops and legal system; you're also vulnerable to violence.

We can talk about safety infinitely, but the fact remains that sex workers are at risk. Taking security measures and being on the defensive are all well and good, but there are only so many ways you can defend yourself against violence and exploitation that is embedded in the patriarchy. Being on the defensive is a band aid, it is not a long term solution. The long term solution is that governments need to stop telling us what we can and cannot do with our bodies, and men need to stop being violent toward sex workers. We can and will fight those problems hard and loud, but sadly, sex workers can't stop violence all by ourselves.

The news of this woman's murder makes me feel small and powerless and really fucking angry. Sure, my work on media is important. But having good messaging doesn't stop sex workers from dying. And tonight it was hard to get very pressing tasks accomplished, stuff that will make a difference to a small and amazing group of sex workers. It's just tough to get things done while thinking about this murdered woman. Fuck.

<http://www.wakingvixen.com/blog/2009/04/16/sex-workers-murder-and-false-securities/>



## Who are these strange people asking me questions?

Reporters are people at work in their professional capacities, so act professionally yourself!

- Don't be late or rude.
- In email correspondence, check spelling and grammar.
- Keep your end of the bargain, honor your commitments.
- Be charming, but keep it professional; you aren't friends, but the reporter's personal opinion of you will color the story.
- Dress to impress and remember that *how* you dress is part of the story if you meet in-person. It sends a message all on its own.

## Why am I so nervous? What did I even just say?

Everyone gets nervous when talking to the press. Don't worry about it, but concentrate on ways to mitigate it. The key is to ensure you don't get in your own way.

- Practice! Take turns taping interviews with your friends and watch and critique them together.
- If you got the questions in advance, come with prepared notes.
- Take your time and speak slowly. You always speak more quickly when you're nervous, and this doesn't give you enough time to think or make you more understandable.
- Be brief! Most people get tongue-tied by over-explaining. Answers are usually better and more effective when they are short. Less is more and a longer answer means you are likely "off-message" and giving the reporter an opportunity to pick and choose what message of yours they want to use rather than you just giving them what you want.
- Don't lie or pretend to understand something, it will bite you.
- Don't use jargon or industry-insider terms, unless you explain them.

## How do I answer that evil question that has nothing to do with what I want to talk about?

This is a bit tricky because sometimes the answer is to deflect completely and return to your talking points, and sometimes doing that can make you look like you are avoiding a tough question because you don't have a good answer for it. Ultimately, this will be your judgment call. The best advice is that even when you are deflecting, try your best to appear to answer the question. Bridging back to your home turf (message) with a phrase like, "I think what's really important here is..." When in doubt, be brief; there's nothing wrong with a one-word answer to a stupid question.

## Tips for Still Photos, Film

- Wear your hair pulled back or up to ensure it doesn't obscure your face.
- Wear solid colors, and avoid white.
- Unless instructed to, don't look directly into the camera, look at the reporter.
- Try not to fidget. If you usually play with your hands or tap your feet have a plan for that (like holding your hands together or crossing your legs).

## Tips for Radio, TV

- If you aren't "live" ask for a minute to think about the question, if you have a false start, apologize and start again.
- Remember that in a taped interview a pause will be edited out but an ill thought out comment will not.
- For live broadcasts memorize some simple talking points and if you get stuck go back to them rather than trying to come up with something that perfectly fits the question, it's not ideal, but it's better than stuttering or looking unprepared for that question.
- For a longer show try to arrange for two sex workers/advocates to be interviewed, it'll take some of the pressure off you.

## Tips for Print Journalism

- Do a phone or email interview when possible, if you meet in-person space in the article usually goes to describing what you look like;
- Nothing you say is ever really "off the record" if you don't want to see it in print, don't say it.
- Speaking on background means that what you say can't appear in quotes next to your name, but it can appear in the article not in quotes.
- Don't get lulled in by a conversation, print journalists are good at making you feel like your chatting with someone casually.

## INTERVIEW QUESTION EXAMPLES



**These are all examples of actual questions we have gotten in interviews.**

Is X your real name?

How old are you?

How long have you been doing this?

How much money do you make?

What kind of johns/men look for prostitutes on Craigslist?

What do you write in your ad?

Are you afraid of these guys?

Why do you feel like you have to do this?

Why do you think so many women prostitute themselves?

Would you want your daughter to be a sex worker?

Have you ever been in a situation where things got out of hand or someone tried to hurt you? What did you do? Has this ever happened to any of your friends?

Have you ever been arrested?

How do you choose the men you go with?

So when men get violent with you, do you go to the police? What do they say?

Do you have a pimp?



### Developing a press list

- Press lists are available for purchase – depending on the reach you want, this may be an option. Have a look at <http://www.easymedialist.com/>
- Keep track of all journalists from whom you get media inquiries, record their contact info and make brief notes about their approach, the beat they cover, etc
- Look at bylines in articles you read that portray sex workers well, add these journalists to your press list
- Beats to consider: health, city, politics, crime
- When adding a journalist or editor to your list, include: full name, title, beat, email, fax, phone, best time and best way to contact
- When you send press releases, send to staff/freelance journalists as well as editors
- Familiarity with your local media landscape is your best asset in learning about who is out there and may be receptive to your message
- Ask local activists who have worked with media before – if there aren't sex worker activists, ask LGBT and kink folks, many have had experience with the media and will gladly share information

### When do I...

- Send a fax? Many newspapers prefer faxes. If you do not have a personal contact, fax is a good way to go. Editors at papers still look through faxes every morning when prepping a day's assignments. If you have a personal contact you probably won't fax unless that form of contact is a stated preference. Don't have a fax machine and don't want to hang out at Kinko's? Try an online fax service, which sends and receives faxes from your computer desktop (right from Word, no scanning required). <http://www.myfax.com> is good and reasonably priced
- Send an email? Most of the time. Paste your press release into the body of the email instead of just as an attachment. You may attach the release as well, but never just send an attachment
- Make a phone call? When your story is very urgent, breaking news. Cold calls are kind of scary – if you don't feel like you're up to the challenge of making a call to a busy newsroom, that's ok. Most of the time email is preferred by editors and journalists. Only call if you have a 15 second pitch all planned and ready to go. Phone calls to the newsroom are good for making contact with television news show that air on a daily basis
- Send materials by postal mail? Almost never, only upon request



### Places to Start

- Alt weeklies frequently cover “offbeat” news and many have a grand history with the LGBT communities. Search the Association of Alternative Newsweeklies to find papers in your area <http://aan.org/>
- FAIR has a short list of big national media outlets (newspapers, mags, tv, radio): <http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=111>
- Your local paper should have easily accessible contact information for editors, and many news outlets have begun to post journalists’ email addresses at the end of their articles

### What kind of stories should you pitch to the media?

- Pitches *should be about something*. For example, a press release about the fact that sex workers’ rights are human rights is unlikely to get media hits. However, responding to an event which disrespect’s sex workers’ human rights with this message has a better chance of getting picked up.
- Sex work-related events that raise awareness about a particular issue are probably the easiest things for which to get media coverage. An event creates something to talk about, plus it is a gathering where the reporter may get a chance to ogle *actual sex workers*. Cheesy but useful.

### Examples of events that have gotten press:

- “Sex Worker Visions”, an art show of art made by sex workers
- “One Nation Under Dildo”, an exhibition of dildos decorated by sex workers
- “Sex Worker Olympics”, ridiculous contest demo’ing specialized skills of sex workers, i.e. obstacle course in stripper shoes, rolling a condom on a dildo with your mouth, fake orgasm contest, etc
- “Sex Work Fashion Show”, featuring clothing made by/for sex workers, plus sex workers strutting their stuff in their own work outfits
- “Tax Workshop for Sex Workers”, demonstrating social responsibility and civil engagement
- Play with the “sexy” expectations media have about sex workers to the extent that you’re comfortable or if it is appropriate for the message you’re trying to send. This can quickly get obnoxious, headlines will be full of puns, and it can feel exploitative to boost up the “fun loving sex worker” thing, but events like this draw press + curious onlookers, so it’s something to consider
- Events as fundraisers are also a good way to get media attention. Create an event that raises money for your local sex worker group or another group that you’re allied with. If you’re raising money for a group that isn’t directly serving sex workers, check first to make sure they’ll accept your donation (sometimes orgs like breast cancer groups won’t take donations)



from people within the sex industry – though this can be an additional source of publicity if you want to go down that road)

### Getting your event listed

- Alt weekly papers and weekly publications like Time Out are great places to run listings for your event
- Weeklies usually make submission guidelines for listings clear. Make sure you follow directions, especially word count and required contact information, otherwise they will not run your listing. Make sure to look for submission dates, usually you need to submit your listing a few weeks in advance.
- Listings generally run without graphics unless the editor decides to feature it. Most weekly publications will select a handful of events to highlight every week, in which case you should have a high resolution image (300 dpi) available to run with the listing. This is something you should have prepared in advance so you aren't scrambling! Make sure you have credits and permissions for photo usage in place as well.

### Letters to the editor

- Keep it short. Most letters to the editor are 200 words or less. If you keep it short there is less of a risk of your piece being drastically edited to mean something other than what you intended
- Make a single point. A letter to the editor is not the time for nuance or complex, multilayered arguments
- Directly reference article you're responding to. The subject of the email should be formatted: "Re: Article Title, date"
- Don't title it. This is the editor's job. You're wasting your time thinking of something clever that will just be replaced
- If possible, write on behalf of an organization. Having a clear tie to the community that is being written about is always an asset. If you are comfortable, identifying yourself as a present or former sex worker in the first line of the letter is a good idea.

### Writing an Op-Ed

- Writer should be an academic, executive director of non-profit, politician, person with a significant affiliation with an organization of significance
- Written in response to a significant event, ed board takes position, another opposing op ed
- Although an op ed typically has only one person's name on it, they are usually written and edited by a number of people. If you see an opportunity in media for an op ed but aren't a strong enough name, consider having a conversation with someone who is prominent and suggest that you draft an op ed for them



### Press release

- Like a newspaper article, the most important information in a press release comes first. Each sentence after the first is less important
- Keep press releases short (one page or less): 3-4 paragraphs, each 2-3 sentences long, is ideal
- When you put on an event, send a press advisory several days before, and then send the press release day of – in the case of an event, the press release should be written in the past tense
- Press releases should always include an attributed quote – if you have a good quote in the release, some journalists will just use that quote, or possibly whole chunks of text from the press release (it's a big success if that happens to you)
- Always list a phone number in addition to email address for the contact person
- At the bottom of the page of the press release, put -30- or ### - this indicates the end of the document. This applies to press statements and advisories as well

### Press statement

- Press statements are the perspective of an organization (not an individual) on an issue or event or piece of legislation. The whole piece should be placed in quotes, but it doesn't need to be attributed to an individual
- When a journalist uses this in their piece, it will be credited as, "According to advocacy organization Sex Work Awareness..."
- Goal of a press statement is to get quotes from your organization into the next news cycle on a topic
- Should be less than a page, preferably one paragraph all in quotes, response to an event – with contact info for one or two people

### Press advisory

- Very short, less than one page piece that gives basic information about an event. No details, no quotes, no flowery prose – just the facts
- A press advisory is typically sent out 2-3 days before an event and is used to get media interested in doing coverage

### Pitching a story idea

- Press releases are important if you're trying to get coverage for an event, but they aren't always necessary. If you're trying to get coverage for breaking news or have the inside scoop on something that would be useful for you or your group to break to the media, a short polite email or phone call (2-5 sentences) about who you are, the story, your involvement, and potential sources is appropriate





- A pitch can be more informal than a press release, and should be informal if you're pitching someone who you've built a relationship with
- Offer an exclusive. A media outlet may be more inclined to pick up your story if you're only telling it to them. The media can be useful in drawing attention to an issue in the community, like police abuse of sex workers
- Increasingly, there are people within the sex work activist community who are also journalists and media makers who may be interested in covering your story or helping you to get coverage for it through their contacts. A short, to the point email is handy in these cases

### Organizing a press conference

- Press conferences are still common for government and legislation-related press announcements, but physical press conferences are becoming increasingly rare for other purposes
- Space: If your press conference is about a piece of legislation or other community issue, contact your local government representative and ask for assistance. Community locations like LGBT centers are good possible choices. If you plan to do a press conference in a public location (like a park or street corner), be sure to check into laws and regulations about public gatherings. Likewise if you plan to do a press conference on private property (like in front of a strip club), do your homework about your rights to gather and the rights of the property owner
- A good alternative for organizing a physical press conference is to organize a remote call. Non-profits organizations are increasingly utilizing new technology to do group calls. Have a look at <http://www.webex.com> and <https://www.gotomeeting.com> - both offer "webinars" that will help to create an event that can be accessed through the web or by phone.
- Create a clear program, with talking points and clear roles for different people in your organization. Written speeches are totally appropriate for press conferences
- Decide in advance how you want to manage questions. You can ask that questions be submitted in advance of the event if that makes you feel more in control. It is also a good idea to plant questions with strategic participants in the press conference



**The New York Times**  
nytimes.com

September 1, 2008

Letter

**A Better Law Against Trafficking**

To the Editor:

Re "Taking On the Traffickers" (editorial, Aug. 23):

Human trafficking is a terrifying problem, and federal law enforcement has identified only a fraction of its victims. But expansion of the Mann Act to include federal prosecution of state prostitution cases would be counterproductive to antitrafficking efforts.

The barrier to successful prosecutions has not been the burden of proving force, fraud and coercion, but the lack of resources for investigating these difficult cases.

By shifting the focus of the law from human trafficking, which includes people in all areas of forced labor, to prostitution, the House bill threatens to divert scarce and necessary resources from victims. Expanding the definition of trafficking would also harm those who are in sex work because of economic necessity.

The Justice Department and organizations and feminists who work directly with victims agree that the Senate version of the antitrafficking act, which excludes expansion of the Mann Act, is the best approach. It would expand remedies while focusing resources on slavery victims.

Sapna Patel

New York, Aug. 26, 2008

*The writer is staff attorney for the Sex Workers Project, Urban Justice Center.*

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR EXAMPLE



*Boston Herald*

Letter

April 23, 2009

### **Respect Deserved**

As an advocate for sex workers, I'm writing to clarify terminology. The women victimized were advertising services as masseuses and exotic dancers, but they weren't necessarily trading sex for money. A "sex worker" does erotic labor in exchange for an agreed upon exchange. Erotic labor is not necessarily sex, and words like "hooker" or phrase like "selling their bodies on Craigslist" are sensationalistic and do not respect or fairly represent the experiences of people who work within the sex industry's diverse professions.

Audacia Ray

Vice President

Sex Work Awareness

New York City



**The New York Times**  
nytimes.com

Op-Ed Contributors

## **The Myth of the Victimless Crime**

By MELISSA FARLEY and VICTOR MALAREK

Published: March 12, 2008

WHAT do we know about the woman Gov. Eliot Spitzer allegedly hired as a prostitute? She was the one person he ignored in his apology. What is she going through now? Is she in danger from organized crime because of what she knows? Is anyone offering her legal counsel or alternatives to prostitution?

“I’m here for a purpose,” she said in a conversation with her booking agent after meeting with Governor Spitzer, according to the affidavit of the F.B.I agent who investigated the prostitution ring. “I know what my purpose is. I’m not a ... moron, you know what I mean.”

Her purpose, as a man who knew patiently explained, is “renting” out an organ for 10 minutes. Men rent women through the Internet or by cellphone as if they were renting a car. And now, in response to the news about Governor Spitzer, pundits are wading into the age-old debates over whether prostitution is a victimless crime or whether women are badly hurt in prostitution no matter what they’re paid.

Whose theory is it that prostitution is victimless? It’s the men who buy prostitutes who spew the myths that women choose prostitution, that they get rich, that it’s glamorous and that it turns women on.

But most women in prostitution, including those working for escort services, have been sexually abused as children, studies show. Incest sets young women up for prostitution — by letting them know what they’re worth and what’s expected of them. Other forces that channel women into escort prostitution are economic hardship and racism.

The Emperor’s Club presented itself as an elite escort service. But aside from charging more, it worked like any other prostitution business. The pimps took their 50 percent cut. The Emperor’s Club often required that the women provide sex twice an hour. One woman who was wiretapped indicated that she couldn’t handle that pressure. The ring operated throughout the United States and Europe. The transport of women for prostitution was masked by its description as “travel dates.”



Telephone operators at the Emperor's Club criticized one of the women for cutting sessions with buyers short so that she could pick up her children at school. "As a general rule," one said, "girls with children tend to have a little more baggage going on."

Whether the woman is in a hotel room or on a side street in someone's car, whether she's trafficked from New York to Washington or from Mexico to Florida or from the city to the suburbs, the experience of being prostituted causes her immense psychological and physical harm. And it all starts with the buyer.

*Melissa Farley is the author of "Prostitution and Trafficking in Nevada: Making the Connections." Victor Malarek is the author of "The Natashas: Inside the New Global Sex Trade."*



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### PRESS STATEMENT

For Immediate Release:

Friday, November 7, 2008

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### ***SAN FRANCISCO BALLOT INITIATIVE ON PROSTITUTION WOULD HAVE REDUCED VIOLENCE AGAINST SEX WORKERS***

NEW YORK CITY (November 7, 2008) – Another kind of history was almost made in San Francisco during this election, where citizens voted on a proposition that would have prohibited the use of public funds to enforce laws criminalizing prostitution and mandated that police instead investigate crimes against sex workers. “We are very proud that 42% of San Francisco voters - 91,017 people counted so far - voted for a saner and safer response to sex work,” said Carol Leigh, a long time sex worker rights activist in San Francisco.

The measure would not only have saved considerable law enforcement resources – estimated at \$11.4 million in 2007 - it would have reduced sex workers’ vulnerability to violence – at the hands of police, clients, employers, and community members – resulting from their criminalized status. Additionally, it would have mandated enforcement of existing laws against coercion, extortion, battery, rape and other violent crimes, regardless of the victim’s status as a sex worker – thereby addressing widespread violence against sex workers, a concern of the propositions’ proponents and opponents alike.

“Social stigma and police abuses partner to further the marginalization of sex workers in all areas of the industry. This not only makes us targets for violence but prevents us from accessing basic needs, like health care and affordable housing, that are every person’s right,” says Dylan Wolfe of Sex Workers Action New York (SWANK).

Proposition K represented a strong public statement that sex workers deserve the same protection from violence as any other person – and should not have to risk arrest when they report violence to police. Sienna Baskin, of the Sex Workers Project at the Urban Justice Center, said “Our clients have been arrested, assaulted, and raped by police. Women of color and transgender women in particular are disproportionately targeted for arrest and abuse in the context of the policing of sex work. It is no wonder sex workers often don’t ask police for help when they are victims of crime.” Additionally, prostitution arrests and police harassment and violence against sex workers let others know that if they prey on sex workers, they are unlikely to be apprehended.

Opponents of Proposition K claimed that it would promote trafficking and make it difficult for police to identify trafficked persons. However, the measure would not have stopped enforcement of anti-trafficking laws, and in fact would have mandated that police investigate cases of coercion and extortion involving sex work. The Sex Workers Project has found that enforcement of anti-prostitution laws does not effectively protect trafficked persons, even when police have received specialized training. In fact, enforcement of anti-prostitution laws drives the industry further underground, making it more difficult to assist trafficked persons, and deters trafficked persons from going to the police for fear of being arrested or, in the case of immigrant victims, deported. In places where sex work is not a criminal offense, sex workers feel safer reporting trafficking when they see or experience it.

“We hope that the conversation started by Proposition K will continue across the nation and inform development of sound public policies that recognize and promote the human rights of sex workers,” said Susan Blake of Prostitutes of New York (PONY)

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# \$ SPREAD MAGAZINE

Contact:  
Shanna Lastname ###-###-####

## **Sex Worker Fashion Show**

***Spread Magazine Hosts Unique Live Show in Brooklyn, Nov. 7***

Sex workers and their friends will gather Monday night in New York City to celebrate the launch of the third issue of *Spread*, the only magazine in the country to explore the sex industry from a worker's perspective.

The celebration will include a sex worker fashion show which will feature the best of escort-wear, stripper gowns, lingerie, and fetish & bondage styles. Amateur models will strut the stage wearing their own creations, personal work-wear, and the designs and merchandise of The Pleasure Chest, and Bellavendetta.

Members of the press are welcome.

For more information about \$spread, visit: [www.spreadmagazine.org](http://www.spreadmagazine.org)

**WHERE:** Galapagos Art Space, 70 N. 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Brooklyn, NY

**WHEN:** Monday, November 7  
Doors at 7 pm, Live Fashion Show at 8:30 pm

**WHAT:** *Featuring:*  
**Escort-wear**  
**Stripper gowns**  
**Lingere**  
**Bondage & Fetish**

*Music by:*  
**DJ Tikka Masala**

*Sponsored by:*  
**Galapagos Art Space**  
**The Pleasure Chest**  
**Bellavendetta**

**TICKETS:** \$7 – 10 general admission  
\$5 – 7 sex workers' discounted admission

# \$ PREAD MAGAZINE

All tickets at the door

-30-



## PSA EXAMPLE



A public service announcement (PSA) is cheap to produce and is a useful tool. While radio stations and TV stations are under no obligation to play them they can be useful for taking up empty air time and helping to fulfill the general obligations the stations have to providing free air time for public programming. Still, you will need to give a good argument for your PSA being played.

### PSA Format

- Length: usually 30 seconds but sometimes as short as 10 seconds (30 seconds = ~65 words; 20 seconds = ~45 words; 15 seconds = ~30 words; and 10 seconds = ~20 words)
- The length should be exact, a TV station will cut off the end of your PSA if it is over or leave a pause of nothing if it is short.
- You can put more than one PSA on a sheet for the station to read from, just space them out well.
- The top of the sheet should read:

FOR USE: December 17th [or] IMMEDIATE [or] TFN  
30 seconds  
Sex Work Awareness  
"A Day of Remembering"

- Then the script (text) should be in two-columns with the left giving directions (camera angles, sound effects, etc.) and the right the dialogue to be read.
- No hyphens or abbreviations.
- Denote the end of the PSA with -30- or ### as you would a press release
- You can send either the script by itself or prerecorded audio with the script to the station.



### Things to consider when creating a new media project

- Who are you trying to reach?
- What are you trying to say?
- Is this an indefinitely ongoing project, a series, or a one-off?
- How will you promote it?
- Who is your desired audience?
- Are you interested in using new media as a jumping of point into newspapers, magazines, television etc?

### Think content before form but also consider your personal stance on outness

### Resources

- Making and Managing Media/Campaigns  
<http://www.messageinbox.tacticaltech.org/>
- Non-Profit Technology (NTEN) Guide to Social Media  
<http://www.wearemedia.org/>

### Relationship-based media

- On social networking sites like Myspace, Facebook, Ning – you are the brand
- Twitter: microblogging, headlines, community
- All are time-consuming two (or more) way conversations
- Social media is useful for a long-term investing in building your brand and contacts, not usually a band-aid for a short term promotional campaign
- Read the Terms of Service carefully before participating in social media sites
- Some sites stake a copyright claim to any content that you upload
- Many sites have restrictions on adult content, so evaluate what kinds of content you'll be uploading and think about the audience you want to reach

### Blogs

- Though people and organizations increasingly rely on social media sites to get their message out, a blog of your own is still an important too for establishing an online presence
- Once you decide on a clever name for your blog, buy the domain (awesomeblogname.com or whatever) even if you don't know how to create a hosted website. You'll regret it later if your blog gets popular and someone else snatches up the domain. GoDaddy.com is a good place to buy domains. Make sure you pay the additional money to keep the "whois" info private, and be sure to renew your domain every year

## NEW MEDIA BEST PRACTICES AND TOOL KITS



- When you're starting out blogging, using a free service to host your blog is fine. I recommend Wordpress.com over Blogspot.com because Blogspot has a filtering system for blogs they deem adult – a warning page gets slapped on the blog and visitors see this first. Tumblr.com is also a popular community-oriented and very easy to use blogging platform
- There have been a few reports of sex-related blogs hosted for free on Wordpress and Blogspot being disabled as “spam blogs” – for this reason, it is a good idea to have the blog hosted on your own .com with an installation of the blog software of your choice
- We recommend <http://dreamhost.com> as a host for adult-related blogs. They have an easy installation function for Wordpress, and hosting for an unlimited number of different domains starts at \$6.95 a month
- Marketing your blog to others is best done contextually. Instead of sending someone an email that generally points to your blog, select a particular post and send the permalink to people who you think might be interested in that particular subject. Building community through linking is key to the success of a blog
- You can start finding blogs that are similar to what you're writing by following links on blogs you read, plus you can do searches on keywords on sites like <http://technorati.com>, <http://blogsearch.google.com>, and <http://blogs.icerocket.com/> - these are also great tools to find out who is linking to you and writing about you in the blogosphere
- It is relatively easy to grow the traffic of a blog related to sex (after all, the internet is for porn), but high traffic isn't necessarily good quality traffic. Don't be dismayed if you get linked somewhere that gives you a spike of traffic that rapidly disappears; this has to happen frequently over time to grow your traffic in a meaningful way
- For information on blogging, safety and anonymity:  
<http://www.messageinbox.tacticaltech.org/anonblogging>  
<http://www.eff.org/wp/blog-safely>

### Email and identity

- If you are a present sex worker and you do not intend to use your blog to drum up business and instead want to speak freely about your work, you should consider having separate blog and work identities
- As part of this, you should create a blog-specific email address. Gmail is always handy, and though you can forward and respond to several Gmail accounts within on, the information for the core account will be included. For example, if you create [myhookername@gmail.com](mailto:myhookername@gmail.com) and respond to it through [myrealname@gmail.com](mailto:myrealname@gmail.com), email recipients may see both email addresses. For those who feel a need to be very private and keep an encrypted email, <http://www.hushmail.com/> is a great option



### Online Photo Communities

- The most widely used online photo community/service is Flickr.com. Though nudity and adult content is allowed on the site, Flickr often flags this content (and asks you to flag your own content) as unsafe. In addition to letting you browse and interact with contacts on Flickr, Flickr gives you the ability to host photos on the site and then embed them in other places
- Increasingly, Facebook users are using the site to host their photos. This is ok but there are some questions Also, on Facebook, your content and profile will get suggested to other users you aren't friends with, and we've heard a number of stories of people getting outed to folks via Facebook because of the site's friend settings. Even if you have a profile that is only viewable to friends, if you tag someone else in a photo it gives that person's friends access to the photo album the image was part of
- On any site, tagging photos with key words about the content of the photo, where it was taken, and what event it's related to is a useful way to get your content seen by more people

### Audio

- An audio podcast is typically an MP3 formatted audio file that can be downloaded into a music managing program (like iTunes) or onto a MP3 player (like the iPod or Zune). The main thing that distinguishes a podcast from an album is that podcasts are ongoing, often regularly scheduled. Many radio shows now upload their shows as free podcasts. Most podcasts have a subscribe option but are free
- The best and easiest way to get your podcast online and make it possible for people to subscribe to it is through <http://libsyn.com>. Libsyn looks and functions a lot like blogging software. Libsyn isn't free, it will cost you \$5 a month to start, but it will also help you set up a feed that will go to iTunes
- Audacity is a great free audio editing software that is available as a download for both Mac and Windows based computers. You can get it here: <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>
- It's worth spending money on a decent microphone if you can. A good quality microphone makes a lot of difference. If you plan to record most of your audio while sitting in front of your computer, look into getting a USB microphone that connects directly to your computer and record directly into Audacity
- If you're planning on recording on the go, there are plenty of devices available. MiniDisc recorders are great and high-quality, but create another media format for you to deal with. There are plenty of digital voice recorders on the market that will give you good quality files that you can drag right into Audacity. If you have an iPod or iPhone there are also microphones and applications that allow you to make recording directly to your device



### Video

- Videos can be made available as one-offs or as podcasts in the same way that audio files can become podcasts
- Cameras: the Flip camera is pretty awesome and simple to use. You can get older versions that operate on two AA batteries for around \$100. Most digital cameras come with a video recording function too, and the quality is fine for online. If you're going to go the prosumer Mini DV (tape) camera route, I recommend the Canon HV20, which starts around \$460
- I made a short video about shooting tips, which you can check out here: <http://tinyurl.com/fliptips>
- Editing video with free software. All Mac computers come with iMovie, which is a decently robust video editing program. Windows based computers are equipped with Windows Movie Maker. You can also upload and edit video, photo, and audio content on <http://jaycut.com> (highly recommended)
- WITNESS is a Brooklyn-based video advocacy non-profit that is excellent and supportive of sex workers. They have a really in depth PDF book that you can download for free from <http://www.witness.org> - the Video For Change Training Guide

### Video distribution service comparison

- YouTube is the most popular video sharing site on the web, but it also has its problems. Video quality degrades a bit when you upload a video to YouTube. Their Terms of Service are arranged so they have license to do as they please with your video (ie profit from a dvd including your video). The service also doesn't support video downloads (though there are workarounds).
- Blip.TV is excellent, high quality and all around awesome. There are also sex worker-friendly people on staff. Blip is our preferred video distro site. The blip page <http://sexworkerspresent.blip.tv> is open to all sex worker made videos; if you're interested in posting a video there instead of creating your own account, email [info@sexworkawareness.org](mailto:info@sexworkawareness.org)
- TubeMogul is an uber-distro site that can send your video to over a dozen different video sites with one upload. They also produce great statistics about videos that are uploaded through their system