

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** December 15, 2015

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Ronald V. Dellums Federal Building and US Courthouse 1303 Clay Street Oakland, CA,

Thursday December 17 2015 Noon-1 pm Press Conference/Rally

***International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers: Sex Workers Call for Federal Court To Rule***

The International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers (IDEVASW) started in 2003 when serial killer Gary Ridgway admitted killing over 70 women in Washington State in the 80s and 90s. When his rampage ended, he said he had picked prostitutes as victims because they were “the easiest targets” and that “no one would miss them”. Well he was wrong about that. Many of the family and friends did and do grieve. And the sex worker community’s grief is now memorialized every December 17th: The International Day To End Violence Against Sex Workers is an annual global event to highlight violence faced by sex workers.

San Francisco Bay Area sex worker groups are coming together on December 17th to call for the remembrance of sex worker victims at a Press Conference and Rally at the US Federal Courthouse in Oakland located at 1303 Clay Street. They are specifically calling for Judge Jeffrey White to rule on the Motion To Dismiss filed back in May by the California State Attorney General’s Office in response to the historic lawsuit ESPLERP v Gascon, that alleges that California’s prostitution statute, Statute 647(b) of the California Penal Code, violates fundamental constitutional privacy rights - and that sex work should be decriminalized.

“Current prostitution laws enable violent predators to target our community because they know that our illegal status deters many of us from coming forward and making police reports”, said Maxine Doogan, President of the Erotic Service Providers Legal Education and Research Project. “ That’s why getting a favorable ruling in our case is imperative as it will save lives! Since the federal judge is under no obligation to make his ruling in any specific time frame, sex workers will continue to vulnerable to violence. We demand decriminalization of our occupation now as a means to begin to respects our human rights and dignity, helps guard us against violence and abuse, and improves our access to justice.”

Rachel West of US PROStitutes Collective also expressed concern with how the perpetrators are allowed free rein. "Serial murderers of sex workers operate with impunity due to criminalization and law enforcement does little or nothing to stop the murders. Amnesty International has recently passed a policy calling for the decriminalization of sex work, which spells out the harm caused by criminalization and how it puts sex workers at great risk of violence".

*The Erotic Service Providers Legal, Education and Research Project (ESPLERP) is a diverse community-based coalition advancing sexual privacy rights through litigation, education, and research.*

Erotic Service Providers Legal, Education and Research Project (ESPLERP)

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