

Erotic Service Providers Legal Education and Research Project (ESPLERP) Year End Report - 2015

Our mission statement

The Erotic Service Providers Legal Education and Research project (ESPLERP) is a diverse community-based erotic service provider led group which seeks to empower the erotic community and advance sexual privacy rights through legal advocacy, education, and research. We seek to create change through a combination of impact litigation, policy statements, and voicing our concerns for our community in political arenas. Through educational trainings and outreach, we will address discrimination against erotic service providers and the greater erotic community. Lastly, we strive to archive and rate much of the research which has been done by and of the sex worker community, and build on this history with research which seeks to be increasingly inclusive, respectful, and ultimately, relevant to erotic service providers and the larger erotic community.

Our values

- Education: We seek to educate the public, politicians, and academia about the true social and economic costs associated with the criminalization of adult consensual sex.
- Empowerment: We seek to empower the voices of those who work as erotic service providers as well as the voices of those in the larger erotic community.
- Integrity: We seek to remain true to our constituency – erotic service providers and the larger erotic community – and to do it with honor.
- Justice: Every person, including erotic service providers and the larger erotic community, should have basic human rights, such as the right to legally work in the profession of one's choice, including sex work; and the right to privacy, including the right of adults to legally engage in consensual sexual relationships, regardless of remuneration.
- Leadership: We demonstrate leadership by posing legal challenges to unjust laws prohibiting prostitution; while alternatively, proposing just laws to legitimize prostitution; and, evaluating the scientific methodology and techniques applied to sex worker research to ensure scientifically sound and unbiased results.
- Respect: We extend our deep sense of self-respect to each other and to the sex industry and the larger erotic service provider community.
- Accountability: We are accountable to each other, and the larger erotic service provider community, to accomplish concrete results while displaying respect and integrity.
- Innovation: We are innovative in seeking and applying new ideas to accomplish our goals, and to bring education, empowerment, justice, leadership, respect, and accountability to erotic service providers and the larger erotic community.

Introduction

In the spirit of accountability, we present our year end report on our activities. No wonder we feel overwhelmed and exhausted...We did a lot of work! All of events, press releases, press conferences, interviews, social media making, and speaking. Not to mention the legal and policy advocacy involved hundreds of hours of work by our all volunteer board members as well as many supporting community members.

What follows is an outline of our main activities and achievements during 2015 (in no particular order). Please do ask us if you would like more information on any item below.

Lawsuit (legal impact)

In March 2015 we filed a historic lawsuit in Federal Court in Oakland arguing that Section 647 of the California Penal Code, which criminalizes prostitution (or sex work) is unconstitutional. The timeline is as follows (running into 2016).

- March 4 2015 - First filing - [ESPLERP Brief filed 3/4/2015 by Louis Sirkin in PDF format](#)
- May 8 2015 - Government's Motion To Dismiss - <http://esplerp.org/motion-to-dismiss-our-case-filed-by-attorney-general/>
- June 8 2015 - ESPLERP's Opposition to Government's Motion To Dismiss - [Opposition to motion to dismiss 6/8/2015 in PDF format](#)
- August 7 2015 - Judge Jeffrey White decides to vacate (cancel) the hearing, opting to submit his ruling in writing.
- January 15 2016 - ESPLERP files a supplemental brief - [SUPPLEMENTAL BRIEF FILED 1/15/16.](#)

We are now waiting on Judge Jeffrey White to issue a ruling - while in the meantime, sex workers in California, and nationwide, are harassed, persecuted, and even killed.

In practice, however the Judge rules, we or the State will very likely appeal - and the case will move up to the Federal 9th Circuit. We have a long road ahead.

Thank you for your support. We will continue to need everyone's time and attention in 2016.

Media

ESPLERP held 2 press conferences and sent out 6 press releases during 2015. Our organization and court case received coverage in 25 pieces of media in print, audio and video at the local and national level.

Our board member Elle created and launched a new website - <http://www.decriminalizesexwork.com/> - to focus on the ESPLERP v Gascon lawsuit. She also has done a great job setting up videos on the YouTube channel 2015 Sexworknation – to capture our good work and in turn use the videos to for more public education. <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZdXKm0CNL5YoSFAGml7V28rjAl1VPox>.

Elle has also provided training on how to get and keep our cause visible in social media. This is important because it is one of ways we have been able to generate revenue and media that helps support our case.

Fundraisers

The successful gofundme 2103/14 fundraiser made it possible to reach our goal of \$30,000 and then afford to file our court case which we did in March of 2015. We surmounted the online fundraising issues with gofundme.org and switched over to litigatetoemancipate.tilt.com but momentum had been derailed. Maxine was able to use social media to bring attention to the discriminatory practice by this financial instrument against our organization and others individuals alike. That resulted in online media publishing two stories about our case in particular and subsequent articles calling out the systemic discrimination against our class of workers. Media coverage is the primary driver of donation.

A special thanks to Amy & Sophia who rallied community members to put on two fundraisers for the case, one in May and one at Halloween. ESPLERP board members hosted a fundraiser in conjunction with Catalyst Con in Los Angeles where we raised awareness about our case and made new community

relationships. A few donors were able to put up specific amounts that were then used to run very successful short term matching funds campaigns that inspired new donors and many donors to contribute again. These matching fundraiser not only succeeded in doubling the original donation but they always exceed every matching goal. 350 donors raised \$40,318.26 this year with 94% going to court case costs and rest for legal education and overhead costs which are low at this time because we have no paid staff-yet. We ended the year with no outstanding invoices!

Rallies

ESPLERP members participated in the rally at the Harvey Milk Plaza in San Francisco on September 5, 2015 in support of Rentboy.com (<https://www.hoodline.com/2015/09/sex-workers-and-supporters-rally-in-reaction-to-rentboy-com-raid>) that demanded that Federal agencies stop criminalizing adults' private lives. The rally condemned the August 25 raid conducted by Homeland Security (DHS) and the New York Police Department (NYPD). Seven Rentboy.com employees who were subsequently arrested and charged with conspiring to violate the Travel Act by promoting prostitution. Their website, Rentboy.com, and bank accounts were seized.

ESPLERP held a community press conference and rally on December 17th on the International Day to Violence Against Sex Workers at the Ronald V. Dellums Federal Building and US Courthouse in Oakland California where the historic lawsuit is being decided by Judge Jeffrey White. The event featured community members speaking out in support of the lawsuit. Thanks to allies who provided the speaker and microphone.

Policy Education

ESPLERP was invited to provide testimony to the California Assembly Public Safety Committee hearing on Human Trafficking -

<http://hernandezstrategy.com/news/assembly-public-safety-committee-holds-informational-hearing-on-human-trafficking/>. We helped organize our community to come out and speak at the public hearing (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7pGy46yRSYk&list=PLZdXKm0CNL5YoSFAGmI7V28rjAI1VPox_) on how trafficking laws hurt our community members and don't help those they are intended to for.

Constituency & Public Education

ESPLERP sponsored a legal self defense training for Erotic Service Providers in September. The interactive workshop featured a criminal defense attorney who provided comprehensive reviews of current laws as well as policies and practices of law enforcement agencies. The workshop provided a comfortable environment for both newcomers and seasoned providers to dispel myths and brush up on safety practices.

The Stanford University Pre Law Society hosted a lively panel discussion on California's prostitution laws. ESPLERP v Gascon was featured along with defendant Alameda County Prosecutor, Professor Barbara Bents from UNLV, and a policy director from one of the anti-prostitution groups out of Washington DC.

We participated in a California Statewide HIV group calling for the state legislators to update HIV laws to reflect the reality of transmission and treatments.

Board Member, Ms. R. did a slideshow presentation to future law enforcement professionals at San Jose State University on sex work and the anti trafficking discourse.

Dancer Iris Perkins' "Untangled" performance and multi media presentation showcased her review of sex work rhetoric in December in San Francisco and Oakland - <https://swopphilly.files.wordpress.com/2015/12/image3.jpeg>. This effort was a collaboration between ESPLERP and the performance artists and a panel of erotic service providers answered questions afterwards.

Goals for 2016

Our goals for 2016 include the following. ESPLERP is a completely all volunteer board and therefore one of our goals this year will be find funding to pay somebody to keep up with all this.

- Broaden our donor base to expand our legal services, research and educational tracks as we continue to be 100% privately funded.
- Sponsor capacity building trainings for ESPs
- Sponsor public events to continue to increase awareness on status for ESPs.
- Expand our volunteer base.
- Expand capacity of our board members.
- Win the court case!