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December 17th: International Day To End Violence Against Sex Workers

Event Demands an End to Police Harassment of Sex Workers

San Francisco, CA – **At noon on Monday December 17th, 2018 at 630 Valencia Street, San Francisco, California, sex workers, allies and local residents will gather to demand that San Francisco Mission District Police prioritize sex workers' safety.**

The protest organized by Erotic Service Providers Legal, Education and Research Project (ESPLERP) and US PROStitutes Collective (US PROS) and endorsed by Rad Mission Neighbors, is part of an observance from around the world for the International Day to End Violence against Sex Workers. We come together in solidarity to honor sex workers lost to violence and to renew our commitment to the struggle for empowerment, visibility, and rights for all sex workers.

San Francisco Police Department and District Attorney's Office [announced a policy](#) on Jan. 11, 2018 that is supposed to protect the city's sex workers from being arrested or prosecuted for prostitution if they report being victim to or witnessing violent crime.

Rachel West (US PROS) who was part of the working group which won the policy commented:

"The formation of the Mission police captain's Sex Work Abatement Unit to aggressively arrest sex workers, clients and others associated with sex workers contradicts SFPD's recent Prioritizing Safety for Sex Workers Policy. Police crackdowns create a hostile and dangerous climate for sex workers who will be much less likely to report violence, rendering the policy useless. Women of color, trans and migrant women are being particularly targeted for arrest."

"Though Governor Jerry Brown signed a bill AB 2243 put forward by Assemblymember Laura Friedman (D-Glendale) that provides immunity from prosecution for prostitution to sex workers who come forward to report serious crimes, it's restricted to extortion, stalking, or a violent felony, which falls short", says Maxine Doogan (ESPLERP). "There are a whole host of crimes that we're victims of, non-violent felonies like theft, that should be covered."

ESPLERP had sought to gain access to equal protection under the law in their 2016 federal case to invalidate California's prostitution law in ESPLERP v Gascon [16-927].

The International Day To End Violence Against Sex Workers was started in 2003 in response to Gary Ridgeway's killing spree from 1982 through 1998 in King County, Washington. Ridgeway may have killed as many as 90 women, many of whom were prostitutes (sex workers) - who he deliberately targeted (as he said) " . . . because they were easy to pick up without being noticed. I knew they would not be reported missing

right away and might never be reported missing. I thought I could kill as many of them as I wanted without getting caught.”

“Most of the women out there in the Mission are mothers, working to support families at a time when poverty and homelessness are at record highs,” say event organizers. “If women are running from the police and fearful of arrest then violent crimes go under-reported, unaddressed and unpunished. Sex workers are part of our families, neighborhoods, and communities and deserve to be safe.”

Rad Mission Neighbors, which is endorsing the event, is a growing network of neighbors who don't support the stepped up arrests of sex workers in the Mission and are calling for an alternative approach.

US PROStitutes Collective is a multiracial network of women who work or have worked in the sex industry and campaigns for decriminalization of prostitution and resources so that on one is forced into sex work through poverty.

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

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