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Sex Workers Tell Media: Stop The Sloppy Reporting On The Robert Kraft Case

Sex Workers Ask News Organizations To Act Responsibly, To Do Research And Fact Check When Reporting On Sex Work; Call For Immediate Decriminalization Of Sex Work

San Francisco, CA - A sex worker activist group, the Erotic Service Providers Legal Education and Research Project (ESPLERP), today called out the media for their irresponsible, lazy reporting on the Robert Kraft case - and about sex work in general.

“The reporting on the Robert Kraft case has been incredibly sloppy and lazy,” said Maxine Doogan of ESPLERP. “You might expect a reputable news operation like the New York Times to conduct some basic fact checking - like checking what the individuals caught up in the Florida massage parlor prostitution sting were actually charged with - which turns out to be misdemeanor prostitution and nothing to do with ‘trafficking’ (<https://tinyurl.com/yxg6trvk>). But instead, they simply parroted law enforcement’s completely misleading and unsupported claims.”

“Florida law enforcement are doubling down on their ‘trafficking’ claims,” said Claire Alwyne of ESPLERP. “They used those claims to get a “sneak and peek” surveillance warrant, to mount a six month long operation that probably cost tens of thousands of taxpayer dollars, to receive sexual services from ‘victims’, and conduct illegal traffic stops. But they have absolutely zero evidence of ‘trafficking’ - and it would be completely embarrassing to admit that now.”

“News organizations love to drink the ‘trafficking’ Kool-Aid,” said Reada Wong of ESPLERP. “For example, every January anti-prostitution campaigners and law enforcement make a slew of announcements, faithfully reproduced by news organizations, about an outbreak of ‘trafficking’ at the Super Bowl. It would be so easy to fact check this - for example at Snopes (<https://tinyurl.com/y8jctpoe>), which notes that the ‘facts do not support the hypothesis’. It’s a myth. But they run it anyway.”

ESPLERP calls on news organizations to act responsibly - to fact check before reproducing extravagant claims about sex work. Not doing so, and therefore promoting trafficking hysteria, is a major contributor to the ‘moral panic’ that led so many legislators, including all the current Democratic presidential hopefuls, to vote for FOSTA. Sloppy reporting has consequences - sex workers are dying because of FOSTA. And the news organizations that uncritically ran ‘trafficking’ stories, the celebrities who stumped for it, and the politicians that campaigned for it, have blood on their hands.

Police should not be wasting time (and taxpayers money) arresting adults engaged in consensual sex. ESPLERP calls on legislators in all 50 states to decriminalize sex work immediately.

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. Contributions to support our work can be submitted at www.litigatetoemancipate.com.

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