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Keynote webinar:

**Women in the Sex Trade: Employment, Oppression, or Violence?**

**Shamita Das Dasgupta**

**October 18, 2017**

>>, Good afternoon. And good morning everyone. Welcome to the advocates Lee Learning Center keynote lecture, women in the sex trade, employment, oppression, or violence? This is Diane Docis at Praxis international and I will be moderating today's lecture. These have special place in our curriculum. The series was designed to inspire our thinking and imagination, and expand their knowledge of different approaches and frameworks to human rights advocacy. They feature practitioners, writers, scholars, thinkers and activists working for social justice, both inside and outside the violence against women movement. People who can give us any perspective as we strengthen our own social change advocacy. The speakers have been selected to augment our ALC course because of their diverse experiences, their perspectives, and their different ways of thinking about social change. I am so pleased today to introduce someone you already know, my ALC colleague Shamita Das Dasgupta. You met her virtually in one of your introductory webinars back in June and in class oh you will know her from in person events, from the immersion event and from the community advocacy training as well. Shamita is usually our keynote moderator but today we are happy to welcome her as our keynote speaker. In addition to her role in the ALC, Shamita is the teacher, writer, mother and grandmother. She is cofounder of Manavi, the first organization in the US to focus on violence against self Asian immigrant movement. She is also the founding board member of practice and it long time consulted in our work. In addition to numerous articles and reports,

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Shumeeta is the author of five books including *body evidence*. *Violence against South Asian women in America*, *mothers for sale*, *women in the Calcutta sex trade*, and *globalization and gestational surrogacy in India*, of *sourcing life*. Shamita is also an advocate, she is our sister in our struggle and movement to end violence against women. Welcome to you Shamita.

>> Thank you so much. Welcome to everyone, thank you for joining us today.

>> Before we turn things over to you let's bring Liz from Praxis in for some webinar tips for us.

>> Thanks Diane. Hello it is good to be with you, it is always good to be with you. Just a few reminders, you are familiar with this platform but I will remind you that you should adjust the display boxes on your screen to your own preferences, that this webinar is being recorded and will be on the class webpage, and that if you have any questions or comments to pass along to our speakers, we encourage you to do so freely in the Q&A box on your screen. Or if you have technology issues use that box to connect with myself or our TA2TA webinar host and whatever the circumstance, question, or comment, or technology issue, we will do our best to navigate those things and to respond to you within the webinar. With that, Shamita and Diane, I will turn it back to you. Thank you so much thank you so much Liz. Moving us forward. I think I have the easy part today. In the role of moderator, it's the great role because I get to listen to you Shamita and enjoy hearing from you, but I am also here to chime in, to bring in your questions. So as we listen to Shamita explores this topic today, as questions arise, please share them in that Q&A box and I will pass them along to Shamita. Shamita I know there are silly directions we can explore with this topic, I am interested in hearing what you have chosen to focus on today. Let me turn it over to you.

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>> Thank you Diane. This is a thorny topic for me and very emotionally difficult topic for me, because I have worked with women who are engaged in the sex trade cup. Right from the beginning, we are at least I as an advocate become confused as to how to approach this. That is one of the explorations that I would like to talk about today. The title of today's presentation is women in the sex trade, employment, oppression, or violence? How did my interest in this topic grow?

>> Like many of you my work has been with battered women and sexually assaulted women. With Manavi my work, we worked with women who are engaged in the sex trade, they were very few, I would say in some ways we addressed it as not to special case but as the woman who has come to seek support or help from Manavi. But in India I ended up working with an organization called [ inaudible ], and that is an organization that has the shelter home for teenage victims of trafficking, young girls who were trafficked and used in the sex trade. And when the police rescued them, or they run away, or something else happened, many times they ended up in the shelter home. I started going there to talk to them and to assert degree, I think all of you have some of the folders that these young girls made. When you start the ALC process, you get those folders. By the end when you graduate you will have something that is related to this particular group of young women. So my interest was at that point, what is going on in their lives? And I became very interested in talking to them.

>> From that interest, I ended up putting together, writing her book called mothers for sale. The majority of these young girls, all under the age of 18, were mothers. And they took their motherhood very seriously or very interestingly. Sometimes it was it came to them, because they are so young, and sometimes it

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was a tremendous sustenance, or much of the time it was a tremendous sustenance for themselves and their survival. Then I ended up interviewing some adult women who were engaged in the sex trade in India that is 300 years old, it is one of the oldest red light districts of the world called [ inaudible ]. Some of you may have seen the video about mobile back that we use in the community advocacy training. So I had started thinking about it, and I wrote about it.

>> And thought well, I'm not sure I know everything about this area, or I would like to discuss it more. From that feeling of I would like to talk with people more, from that this keynote emerged. The idea came from working in a teenage home and my interviews with adult women who are engaged in the sex trade. I'm sorry I'm going to ask Diane to keep changing the slides. My computer is kaput.

>> So what is the popular media presentation? What do we end up seeing, and Diane is of perfect person to talk about this. The media images that we have. Of battered women, sexually assaulted women. Coming from that angle, what is the media presentation of the sex trade? And women who are engaged in it?

>> Part of it, if you look at these pictures, they show it as A fun job. There may be some trials and tribulations but not too bad. In the number of books in the 1970s I woman named Savior Hollander who wrote about her engagement in the sex trade, the name of the book was happy Hooker. It came out as the movie. The idea always was, and many times with the films, and popular stories, media stories that we see, is that prostitution is fun, it is kind of an adventure, it may away be a way of satisfying sexuality.

>> And always somewhere there is the idea that it is easy money. You don't have to work too hard, and the backbreaking job cooking hamburgers or cleaning homes or other things, or that we do, from that is much easier work. You set your

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own time, and you charge what you want, and you do it when you want to do it. It is a good way, and easy way of making money. That is the popular image.

>> This image forgets totally about all of the dark sides of prostitution. The stigma that is generally associated with it is overlooked. If you have seen pretty women, the movie, it seems like the wonderful way of getting up for advancement, it's the wonderful way of going up in society. In the stigma is generally overlooked, or sometimes dismissed as a tightness of the conservative society about sexuality in play. It is almost like sexuality and prostitution is a one on plaything. And if any of us, in particular advocates who have this reputation of being grim people, so it is their uptight which should be questioned. And also there is this idea that when a woman is engaged in the sex trade, she will meet Mr. right who is going to come around and take her away from the work and they would live happily ever after.

>> Think about the film pretty woman. Also this Beverly Hills madam, or they are our a number of other high visibility women who are quote unquote madams, who have come out with this kind of a production of image. And the point is that a woman who is engaged in prostitution is no more worse for the wear, and the customer and she benefit from the experience. It's a slightly different version of the story that this man is going to come and rescue her and everything is going to be great.

>> The next lie?

>> I'm having a thought as you review this for the first time. It is seeing the contradiction inherent in that, and thinking that there will be A rescue work, but at the same time, framing the experience of the woman working in the sex trade as being positive. And therefore theoretically someone would not need to be rescued from it.

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>> That is really a good question or perspective. This kind of contradiction is everywhere for women. In every work, in everything they do, that there is always going to be somebody, some man who will come in and help you become better or help you lead a good life. So amongst the sex trade, women who are engaged in the sex trade it is no different. That somehow she is going to meet someone who will marry her and they will have live happily ever after. It is always there. And in fact the women I have talked to continuously talk about this. The women I have interviewed always talk about somebody who is going to come around.

>> It is a very interesting, as you say very contradictory notion of a difficult position in society, and yet is portrayed as fun and a man rescuing them, at the same time. Thank you for pointing that out. Absolutely. There is no way we can say there is a in Tarrant compared image. It is definitely contradictory.

>> The next light?

>> I'm sorry I'm unable to see.

>> Who is the prostitute? This is something we will have to talk about. How do we know who is a prostitute in society? And as we go into the theoretical arguments, this whole idea of prostitution, and for lack of a better word, engaged in the sex trade, many theoretical positions and pro-prostitution advocates say, we are coming from a very middle-class, quote unquote position. How do we know, when we talk about prostitutes, how do we know who a is one? How do we distinguish them who are not prostitutes? Is it women who are like us or are they different from us? As you see in the slide, it is women who wear certain clothes, behave in sexually suggestive manner, any of those things. Does that make somebody a prostitute? Could women accept gifts from his sexual partner, and any of those things. The biggest seems to be, the definition pointing to seems to

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be, to sell services for purposes of sexual intercourse, but there is also an exchange of money there. So exchange of sex for money seems to have clinched the definition of prostitute. But in that case, how do we separate that from gifts from sexual partners? Or her boyfriend who says, will I will pay your rent because you don't have money right now. Women who may have many sexual partners, so how do we define that? How do we distinguish them?

>> This is a serious problem, once we get into it we will see. The whole discourse, and so, here is an interesting definition which basically says that it is an exchange of money, but it is also choosing or being forced to violate social codes, whatever that might be. The interesting part is the discourse. The discourse on prostitution abounds with such questions. There are points that are very contradictory and confusing, it's polemic. We really don't know how to distinguish one from the other.

>> As you will see, some pro-prostitution theories actually talk about marriage, actually equate marriage and prostitution. So again we have to think about what that means. We will get to that in the pit. You will get to that in a bit.

>> How do we know? You don't put the P on the four head. The old adage that we will know that when we see them does not necessarily work at all. That's the problem again. If you think about it, the whole idea of the reality is very closely associated with the idea of prostitution. Societies morality, whether we like it and even with all of the sexual liberation that is happened in this country or around the world, women who with loose morals, promiscuous, are considered to be prostitutes. They are called slots. Men who are abusive routinely call their female partners or in almost every language. In almost every language they refer to them as that. Especially if they are seen as objects of desire, lascivious objects. So they are continuously called prostitutes. How do we do that? How do we distinguish?

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>> Some theories say that prostitution is not going to be there unless there is a society. Prostitution would vanish unless we have a society with a moral code that frowns on women who deliberately have sex with many people. And upon the exchange of money and sex. If society throws away that moral code then there is nobody who is a prostitute, who was a prostitute. The code is gender discriminatory. Men may engage in the same thing, and it is going to be seen as their prowess, their sexual prowess. But not women. So the code is gender discriminatory, but it is there, and if we don't have that, there is going to be no category as prostitution.

>> Let's decide that women who are engaged in commercial sex are prostitutes. Here are some facts about prostitution. I apologize that it is a 2012 statistics. I tried to get more recent ones and it seems to be they only come out in 10 year increments. I could not get more recent statistics.

>> What is important here is if you look at it there are 40 to 42 million women engaged in prostitution around the world. That is almost like a whole country, the population of the medical country. And most of them are between 13 and 25 years old. If you look at money being spent on prostitution worldwide, 100 \$86 billion and probably more now. This is astonishing. This is really huge. We will go later on to which countries ban prostitution or make it illegal. Interestingly even in those places prostitution forces. And also, country governments often depend on prostitution or the money from prostitution. In countries where there is military installation, particularly from another country, countries that open up for the military, such as the Philippines, countries that have tremendous forced foreign tourism, these are all places that are very high in demand of prostitutes. Many of the governments depend on that income.

>> My apologies to the class as we navigate this.

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>> Just be patient with us. The truth about prostitution and sex work, it is not monolithic. In fact I work mainly with street-level prostitutes and this is what they do, and the areas they live in. And they are the poorest of the poor. In this category of women. But there are upper-class prostitutes who only work in large hotels or resorts, they are highly paid call girls, and they are what is called flying homemakers. Flying homemakers are homemakers who make money on the side. And of course male prostitutes. And we have talked about everything here, why do they enter? For different reasons obviously. And part of it is we have to recognize even as advocates, this may be one way women, shame society. Societies don't provide women more ways of advancement. This is one way women may advance in society.

>> Shamita can you explain what you mean by advancement?

>> To make financial gain. Who may actually have enough money to do other things in life. Advancement in the sense of financially becoming secure. So there are women who may not find eight quote unquote legitimate job, and this may be the only way they not just survive, but strive's. But others may not have the job but you get the feeling they are not advancing as perhaps their male colleagues in the use prostitution on the side to make money for economic advancement. Does that make sense?

>> Yes, thank you. That is something that we do end up seeing with highly paid quote unquote call girls. Or flying homemakers etc. And of course the last, which is actually trafficking, that is the track we seem to focus on, the area we end up focusing on. But as we will go into it later, there are other ways, other things that we need to think about when we are talking about prostitution.

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>> This may be good time to ask if there are any questions. And I guess Diane, they can write in their questions right?

>> Yes, as we go through the session today, reminder to please send us your questions or thoughts or comments in the Q&A box. We will pass them along to Shamita and right now there are no questions in. So you can continue.

>> All right. The next light, which is actually the debate, and the debate is how to label this phenomenon? This is the totally theoretical understanding of sex work. Or prostitution, women engaged in the sex trade. The one side is that we think of this as prostitution, which is damaging to the soul. Selling sex changes oneself identity and therefore women are victimized, and should be called prostituted women. The reason for that word, prostituted, meaning that somebody else is prostituting them is what we will talk about in a little bit. And the idea that selling sex is not work and it is doomed humanizing therefore, it is dehumanizing therefore that last category is what is important, selling sex is defined by patriarchal norms. Intersociety, men tend to buy sex, and they assume that women are going to be available to them whenever and wherever. This is only part of that idea. The entitlement of buying the woman's body. The other side of the debate is that it should be called work, that selling sex is an occupation.

>> It may be different from teaching or selling your knowledge, but it is an occupation, and the difference between the two seems to be the recognition of women's agency. It is called sex work it is assumed that women may be entering it out of deliberate choice, where is I'm going to say prostituted women, we are really talking about women who are being forced into it or someone tricked them into it. Or they have no other recourse. This is the only thing that they can do. So what is an idea of free agency.

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>> This is where it becomes interesting. The argument is that in fact, prostitution or sex workers and wives are not so different. Both are exchanging sex for money. Or sex for sustenance. Therefore why is it that wives are considered to be respected people in society, and women who actually sell sex are not. Of course the argument that comes out in this this area is that it is patriarchal dictate. That patriarchy decides what is good and bad.

>> It is not women. And in fact, prostitutes are considered, sex workers are considered that because they actually set the terms of what they sell and how they sell it and how much they sell it for. Where is the wives don't have that kind of freedom. It is very provocative argument, and there is a lot of debate that goes on around that. But it is something that we should talk about and think about, how is that different?

>> And also it says that selling sex is critiquing the roles of women, that is girls and women we have no other resource, no other Avenue to make money. That in every society, each society cannot provide those women enough work or work that sustains themselves or helps them advance in society. Therefore they have to engage in this. It is provocative and that since.

>> It is postmodern thinking. And it is also the idea of what is, human sexual activity, is it bad or wrong. One of the theorists is [ inaudible ], and she says, and I was quoted here, both sexuality and prostitution are institutions, the institution of heterosexual prostitution query being derivative of heterosexual male sexuality, and [ inaudible ]. Within that comes in marriage, comes just having sex with somebody you care for or you know, and in that same continuum, prostitution is going to be a part of it. Rinse prostitution activists call this the fallacy.

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>> That really it is trying to make it very unpalatable occupation and very violent occupation for women Pallotta bowl to the rest of the world. And that cannot be tolerated. Now I find this to be interesting because, the idea of heterosexuality and prostitution is what becomes important here. If we think about it, prostitution is all about male sexuality. 99% of the customers of women engaged in the sex trade are men.

>> So prostitution is all about men sexuality, the social economic power that this gender has, and men's entitlement to accessing women's bodies at will. Women engaged in prostitution have little choice in the matter, for that matter, they actually sell their bodies and much of the money is taken by pimps or their agents. And there is a lot of coercion that pushes them towards prostitution. And the coercion of poverty and social marginalization, violence, or even parents or family selling one child, one woman, one daughter to survive.

>> In this case heterosexuality and prostitution go hand in hand. Prostitution should be formulated as male sexuality in the capitalist world. In a capitalist violent world. For many people the social space of this has really changed, for many people in the world, after colonization, after world wars, things have become quite different in terms of prostitution and sexuality.

>> In fact after the wars, the world wars, the first and second, prostitution basically increased exponentially. All over the world. Through colonization, and militarization, military installments all over. Prostitution flourishes. What we have to think about is how does the culture of masculinity intersect heterosexuality? And prostitution?

>> Masculinity, if you think about it, masculinity is about accessing women's bodies whenever, wherever, however. And the entitlement of that. And also

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impregnation to certain degree. If you think about it, men who are unable to have children, or who are respectful about women, are called sissies. They are derided in society and particularly the violent image of aggressive masculinity, puts men who are gentle down.

>> So we have to think about that in terms of this kind of violence masculinity. Are there any questions?

>> Something comes to mind for me is you are exploring this Shamita are the intersections of race and class as you mentioned here under the third bullet point, and thinking about the post world wars, and during wars as well. And the ways, what comes to mind immediately is some of the comfort women. But all of those layers of race, and class, and gender that come into play, and power, and power over. It is very complex.

>> It is. It is extremely complex. It is also something that we really need to think about, and really need to challenge at various levels. But this is the opposite of what we are talking about here, there are of course detractors who are talking about, who say that it is true that some women are forced into prostitution and mainframe to remain through intimidation but not all are that is not the universal truth. There are many who enter prostitution from their own free will.

>> In this idea, generic idea of helpless female and oppressor mail, is very much based on this middle-class ideology. And that tries to maintain female sexuality within chased ideas. Why should we do that? There is no reason to do that, and all kinds of nonnormative sex then becomes, is condemned at that point. So let's think about not doing that.

>> I think about the ways we can hear some of this echoed in discussions around sexual assault prevention, in the general discourse, and how that can be framed

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as protection, and protecting women, and who are the women we are talking about protecting. And does that mean white women. And then the framework of liberation versus protection so that is coming to mind for me as well as you explore this.

>> You are absolutely correct this has been very big part of it. In the colonial times, when you're British were colonizing all over, they were all very eager to protect white females. And white femininity so to speak. And that's where the frustration came that white women should not be mixing with quote unquote dark skinned natives. And yet, white men actually engaged, I wouldn't say respectfully, aggress on local women brown skinned and black skinned women, because they thought that they are less than humans.

>> And therefore it is okay, the standards do not apply to them. So on the one hand, white women are being protected, and the idea was that while we can use the black women, so that the sexual energy is diverted onto that side over there. And the white women become protected.

>> It is not just white women being protected from dark skinned people but also from pent-up sexuality of white men. It is the very complex idea and sometimes when I think about it, oh my gosh, there is of tremendous amount of hegemonic and oppressive behavior that people of color in developing countries and colonies countries have faced.

>> Let's go to the next slide. Theoretical positions on prostitution. Radical feminists, they are very very anti-prostitution position. They are very strictly anti-prostitution. It says that however they come into it, they are coerced. They are they are economically, or by poverty, or by the historic position of women which is always subservient. And the two main proponents of this as you can imagine is

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Catherine McKinnon and [ inaudible ], and they really have talked a lot about this, and they talked about how male sexuality, prostitution is about male sexuality and about making, utilizing women to make money for men, not for them. The way we think of prostitutes, women engaged in the sex trade making money, is absolutely wrong. Because what they do is they make money for the pimp who is almost always the mail. Or they make it for other agencies. But they themselves hardly ever make money. It is also not about their freedom, their liberation, their free will. Because women have no free will in the situation. When men are entitled to access their body. So the female sexuality we are talking about, what theorists talk about in terms of women sexuality, it is literally constructed by men and managed by men. If the patriarchate construction, of female sexuality that is in joyful service of men. And women are enjoying it. And it is also managed by men, and it serves male desires. And this has very little to do with the realities of women engaged in prostitution.

>> What they face is violence, they face trafficking, which are very integrally linked, so it is not something that we can say that they engage in for advancement or in free will. They have little choice in the matter. So on the other side the Reformation focus says that may be true, and some women engage in it willingly, others may be forced into it. But the people who want to get out can't get out, it should always be that people who want to get out can't get out. Trafficking must be stopped because that is violent.

>> But we can change on the edges. We can make the edges of this work different, the women can't be less exploited. We can stop women's exploitation. We should not be too negative about this. And the third idea is that regardless of how women enter into this, it is all legitimate. Because even if the 13-year-old enters, after trafficking, into prostitution after trafficking, if they ask her at 25 if

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she wants to leave the situation she probably won't. They should just make it safe for them to engage in prostitution.

>> These are very oppositional perspectives. These are the ones that are important and they dominate the discourse. What is interesting, next line please, next slide please, these are the solutions, right? The solutions the radical feminists say is it has to go. And prostitution by legislation, advocacy, punish people who gain from it, and look for social change. As we will talk about later, they do not advocate for criminalization of the women who are engaged in it. We will get to that little later. Whereas Reformation, the second point says coercion must him, but let's provide women with good laws that protect them and stop exploitation. Provide alternate occupations that are equally beneficial to women and let's go on from there.

>> The third one basically says legitimate occupation so bite support and protective legislation and all of those things. It is not going to go away because it is been there historically forever. Expending our resources to end prostitution, instead of that we should make it better, easier, and more safe, and more profitable for the women. Know this, by the way is an interesting position because many of the women I have talked to go with that.

>> But what was interesting to me, is when I asked would you recommend your daughter into the sex trade, and they almost invariably said no. And if it is such an wonderful occupation, then why not your daughter? And they said no, there are problems. But since I have been again engaged in it for so long, there is nowhere else I can go. So it is much more of the situation of coercion due to helplessness. That is what I felt.



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>> This kind of discourse rages all over continuously. Among scholars, among different advocates, and policymakers by the way. So here is the crux of the matter in some ways. It is the idea, next slide, women sexuality, sexual pleasure and agency. The position which is the radical feminist position is what is also called sex negative feminists, I don't know why. That kind of bothers me. Because it is the putdown I think in some ways.

>> I would say it is not at term of those here who would have chosen for themselves.

>> What we have been talking about, this is not about women's sexuality, it is not about women's sexual pleasure. Prostitution, women's are victims of a system that produces and reproduces the sex trade for the satisfaction of male pleasure, and male sexual pleasure and power. The power to buy women, the power to degrade women in some ways. The prostitutes body actually becomes a representation of patriarchal imaginings, of female sexuality that is joyful and subservient. That enjoys the service of men.

>> To me, that totally makes sense in the way we see what is happening. And in my experience when I talk to women that is something I have seen. There is little free will in any of this. But they also say that well, some ways, I hinted at it earlier, think about the marriage, why promote marriage in the society if we are going against prostitution.

>> Marriage is basically the contract also to have full access to women's bodies and their sexual labor, but in the marriage, women have difficulty getting out of the institution that actually punishes them for getting out of the contract. Whereas our prostitute can contract as the free agent, I don't believe that, but it

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is time-limited. They may engage in a contract but it is time-limited, marriage is assumed to be forever. And therefore the exchange part is buried in all of this.

>> It is buried in the rhetoric of love, and it disempowers women in some basic ways. So it is something we can think about. That's the position one perspective, position two and three which is reformist and totally allowable, as the legitimate occupation and role, perspective, basically says as feminists you have to understand that sexuality is not negative and women can make their own decisions and some ways. Prostitution actually can be a legitimate form for sexual pleasure, of sexuality. In some ways, I will tell you, there are a number of groups that are working in these areas. The coalition against trafficking in women, or [ inaudible ], basically follows the first perspective which is you have to curb the demand for commercial sex and and sexual exploitation of women. There is another one called global alliance against trafficking in women, GA ATW, and their thing basically says how women make informed choices and implement good laws. And within that also, or close to it, is a group that says it is legitimate occupation, one of the groups, I don't know if you know about it, it was quite active at one time called call off your old tired ethics, coyote, it was situated in the US.

>> It assume that women have are right to sell sex like any other marketable skill such as carpentry, such as teaching, such as medicine or whatever that might be. Let's not get all uptight about this. My argument against that is, for prostitution, for all other occupations that we can think of, we need some kind of an education, not education but skills development. Where's prostitution, only needs the anatomy of one's body and nothing more. And then we have to think about, is that enough to assume that it is in marketable skill?

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>> I don't know the answer to that quite frankly. I have enough arguments with my friends on that. Let's go to the next slide. The crux of the debate.

>> I'm still thinking about the last thing. I don't really have any comment or question. I'm going over to my head. Let me posit also remind participants, if you haven't question, that you have actually been able to formulate, like me, please feel free to type it into the Q&A box.

>> Shamita I will turn it back over to you, for the crux of the debate.

>> The point here if you think about all of these positions, is due women have free will. Do women have free will to engage in prostitution? Or engage in marriage? Or engage in anything else? Are they subjugated, do they have the will to do these things?

>> Many people assume it is in matter of degree not matter of difference in kind. So yes prostitutes may have a slightly lower free will, but so do women who are married, they may have a slightly different level of free will. But it is still in question. Do women have free will?

>> Can women have free will in a society that is basically patriarchal? And you are going to answer this for us right?

>> I am pausing for you to engage in that.

>> I feel like I am in a philosophy class, I think about this I think what is free will? What does that mean X what does that mean in the context of gender oppression and classes of women, capitalism, and what does that mean for any of us in any line of work? Go ahead, answer it for us now Shamita.

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>> Go to the next slide. What is free will? Does anybody have complete free will? Or do we only have various degrees of it? And if that is so, then how is engagement in sex, it may be slightly different but not completely. It may not be completely devoid of free will, that is something we have to choose.

>> The question of free will is very difficult issue. Do we all have choice, free choice. Forget about prostitution, but for anything in society, or does society exert direct or indirect influences on us to make those choices. As women with a particular body, a particular socialization that goes along with that body, where do we start and where do we end free choice? Or free will?

>> Again, going back a little bit in that, the prostitute advocates often say actually, the women who are engaged in sex work are challengers to the patriarchal standard, which is wise and chaste and faithful etc. And that which is single and promiscuous and takes money for sex, that is kind of the good and bad femininity. So they are bringing out a very fundamental question or issue in a patriarchal world. In a patriarchal capitalist world. Because the money becomes the crux of all of this along with free will.

>> The patriarchal capitalistic market that locks women out of advantages, not because of anything else but because of her body, and how that body is made, what is wrong for her to use that body to become not only go forward, but to go ahead, but also at the same time expose the hypocrisies of that society? I think one of the things that came to me so clearly is that lately we have been talking about Weinstein the argument that's going on.

>> Weinberg right?

>> Weinstein you are right.

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>> The Weinstein argument going on, you end up seeing, I'm sure many of you have looked at the me too campaign that is going on, women writing me to on Facebook or media. If they have been sexually harassed one of the things we also see in this Weinstein debacle is look it all of these very very famous, very powerful actors and actresses who basically say, and by the way there were any couple of been that came out talking about this, but who basically said that they were harassed and they couldn't say anything.

>> They could not talk about it. And they had to bite their tongue to work in the industry. These are powerful women, they make a a lot of money, they are big names. And they are having such problems. And it is only true, one woman who started speaking about it, that all of this came out. It is a similar kind of argument that the woman who is engaged in the sex trade is actually challenging, she is the Challenger of the standards of good and bad. Patriarchal standards of good and bad. So another theorist who talks about female sexuality in the context of the sex trade, she basically says that marriage and prostitution are similar. That they are very much similar.

>> And they are not that different, but she has more respect, and she talks about prostitution as a much more challenging and regulated by contracts. So she may or may not [ inaudible ] if she does not like the person. Or she may and it with one encounter. But not so with marriage. That is the huge problem right there.

>> Let's go to the next one. No,

>> Silence and prostitutes the US data. Are you go.

>> Here we have the US data. This is something I think is very, very important to look at. It is pretty old data. It is 1998, one study. And we are talking about ready to million people, it is of very small study, 42 million across the world. This study

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focuses on 100 30, women and transgendered people engaged in sex work in San Francisco. What they found was interesting to me. They not only talked about what happens during their engagement prostitution, but also what happened before. And what they show is that 57% were sexually assaulted as children.

>> Child sexual abuse may be one of the triggers that take people to prostitution. 49% admitted to being physically assaulted as children. Other than that, as adults engaged in prostitution, look at the percentages. It is extraordinarily high. It is 82% have been physically assaulted. 83%, very close, had been threatened with the weapon. And 68% have shown signs of PTSD. It is almost like we are talking about the battlefield. Where women are working. It is not just an occupation. According to the reformists or occupation theorist, it is the dangerous occupation. It is an occupation that creates PTSD in people who are engaged in it.

>> What is interesting is this is an argument that has been promoted, but the next thing you know, is there an argument that there is an argument back saying is it more the same way? Don't soldiers have PTSD? So it is like any other dangerous occupation. It happens to be that more women are engaged in it.

>> As I look at this I think it couple of things, like I want to see the statistics of the general population as of comparison. And then you can also see how the argument for harm reduction and reform, steps to create increased safety, how that comes about if you look at the statistics. You can look at the statistics I come to different conclusions.

>> Absolutely. And to me what is important is that if we are looking at the preconditions, this high level of child sexual abuse and physical assault, you see that gives us an idea of how to change society and what to do. It also makes me happy that is advocates we've been trying to do that, all of us are doing that.

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Something is there to [ inaudible ]. This particular study does that. Wouldn't you say?

>> Yes absolutely. But I also think about some of the adverse childhood experiences and that trauma piece and that statistic on PTSD. We don't know necessarily, or you might from reading research, is the PTSD result of engaging in prostitution or were those with PTSD from other experiences more likely to go into sex work.

>> That is the good question because we hardly ever know the relationship in these kinds of studies. We only know the correlation. When the participants of the studies, they responded to the questionnaire or they were interviewed, they all showed signs of PTSD. But we don't know the causal relationship, is it the cause of the childhood or maybe it is the childhood and, not one, but adult engagement in what they are doing every day.

>> It could be tremendous. And it is calm pounding probably. If you go to the next slide? The violence in prostitution worldwide statistics, look at that. This is also coming out of the prostitution research world. 70 to 95% of prostitutes are physically assaulted as they engage in the trade. That is an extraordinary number. Look at the rape statistics. Sexual harassment, and women's law talks about each prostitute is probably raped 8 to 10 times per year in their work. That is an extraordinary statistic. Although the PTSD that we were just talking about we are saying we don't know what the cause of it is, I can imagine that we can surmise that it is the causal relationship right there. That's an extraordinary statistic.

>> And was so much you been describing, the complexity of trying to pull apart Ortiz out what is connected to water what is caused by what, or what we can't determine and what we can. Again, going back to the complexities of this topic.

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>> Next one, next slide. So the impact of prostitution, what happens, is it just an occupation? That is the question. One thing we know from statistics previously presented is it prostitution facilitates rape and murder. How many murders of women and girls engaged in prostitution happen, and how much is sexual assault as well as physical abuse, instances of physical abuse that go on. Even when men are engaged in prostitution when women are at much higher risk of being prostituted. Boys might actually be prostituted and my assumption is always that any child who is engaged in prostitution, that is the violence itself. Children do not have, we cannot talk about free will and children.

>> Even with adult women, and men, women are at much higher risk of being prostituted than men copying traffic. It is totally different for men and women. For the same kinds of exposure. The other thing to me that was very telling is the last bullet, one study found 75% of women engaged in prostitution have attempted suicide at least once.

>> And of course it is going along with the patriarchal idea of women being disposable, not important to society, women are to be used and abused. Next one.

>> So here is the 100 countries is that what we are looking at? The 100 countries and their prostitution policies. If you look at it, and very large chunk is it is legal. And where it is illegal, often what ends up happening is women are the ones who get arrested because they are engaging in an illegal trade. Women are picked up and arrested and convicted and so on and so forth. It is not the customers who get punished, but the women who were engaging in it. It's the same idea if you look at it population wise, you can see how it is.



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>> What is the solution? Here is what has become important. There are two different approaches. One is criminalization, and one is legalization. Those are two totally opposite ends of this, they are oppositional. Criminalization is basically all aspects of prostitution must be made into the criminal problem. That it is illegal, selling sex, buying sex, being apparent, everything associated with it must be made into in criminal activity. Sweden did something which work they criminalize the buying of sex only. So the men customers would be picked up. They saw an 80% decrease in trafficking.

>> Whereas many women who are engaged in prostitution totally protest this and go against it because they say if the buyers are criminalized, unless we have an occupation, we are not going to be eating. So if buyers are criminalized and nobody is coming, and nobody is coming to buy sex or must you better give us something so we can eat or raise our children or do whatever. You cannot have one without the other.

>> That again is that your complex problem, you have to look at it in a holistic way. The other side is legalization.

>> That is everything goes, it's okay, as long as it is not violence, and that falls under regular assault laws. The third might be decriminalization which is you make it into misdemeanor, no criminal penalty, but child prostitution and trafficking is almost always criminalized.

>> Next slide. As advocates, what can we do? One of the things, when I started working in India, with women who are engaged in the sex trade, one of the things I noticed was many of the organizations that are working with battered women, or sexual assault victims, do not engage with women who are engaged in the sex trade. I think that is a problem, that we do have to, as advocates, we must treat

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and think of inclusion or including women as victims and facilitate their access to our work. Our advocacy. We must be engaged in that.

>> Otherwise what we are doing is creating A marginalized group and there is no reason they should be having any kind of trust in us, in our work. Because we don't think of them, and there is no way they can trust us in any way. So all of the other things that are here car one of the pieces that I find important is changing traditional masculinity. As I think I have mentioned before, traditional masculinity is about winning, is about accessing women's bodies, is about domination, if we can think about it, it's about any kind of power, any kind of power over others. So, unless we change that, unless we think about how that can be changed, unless we can think about how aggressive masculinity can be changed, I think we have very little hope of changing prostitution in society. As well as domestic violence and sexual assault. Masculinity by definition needs to be changed into much more honorable and sympathetic, and empathic idea. Rather than this idea of when, when. Notches in the belt kind of aggression.

>> The other piece of course is traditional patriarchy which is the loss we have talked about, that we make laws, that we make policies that support women and marginalize women and provide women with alternatives to selling their bodies. If we cannot feed everyone, if we cannot provide them with honorable work, it is going to be prostitution forever. It is not going to change. Because women do have to eat and they have to feed their children, they also have permission to advance in society. And not just be stuck in one place.

>> Diane?

>> Are there any comments?

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>> I'm thinking many different things. You always get me thinking. I am thinking about the notion or the term, honorable work, and just how much that could be unpacked as well, about what determines honorable,

>> It is. Honorable in the sense of not defined by patriarchy, for sure. It is about work that nourishes women's not just economically, but also spiritually. Not just to women, in person. So that is we hardly ever see that, particularly in our kind of picture of capitalism. I absolutely agree that it is loaded word when I say honor, because what we know of honor is in terms of patriarchal definitions. And we need to challenge that also.

>> And well and the ways that that overlaps as well, how many we went right now who are not working insects work or prostitution, with say that they are doing paid work that nourishes them. Spiritually. I would say not many.

>> Bright.

>> Go ahead.

>> I think we do good work, and advocates are in that work. We are doing good work.

>> We might be more nourished on the spiritual side than the economic side [ Laugh ]

>> [ Laugh ]

>> [ Laugh ]

>> And the other thing I'm thinking as we come to the end here, what this means for us as advocates. And what are the implications for advocacy. In the ways this intersects with our every day work for social change. But I'm also thinking about

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practical intersections, and for me as the longtime campus advocate, thinking about it is not often that I would be interacting with women who identified as working insects work or prostitution. But certainly many women, when you think of it as the spectrum, and their sex work, and their sexual lives were, so dancers are strippers or even working at Hooters. And all the layers of that as well.'s but when I think about what it is that we can do as advocates we explored it in the big picture here, in the slide. Is there any other tips or thoughts that you have, or from your own experience as well, as an advocate, what it is that we might want to think about doing, or who we might want to link with, or conversations that we can begin to have or continue to have with other advocates.

>> Interestingly when I worked in India, one of the things I found, organizations going into provide women and asking them what you need, brought out the tremendous amount of response. Often they needed children's school care, or work at night, I need childcare. I need to place where I can go when I am sick, because the hospitals or any other place I don't have, they don't respect me. These are pieces that come up. And as advocates we do know how to do that. We know how to ask people board as communities as to what they need. And to provide that. Also it is as simple as one of the things I found, an organization I worked with in India, is to provide night care service rather than daycare because these women worked in the evenings up to really late. This night care service for children, and that area. And the women themselves came to trust them. And trust the organization, they were eager to come and talk about sexual assault, about police brutality, various other issues in their lives. Criminalization, all of that. So I think as advocates we do know how to do that, to organize within communities and to think about that. So I think that would be the place to start.

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>> Yes and thank you for getting us started in thinking about this, and helping us to begin to reflect on and analyze, and unpack all the layers of this complex topic. Thank you so much for being with us today, Shamita. And thank you for everyone in the classes for your participation as well. There are a few reminders before we say goodbye, we ask you to complete an evaluation for this session so please take a few minutes to do that. When we wrap up, we will be back together all of this in class P on Thursday, November 2 for our next advocacy discussion. Be sure to join us for that. Class O we will see you on October 24 for your next advocacy strategy session, with Priscilla Gonzalez. We will be talking about how we can engage survivors in creating social change. Like you very much all of you for joining us in the special thanks to you, Shamita. I hope you will have the great afternoon. Goodbye now.

>> Thank you so much everyone, and I hope you go out and do a lot more thinking on this topic.

>> Thank you, Shamita. Thank you everyone.