
Paying The Price For Someone Else's Morals

Often referred to as the world's oldest profession, prostitution often has a happy ending when portrayed in pop culture. Vivian managed to wrangle her a millionaire in *Pretty Woman* and Fancy got her a Georgia mansion in Reba McEntire's classic, "Fancy". Unfortunately, the vast majority of true stories involving sex work don't end in a New Yorktown house. Despite these wildly popular depictions, sex work is still frowned upon in society. Most people consider prostitution to go against the moral compass of life, and while it isn't something I can ever see myself doing, I don't think someone else's morals should make the laws. The actors in pornographic movies, while making the same sex for money trade as prostitutes, are held to strict standards for health testing, providing a safer work environment. I feel that we could end the stigma for sex workers if the government would spend their seemingly endless resources on making sure the profession is safe, healthy and profitable for the government and communities.

Sex workers have an up to 60 time shigher chance of having some type of STI than the general public. This can be contributed to the lack of both regulated health testing and prophylactic requirements. If under the same regulations as the pornography industry, sex workers would be required to have regular health screenings and be required to use condoms. In Nevada, where prostitution is legal in some areas, condoms area requirement for the job. When testing legal prostitutes for HIV, there wasn't a single instance of HIV; unfortunately, the same couldn't be said for the illegal prostitutes that were tested. It's an accepted truth that condoms prevent STIs in addition to pregnancy. If prostitution was legal, the clients and workers were held to strict standards to prevent these diseases.

Another startling statistic for prostitutes is that these workers are 68 percent more likely to experience violence or to be raped while working. Sadly, only about five percent of these attacks are reported to the authorities, and an even smaller number of perpetrators are caught. Violent criminals are aware of the restrictions of justice for these prostitutes and continue to prey on this small demographic. Due to the risk of themselves being arrested, prostitutes see little reason to go to the police. This leaves them few places to turn to for safety. Often, the sole person to turn to when looking for safety is a pimp. Beatings and rapes are often handed out by the person that was once a prostitute's safe haven. "Belonging" to a pimp can also incur massive amounts of debt, making it virtually impossible to escape the clutches of the undertow that's keeping a prostitute in the business. When prostitution is legalized, the safety channels that are open for the rest of the world will be opened for these men and women.

Despite the high probability of assault while working the street, prostitution is still a multi-billion dollar a year business in the United States alone! This is money that can be taxed and used for

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a plethora of community outreach programs, among other things. I find that when people are benefiting monetarily from something, even if it goes against their morals, they tend to be a little more accepting of those gains they consider ill-gotten. Legitimate businesses pay taxes, and the salaries of legal prostitutes should be taxed as well. Being recognized by the government would go a long way towards acknowledging that prostitution can be a legitimate business.

Our morals, as a county that was based on religion, tell us that sex is something private and that it should never be anonymously. When we strip away the moral layers of prostitution, we find that it is merely an exchange of money for a service. Everyday people pay for services at a nail salon, restaurants or even when paying the dog walker. A nail artist using his/her natural artistic skills to paint nails to please a client is no different from a prostitute using his/her natural sexual talent to please a client.

Sex workers are typical people who go to work every day to pay the bills. With economic crises, seemingly, always looming over our heads, why shouldn't an individual be able to make money in any way they see fit? If we can't convince these people to leave the sex work, the least we can do is demand routine health screening, better avenues to stay safe and allowing the government to recognize brothels as legitimate businesses as a way to give back to the community. These people shouldn't be put in danger while trying to make ends meet just because someone else's moral compass points the other way.

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