

# **Prostitutes Are Americans, Too!**

By

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The sexual professions stand at the new frontier of the American civil rights movement.

Sex professionals are the most abused, downtrodden minority in our nation. They are treated as criminals in most jurisdictions, subject to confiscations, unreasonable searches and seizures, fines and even imprisonment as they strive to build a better life for themselves and their families. These hard-working professionals can be stopped and questioned with no more probable cause than a failure to produce identification or show a ticket or bus fare at a public bus stop. They live in the shadow of constant fear.

Clearly, however, prostitutes and their allied professionals, such as procurers, are not criminals: Prostitution is not a felony anywhere in the United States. Moreover, prostitutes "work hard for the money," purveying needed services for a reasonable price that putatively respectable citizens will not perform. They pay taxes that ironically fund the very police agencies that harrass them. They vote in elections.

Religious extremists have put forth proposals to criminalize the sex professions, making prostitution a felony. That would be wrong. Prostitutes have the same right to our streets, motels and massage parlors as any other American. They're here, and they're going to stay. Worse, criminalization is impractical: There are simply too many of them. We would merely be adopting unenforceable laws, the concomitant widespread disobedience to which would sow disrespect for all laws. We need to find the middle ground.

A new civil rights organization, Prostitutes United for Tolerance And Sanity, proposes the following:

Sex professionals who have worked in the trade for at least five years would be granted permits to work unmolested. This group has shown the maturity and responsibility necessary to uphold professional standards, and should be left alone.

Sex workers -- prostitutes and others who have worked for at least three but less than five years -- will be required to pay a fine equal to the earnings of one procurer from one prostitute for one day. This group will also have to report to local police agencies to check for warrants and disqualifying crimes, and subject themselves to a health check to detect communicable diseases. Upon successfully completing these checks, members of this group can be certified as sex professionals.

Persons with less than three years in "the life" must leave the profession, but can re-enter after three years by taking professional courses leading to certification. State universities should have no problem adapting their existing faculties and curricula to this purpose.

Be sure that this proposal in no way suggests that we should legalize prostitution. We are a nation of laws! All these provisions do is normalize the practice of the Sex professions to remove the stigma of arrest and punishment.

May we count on your generous support?