

# Letters

## Our readers respond

### Various Authors

2014

Send letters to fe (at) fifthestate.org or Fifth Estate, POB 201016, Ferndale MI 48220.  
All formats accepted including typescript & handwritten; letters may be edited for length.

### Confessions of a John

A long time ago, my heart was busted by a girl who had her kicks with me but wasn't ready for a long time commitment. As these things go, I was tremendously trashed, heartbroken, and horny. Things got so bad it devolved into clinical depression. I was losing my head. So, I thought, go to a red house for some well needed relief.

(See Spring/Summer 2014 *FE*; "Anarchist & Sex Work: Solidarity or Abolition," by Aaron Lakoff.)

The place was quiet and clean and the women seemed content, plus there was a video camera in the room to watch any misbehavior by the guys. We had sex and as guys always say, it was emotionless. She was quite kind, asking me why I was so upset, etc. Perhaps it was all part of a well rehearsed act, but it sure made me feel better.

I hardly think it was sexist and make no apologies. I'm well aware of the bad end of the trade and am against it. I expect plenty of the politically correct to flip out. Please chill and realize that there was hardly any harm done. I'm a libertine libertarian and the world would be a more pleasant place were everyone else, too.

A word to the fun-phobes and sex-KGB; please stop your old tired ways. I was in tremendous pain and got much needed help. Please keep your authoritarian ways out of our way.

The Sultan Of Sex!

Brooklyn, N.Y.

### More Questions

Concerning prostitution and sex work, I have more questions than answers. What are we really talking about when discussing what is now called sex work?

If we're talking about sex, is it because nudity equals sex in our puritanical society? There's very little sex in dancing in a cubicle or in serving middle-aged men in a private club dressed in a net body suit.

If we're talking about work, are we talking about the alienation and the other harmful aspects of salaried work, especially for working class and poor women and children who comprise the majority of sex workers? Anarchists and radicals don't talk about making a choice when it comes to working in a fast food restaurant or a paint factory. So, why is the word choice used when discussing this option?

If the word sex is used, shouldn't the term be sex possession? When money is involved, when something is bought, it becomes a commodity, a thing, owned by the payer, even if it's for the duration of a blow-job in a park or a car.

Should the term be sexual schizophrenia or sexual illusion as the men really know that the women or children are there because they're being paid, and not because they want to be there, even if they're smiling while they are dancing at their table or faking an orgasm? Isn't advocating sex without pleasure and the commodification and the objectification of human bodies the opposite of anarchist ideals?

Should the term be sexual control because governments, and very often, but not always, pimps and organized crime are controlling women's and children's bodies?

The term sex workers doesn't add understanding to the subject. People who call themselves this publicly tend to be the most articulate, the most in control of their lives; we won't hear from those who are controlled by others.

Aaron Lakoff's article is helpful because it clearly outlines the positions of certain anarchists about this question and he takes a stand in this debate. But other anarchists emphasize different aspects including the state, (which determines when and where it's legal and when it's not); capitalism (because it is the third source of profit for organized crime, and because the great majority of clients are middle- and upper-class men, in contrast to the majority of those who are working in it who are poor or working class women and children); and male domination (98 per cent of clients are men).

Susan Smith

Toronto, Ont.

*Walker Lane responds:* When we published the article to which Smith and the Sultan are replying, I thought this magazine would be flooded with rebuttals since Lakoff's call for solidarity with sex workers is in sharp conflict with those anarchists calling for the elimination of prostitution and similar work.

However, we received nothing from the abolitionists who desire the end of prostitution.

And, understandably. I can't imagine what they would advocate, and Smith offers no suggestions. Moralists and Christian scolds have tried everything through the ages from capital punishment to social work, and yet the profession continues. What can anarchists suggest that would end activity with such a huge client demand?

Some suggest altering laws, but this only operates within capitalism's state repressive apparatus which is demonstrably ineffective. Maybe the stop gap solution, until nothing is for sale and sexual misery abates, is decriminalization of prostitution.

Then, sex workers would operate under the statutory protections of the state enjoying the same status as other job categories. Capitalist labor laws offer ostensible protection for all workers, i.e., working conditions, wage and hour standards, no child labor, etc. Although laws and regulations are violated all of the time by employers, and are no guarantee of safe or fair work, now, prostitution exists within the worst of capitalism, an entirely unregulated sector.

The current laws against the activity of pimps ("living off of the proceeds of prostitution"), prostitutes (a crime in itself), and clients ("soliciting for immoral purposes") criminalizes participants while making no dent in the practice.

If prostitution was decriminalized, a pimp as employer who brutalizes his workers, withholds their pay, employs minors, etc., is breaking numerous laws that apply to labor. Instead of enforcing those statutes, it is the pimp's proceeds or the prostitute's work that are deemed illegal.

Prostitutes who are collecting money for their practice would seem to be workers by definition. If some are slaves or minors (no one knows what percentage) this is illegal, but probably less so than among agricultural workers.

Naturally, it will be the lower rungs of economic status who take the worst jobs capitalism offers as can be seen at a Wal-Mart or other low paying employment. Given the choice of working at a fast food restaurant or prostitution, most poor women will choose the former, but, unless we are letting moralism define the subject, we owe those women who make a different choice our greatest solidarity and protection no less than we offer to minimum wage workers.

As anarchists, probably the best we can do is suggest unionizing in the manner of the Barcelona prostitutes during the Spanish Revolution of the 1930s, and to assist in such efforts if asked.

There are numerous associations of prostitutes across the world that struggle to imbue their work with a dignity denied them, not because they are exploited, but because of the moral condemnation that religion places on unsanctioned sexual activity.

The most articulate and independent sex workers, like the Tits and Sass people (TitsandSass.com) are such a group in this country whose ideas and leadership can help end much of the overt misery associated with sex work as it currently exists.

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