



STREET SEX WORKERS AND OUR ALLIES STAND UP FOR FULL DECRIMINALIZATION OF OUR LIVES

March 3 2013 Collective statement

March 3 is International Sex Workers Rights Day, started in 2001 by Indian Sex workers union DMSC. On this day, we sex workers with street level experience and our allies state our support for the repeal of ALL prostitution offenses in Turtle Island/Canada, including section 213 prohibiting communicating in public for the purposes of prostitution. Like so many others, this law defines us as nuisances, not humans deserving of rights and protections--and as a result, over 90% of all prostitution arrests are under section 213. This especially affects street based workers who are racialized, Indigenous, drug users, mothers, youth, trans, migrant, and poor and who are targeted by the police for being who we are. These paternalistic and moralizing laws are part of a whole system that has led to a great deal of state and interpersonal violence against members of our communities.

The sex working community and our allies stand against this—because we know that safety and justice come from rights and power—not criminalization!

Some people believe that we should be forced to work indoors and then our work will be safer. For many of us, working indoors isn't a desired or realistic option and never will be. There will always be street sex work AND we know how to make it safer for ourselves! We are an inspiring, caring, kick-ass and resilient community--and as the workers doing the work, we are the experts on our safety. Why look to the state for solutions to our safety when the answers are right here, with each other?

Our allies have an incredible opportunity to support us to create our own strategies for safety and self-determination--strategies that eliminate violence and harassment against us. To do this, we need your support! Join our call for an end to the criminalization of street sex workers whole lives, including an end to section 213!

Street-Based Sex Workers Speak:

These statements below are from sex workers involved in the Maggie's *Aboriginal Sex Workers Education and Outreach Project* and the weekly Lounge hang out.

"We acknowledge that as Aboriginal sex workers, we are family for a lot of different people. The love we give cannot be defined by the English language. We are very much connected and sex work has pulled us together to respect/connect over that part of our lives. There is no better time to work around decriminalization. This will push forward

Aboriginal sex workers out of darkness, oppressions and bring more empowerment. It will bring validation of our work and the lives we choose to lead”

“Communication and free speech is a right. How can the state tell us that the act of exchanging sex for money is legal but that having a conversation about it is not?! I have a right to speak to who I want, about whatever I want. Especially when that conversation is with regards to my safety, sexual boundaries or health.”

“Communication is important to everyone involved in sex work for safety and to avoid any miscommunication. No one wants an unwanted situation or different expectation of what they deserve.”

“We do not want to be charged or subjected to the conditions of the police or state jails.”

“Criminalization is not the answer.”

“Having power means we are able to work the way we want to work, but in order to do that we need to be able to talk about our work and make money.”

“It is important to get rid of the communicating law because it’s the sex workers right to ensure their safety by talking to who she is meeting. Simple communication reduces risk of danger.”

**We would still love your support! To sign on to this statement and support the fight for the full decriminalization of prostitution in Turtle Island/Canada please contact communications@maggiestoronto.ca
www.maggiestoronto.ca
416-964-0150**

Endorsers:

Families of Sisters in Spirit, 2 Spirits of the First Nation, Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention, Toronto Rape Crisis Centre, No One Is Illegal--Toronto, No One Is Illegal--London, Native Women’s Resource Centre of Toronto, PASAN, No More Silence, Asian Community AIDS Service, HIV AIDS Legal Network, HIV AIDS Legal Clinic, Stepping Stone, Hassle Free Clinic, Brave New Girls, The People Project, Assaulted Women and Children Counseling and Advocacy Program at George Brown, Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, the 519 Community Centre, Sex Professionals of Canada, Queen West Community Health Centre, Sex Workers Action Group--Kingston, Rittenhouse, PIVOT Legal, Sistering, Prisoners Solidarity Group (London), Springtide Resources, Centre for Women and Trans People York University, Stop the Arrests!, Toronto Harm Reduction Coalition, Trans Pride Toronto, Justicia For Migrant Workers, Sex Workers United Against Violence (Vancouver), POWER (Ottawa), AIDS committee of

Toronto, FIRST (Feminists for Decriminalization), Stella (Montreal), BC Coalition of Experiential Communities

