

Press Release

[free-them]

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Human rights activists and freedom fighters react to court case challenging prostitution laws at the Supreme Court of Canada

Toronto, ON June 13, 2013 – Today, activists and anti-human trafficking organization, [free-them] took their position against proponents challenging Canada's laws surrounding prostitution.

In 2010, the Ontario Court of Appeal's ruling brought down the laws criminalizing the keeping of a bawdy house, communicating for the purposes of purchasing sex, and living off of the avails of prostitution as in contravention of Section 7 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Now with these laws being threatened, [free-them] maintains that the loss of the laws will increase human trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation, and normalize the behavior of degradation and violence against women. Further, legalization will make Canada a 'safe haven' for sex tourism and the increase of minors and children to be sexual exploited will occur.

In support of this, [free-them] pointed to the failed examples of countries that have legalized prostitution, such as, Germany and the Netherlands. "Over a million men pay for sex each day in Germany, while this is good for business, it leaves the women with little earnings," writes The Local, the largest English language news network in Europe.

According to the Washington Times, one in five victims of sex trafficking were underage. Since legalization in 2002, Germany now has reported over 300,000 people in the sex trade with over two-thirds coming from overseas, making Germany "Europe's largest brothel."

"When Germany legalized prostitution just over a decade ago, politicians hoped that it would create better conditions and more autonomy for sex workers. It hasn't worked out that way, though. Exploitation and human trafficking remain significant problems," said Spiegel Online International.

"What many people do not realize is that the vast majority of prostitution is forced. When the average age of entry into prostitution is 12-14 years old, it is never a choice. By legalizing prostitution, what changes is the law and not the pimps/traffickers controlling the exploitation. Canada needs to learn from the mistakes that other countries, such as the Netherlands and Germany have made by legalizing prostitution. We urge the Government of Canada to adopt the Nordic Model, which has proved to be a successful method to combat human trafficking. This model was employed in Amsterdam, and today the city has successfully shut down over one-third of its red-light district, with plans to remove the red light district all together," said Shae Invidiata, founder, [free-them].

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Interested parties in the trial made their opinions known:

“Prostitution is violence against women. I was in the industry for 15 years working indoors. It was not the location that harmed me, it was my clients and the parlour owners. If I had been asked 4 years ago if I supported legalization, I definitely would have said yes, because I felt as though I had no other option. I feel that the majority of prostituted women who support legalization feel trapped by their choices, because it is easier to continue the lie rather than admit to yourself that something is wrong.” – Katarina MacLeod, sex trade survivor

“As a group of former prostituted women we at EVE (formerly Exploited Voices now Educating) know that legalizing/decriminalizing prostitution will only increase the violence and degradation women suffer at the hands of men. While we do not agree with the current laws, and aim to have an asymmetrical model that decriminalizes the women and criminalizes the men, to have a legal vacuum where women’s equality and worth will be ranked by free market capitalism will do nothing to keep women safe & secure. Only ending the world’s oldest oppression through the abolition of prostitution will do that.” – Trisha Baptie, Founder, EVE

“A legitimate businessperson works to increase profits and promote economic development but he/she does not cause danger to society. I was raped hundreds of times, drugged and monitored everywhere I went by my trafficker. How does legitimizing pimping increase safety and improve society as a whole? It is time to analyze what part of legalizing a brothel improves society. People are not being sold for sex, they are being sold for rape. To me, that is a crime in itself. Why would any legitimate businessperson wish to legally make a living in that lifestyle?” - Anna Malika, survivor of sex trafficking.

“This is an opportunity for Canada to protect the most vulnerable of our society from violence and exploitation. If we want to protect women in prostitution from rape, violence, murder and exploitation then we must hold those who are responsible for such crimes accountable. I urge Canada to adopt the Nordic Model of Prostitution, as it has a proven success rate for protecting women in prostitution and decreasing human trafficking.” - Tara Teng- Human Rights Activist, Miss World Canada 2012

“In 2010, Canada made preventing human trafficking a priority by applying laws that address prostitution. As a survivor of multiple forms of abuse and a human rights activist, I believe that the protection of our citizens should be our priority when considering a change to the current laws. The proposed adjustments to these laws would be a major setback in the strides we have made to end human trafficking in Canada.” - Jacyn Miles, Miss Canada 2012

About [free-them]

In January 2010, [free-them] was officially founded, an initiative dedicated to raising awareness and funds to abolish human trafficking in Canada and abroad by partnering with people, organizations, & businesses to fight human trafficking - slavery today. [free-them] regularly speaks at different high schools, professional groups and events to educate and bring awareness and action to fighting human trafficking.

[free-them] regularly speaks at high schools, universities, faith groups, and conferences, and has led many events all over Toronto and the GTA, including our 3rd Annual Freedom Walk in Toronto every September. [free-them] is a Stakeholder to both MP Joy Smith’s Private Members Bill C-268 and Bill C-310. With much work both Bills received Royal Assent and amended the Criminal Code in June 2010 and June 2012. [free-them] is a Stakeholder to the Federal Government’s National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking, which was adopted June 6, 2012.

On October 3, 2011 MP Terence Young gave his Members Statement-S031- in the House of Commons to recognize the work of [free-them] Founder Shae Invidiata and her efforts with [free-them] to combat human trafficking.

Fifteen months after proposing a 40-page proposal for an Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking to the Toronto Mayor's Office and City of Council, with continuous work throughout the year, we now have the first Human Trafficking report that was brought before Executive Committee February 5th of this year. [free-them] continues to lead as a Stakeholder in this report to see a Slave Free Toronto.

Invidiata and [free-them] have appeared on and been interviewed by many different media sources, including but not limited to, The Toronto Star, GlobalTV, CTV, CityNews, CP24 News, The Toronto Sun, The Morning Live Show CHCH News, MetroMorning, CBC Radio, Metro News, Inside Halton, Cogeco and Rogers TV.

Invidiata was a nominee for Canadian Women's Fashion Magazine Chatelaine as a Top 20 Finalist for "Canada's Women of the Year 2011" for her work and dedication to fight human trafficking and raise up others to join in the worthy fight. Invidiata was recognized with the YMCA Peace Medallion 2011. In June 2012, Invidiata was a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal, being recognized for Invidiata's dedication and service to citizens of Canada. Most recent, [free-them] was award the National Freedom Award in October 2012, being recognized as one of Canada's Heros for the work [free-them] has done to combat human trafficking in Canada.

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