

Myths and Misconceptions Surrounding Sex Industry Work

- **Myth:** Sex workers are only young women.
 - **Fact:** Sex workers are male, female and transgendered. They are also many different ages, body types and personalities.
- **Myth:** Sex industry work is an easy way to make lots of money.
 - **Fact:** Sex work is not always easy, and can be dangerous. Monetary rewards are sometimes exaggerated and can quickly be absorbed by stage fees, costumes, pimps, out of pocket medical care, etc.
- **Myth:** Sex workers are victims and/or need to be rescued (i.e. they were abused/assaulted as children, came from unhappy homes, are drug addicts, are sluts/sex addicts, etc.)
 - **Fact:** This methodology is most often applied to the women in the industry, as opposed to the men. While it is true that some sex workers are addicted to drugs or were assaulted as a child, the same could be said for a doctor or janitor. The fact is that everyone comes from a different place in life, and it is unfair to make assumptions about another person's life simply based on their occupation.
- **Myth:** Sex workers are unqualified, or not educated enough, to do any other work. Only a desperate person would stoop to sex work. Sex workers are innocent kids making their way through college, or slumming third wave feminists trying to get life experience/street cred.
 - **Fact:** In many cases, it is circumstance and not education levels that prevent sex workers from holding "legitimate" employment. Arrest records, need for a flexible schedule, lack of marketable skills, homelessness, being a single parent, coercion, or personal choice are just some of the reasons why people become involved in sex work. Many sex workers hold advanced college degrees and "day" jobs while still engaging in sex work. Others may be high school drop outs or runaways just trying to make ends meet. There is an entire spectrum of reasons why people start, and continue, doing sex work.
- **Myth:** Sex workers want out of the industry.
 - **Fact:** While some sex workers may jump on an alternative way of making a living, others may not. This goes back to why they are in the industry to begin with and what experiences the individual has had while engaging in sex work.

- **Myth:** Sex work is incredibly dangerous.
 - **Fact:** Safety within the sex industry really varies depending on the type of work being done. Domination work is often safer than street prostitution, stripping is often safer than escorting. Sex work that takes place inside a club or brothel generally tends to be safer than work occurring on the street or in a hotel room.

- **Myth:** Sex industry work is always prostitution.
 - **Fact:** Sex work can mean a lot of different things. While prostitution is one form of sex work; stripping, nude modeling, domination work, sexual surrogate services, pornographic acting, escorting, erotic massage, etc. are as well. Just because actual sex isn't taking place doesn't mean that the work being performed is not part of the sex industry. And just because a person is engaging in sex work doesn't mean that they are prostitutes.

- **Myth:** Sex Work = Crime
 - **Fact:** The presence of sex workers does not create crime. Zoning laws and gentrification often force many sex based businesses to exist in areas where crime is already pervasive. The lack of perceived legitimacy surrounding sex work, coupled with high profit margins, leaves the industry vulnerable to exploitation by organized crime.

- **Myth:** Arresting sex workers will keep them off the street/out of danger.
 - **Fact:** Giving a person a police record reduces their ability to find employment. Giving a person stiff fines despite their income only creates the need to get out there and make more money. Arresting sex workers usually only keeps them out of the business temporarily. It also pushes the industry further underground, making workers more vulnerable to danger.

- **Myth:** Sexual assault is just part of the job.
 - **Fact:** No one ever deserves to be sexually assaulted. To assume that sex workers "ask for it" is no different than blaming a college girl assaulted at a frat party for wearing a mini skirt. The fact that many sex industry workers are intimidated by the police prevents them from reporting acts of violence against them, and perpetrators know this makes them an easy target.