

Political Economy and Prostitution

JANUARY 14, 2019

STRUGGLESSESSIONS



POLITICAL ECONOMY AND PROSTITUTION
POLITICAL ECONOMY AND PROSTITUTION

“On what foundation is the present family, the bourgeois family, based? On capital, on private gain. In its completely developed form, this family exists only among the bourgeoisie. But this state of things finds its complement in the practical absence of the family among the proletarians, and in public prostitution.”

—Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto*

“It is self-evident that the abolition of the present system of production must bring with it the abolition of the community of women springing from that system, i.e., of prostitution both public and private.”

—Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto*

Introduction

“[...] the question of prostitutes will give rise to many serious problems here. Take them back to productive work, bring them into the social economy. That is what we must do. But it is difficult and a complicated task to carry out in the present conditions of our economic life and in all the prevailing circumstances. There you have one aspect of the women’s problem which, after the seizure of

power by the proletariat, looms large before us and demands a practical solution.”

—V. I. Lenin, Conversation with Clara Zetkin, 1920

The subject is endlessly debated on the internet—and terms like “sex work” are slipped in to distract would-be Marxists from examining the matter of prostitution. But we must begin by stating that the matter of prostitution for Marxists has been resolved for approaching 200 years, and there is no ambiguity on this. It is mentioned three times in the *Communist Manifesto*—the most basic introductory text to Communism that all Communists unite around. To be a Marxist is to oppose prostitution. More importantly, Marxism gives us the framework to analyze exactly why Marxists have historically come to this position, and why Marxists today reject terms like “sex worker” that seek to sanitize prostitution, which we understand as sexual violence, mainly against women.

It is trendy to compare prostitution to work—without ever delving into what Marxists even mean by “worker”—and to frame the most basic Marxist positions as “backward.” Without delving too far into the individual theorists behind the sanitation of sexual violence as “sex work,” it is enough to identify this tendency as the inheritance of third-wave feminism, which has overlapped with postmodern method of analysis. Engels himself likened prostitution to slavery, and for very precise political economic reasons. What brought Marx and Engels together to begin with were Engels’s astute observations on political economy. Suffice it to say, Engels is a great authority on the subject second only to Marx. Engels wrote,

“Wage labor appears sporadically, side by side with slave labor, and at the same time, as its necessary correlate, the professional prostitution of free women side by side with the forced surrender of the slave.”

Engels viewed these as a *necessary correlate*, meaning a unity of opposites, where the identity of each depends on the existence of the other.

When examining the trend of “sex worker advocacy” we see two things most often. The first is to totally hollow out the term “worker” of any of its political-economic definitions. The second is to lump various classes and strata together into a single category—this means even distinct trades undertaken by distinct classes are conflated and flattened into one singular “oppressed” group. By defect of the first error, which destroys the understanding of the economic identity of the worker, we arrive at the second, that porno movie performers, exotic dancers, street prostitutes, “cam girls,” and others are all one thing. Apologists maintain this as if the exchange of money for a sex service or sexualized service somehow, in and of itself, constitutes such an ultimate commonality among these “workers” that it obliterates the profound concrete differences in each case to their actual relationships to production. One of the most critical phenomena erased in their analysis is the profound stratification, which exists even within groupings that do have a similar relationship to production. Putting their position into practice entails forcing class collaboration between management, entertainer, and slave.

A brief history

Comrade Mary Inman, one of the staunchest antirevisionists in the CPUSA of the 1930s-40’s, whose contributions will be discussed more thoroughly later, offers the following powerful passage:

“Prostitution did not start with folk customs. It did not grow out of group marriages between free people, for pre-slavery tribes had no such institution. It did not grow out of mystic rites, nor sex worship. It was always a rape institution. Even in the earliest records of prostitution, the evidence shows that the people lived in terrible degradation rising from economic slavery, and did not have the freedom to decide such matters.”

We do not have any interest in going over the earth’s recorded history of prostitution, and will use this section only to establish some relevant facts pertaining to its history in the US.

In the war for control over the colonies that some call the “American Revolution,” as well as throughout the US Civil War, women were unofficially enlisted as prostitutes to follow the soldiers to “keep morale high.”[1] At this time, the ruling class found this a necessity in order to sustain the war. It is useful to understand the shifts and changes that the ruling class makes in terms of prostitution. In wartime, their puritanical Christian opposition vanishes in favor of the cold pragmatism of whatever they think it takes to win.

Prostitution, while technically illegal in the 19th century, was widespread, and brothels were commonplace. The laws were simply not enforced. This period was not without war, considering the increase in Native genocide carried out by the settlers during westward expansion. And this colonial expansion meant the expansion of brothels as well.

In the early 1900s, the precursor to the FBI, the Bureau of Investigations, cracked down on prostitution in earnest for the first time in US history.[2] Their reason, far from having anything to do with the rights of those experiencing sexual violence, was, as they put it, “to oppose white slavery.” In practice this effort constituted a political maneuver as well as a propaganda effort. In order to enforce social segregation and further consolidate settler-colonialism, the ruling class attempted to get white women out of brothels. This campaign has had long-lasting effects: even today the majority of prostitutes are not white. This is similar to the way the US imperialist ruling class carries out the “War on Drugs,” primarily to harm the oppressed nations of its population.

What we have attempted to sketch out here is that the question of prostitution in the US cannot be separated from the US history of settler-colonialism—that these things march in step as what Engels might call “necessary correlates.” Prostitution, like chattel slavery and settler-colonialism (genocide against the indigenous North Americans), was an ingredient in the US imperialist project, and it served its master well. This argument, that prostitution and colonialism in the US are necessary correlates of each other, deserves its own paper, but here we must move on from it.

In all of these instances, economic conditions provide the impulse for prostitution.

Some basic prostitution statistics

One of the strongest examples of the unbreakable link between, on the one hand, the fact that the US is a prisonhouse of nations, built up through settler-colonialism and slavery, and prostitution on the other hand, is the fact that 40% of prostitutes in the US are Black[3] (Black people constitute only 13.4% of the overall population), while the majority of johns are white.[4] And it is commonplace that many regular johns are police.[5]

According to Havocscope, a website dedicated to researching global black markets, the average cost of a trick in many places is \$20–50, with minors earning less. Due to the constant conditions of national oppression in the US, Black people tend to earn less than others. This trend cannot be forgotten when we evaluate prostitution. This is yet one further way the stratification of the trade takes shape. While prostitutes earn twice as much as the average US worker and three times as much as the average woman in the US, much of this income is withheld by pimps.

The sex-positive apologists of prostitution will without fail argue that the trade somehow is or can be “empowering.” But statistically, the majority of prostitutes are victims of child abuse (one study found 73% were physically abused as children)[6], and there is evidence that they enter the trade at an average age of 15.[7] An average starting age of 15 or anywhere close all but eliminates the myth of the consenting prostitute. Underage prostitutes—which is what the majority of them start as—face physical violence, emotional manipulation, and other forms of gendered abuse to coerce them to start.

It is economic necessity that sets the conditions for prostitution—there are no exceptions. Sex that a woman would not otherwise engage except in exchange for money is no longer “sex” but rape, as the ability to consent is removed by

economic coercion—and a prostitute is always coerced economically.

Prostitution is most often rape.

Some men are prostitutes as well, but 69% of those arrested are women, including arrested johns and pimps.[8]

Atlanta, one of the US cities with a majority Black population, is home to the country's highest-grossing pimps, who reap about \$33,000 a week on average. [9] Some of these pimps are women who maintain hierarchy and obedience among the prostitutes, another way stratification manifests. This also makes it obvious that prostitution is caused by economic conditions and is not just (as some maintain) a result of personal sexist attitudes.

For obvious reasons, the majority of assaults experienced by prostitutes go unreported. 89% of adult prostitutes want to quit, but due to economic coercion feel that they cannot.[10] Being in thrall to a pimp, who controls everything and deploys severe psychological and sometimes physical abuse, makes the victim of prostitution far less likely to admit to wanting to quit, which itself skews statistics. Understanding that many enthralled women cannot speak up about their abuse, we would do well to understand that things are far worse than the picture painted by what makes it into official reports.

Which prostitute?

Unlike workers and more specifically proletarians, prostitutes are not engaged in productive, socially-productive, or reproductive labor. They do not receive a wage in the proletarian sense (of receiving a portion of what they produce in a value form/money, with the bulk of their labor being exploited by the owner) and are not devoid of the tools of their occupation, which in this case are the bodies of the prostitutes themselves. To return to the question of stratification, we can observe that in terms of relationship to production, a woman engaged in street-level prostitution without a pimp is distinct from those with pimps, and both are distinct from women who work for escort services or through self-promotion on websites (past examples are Backpage and Craigslist).

For the majority of women trapped in prostitution, the reality of a pimp forces them to the lower strata (this is combined in many cases with national oppression). They have no financial independence from their boss/owner, who makes all or all major decisions regarding their activity: what they do and do not engage in, what subsistence is allowed, and what accommodations are awarded or denied. But those in this most common situation do not qualify in any sense as proletarian despite the pimp behaving like a boss or even like an owner, because he does not simply “own the business”—*he owns the women*. These women come far closer to being slaves than to being workers. The wage of a slave is nothing except subsistence; the owner of the slave, in our instance the pimp, is the chief executive of every aspect of life. That includes housing, food, clothing, tools, and everything else—provided by the pimp to subsidize the prostitute in order for her to live and continue earning them profit. This is one of the most extreme forms of exploitation, not to mention the most inhumane. Nonetheless, the degree of oppression and brutality one faces does not determine one’s relationship to production, nor does intense oppression alone place one in the social class of the proletariat. Further distancing the enthralled woman from the worker is the fact that she cannot just quit of her own accord; like the slave, she can only organize her escape.

The only method of organization for a slave is rebellion and escape; there are no such things as reformist options for the slave. These contradictions are part of why slavery as a widespread mode of production was replaced by feudalism (in turn replaced by capitalism), which was more manageable, and why capitalism itself is more profitable than slavery in terms of the performance and capacity of the productive forces.

This highlights the position that in the women’s struggle, the only Communist approach regarding the majority of women in prostitution is to organize them out of it, and that this is accomplished mainly through People’s War and socialist revolution. At some stage of revolutionary struggle, this means the use of revolutionary violence against lumpenproletarian gangs that back up the pimps in the military sense. Short of this option, the only acceptable tactic is to secure the transition of individual women into productive work and the

opportunity to gain other skills, a total change of social environment, and continuous political education and thought reform. This can improve the conditions of some prostitutes and rehabilitate them into being proletarians, but it cannot emancipate them as women or end prostitution. Furthermore, it requires a high level of organization: it needs Party committees and mass organizations to lead the effort and a Red Army and militias to defend this work and protect the ex-prostitute, securing her escape from the trade, preventing retaliatory action from pimps, and so on.

Any effort to transpose the methods used in workers struggles' into the realm of prostitution falls hopelessly short. A struggle against a pimp cannot be carried out in the same way as a struggle against a factory owner or regular boss. Arguing that it can and must be carried out the same way—viewing prostitutes as workers and pimps as bosses to be struggled against—really lacks all Marxist understanding of why workers can be organized against bosses and so lapses into a subjective moralist approach to combating oppression. People of this persuasion attempt to implement prostitute unions; like the syndicalist, they dream of a union for everything, and are under the delusion that slaves can unionize and struggle for reforms against their slave-master.

While the so-called Maoists who promote right-opportunism will admit that prostitution cannot persist under socialism, they often make concessions, by believing in and promoting the construction of prostitute trade unions.

Being under the control of a pimp prevents a prostitute from all independent activity and independent thinking. The woman chained by the pimp cannot be organized into a trade union. A union of prostitutes who through some unknown force have ceased to be enthralled to pimps, due to the inevitable emergence of leadership and people who professionally manage such a union, will inevitably just generate its own, internal pimps. This is true because if the union bureaucracy is not completely ineffective (that is, if the union actually exists and functions), they would find themselves enforcing payment from renegeing johns, securing housing in times of income shortage, bribing or negotiating with police, and sustaining their professional organizers with dues:

they would in essence be pimps with a more charitable subsidiary. The use of violent reprisal and or the lack thereof is not the decisive factor in determining a pimp's relationship to production—what is principal is the fact of reproducing prostitutes. The likelihood of successfully organizing such a union— or even making a substantial attempt at doing so—is so slim that it hardly merits mention beyond the totally hypothetical. We give it attention here only to point out the utter ridiculousness of the right-opportunist line.

In the case of prostitutes without pimps (who are not being pimped upon the point of being organized), who basically take contracts independently and have full access to their own income, these are more or less the lumpenproletarian (declassed) version of the petty bourgeoisie who own their own means of production. For them the formation of a union is impossible. After all, a “union” of those who own their own means of production (lumpen or not) is actually called a cartel. Furthermore, the existence of a cartel gives impulse to the hiring of a general staff—plus, the stratification of prostitution would allow the cartel to employ other prostitutes under its protection—this again is a return to pimping. Prostitutes who become pimps are not unheard of, and some reports show that new pimps are drawn to the trade through familial connections with prostitutes.[11]

A free market always has a trajectory that can be scientifically understood and described. A free market that sees the formation of cartels to manage the market will in turn eventually see the formation of conglomerates and monopolies. For legal and illegal trade, this inevitably leads to war. It is much more difficult for illegal businesses to establish conglomerates and monopolies due to the nature of the competition in these markets. In this case, competition is for clients (market share), for slaves (“workers”), and for other resources. The organization of competition for illegal businesses brings war faster and more often than it does for legal business. This facet restricts growth—nonetheless, these prostitution cartels would be held to the same economic laws as drug cartels and would need the same level of maintenance (the protection of the business's interests through violence).

The existence of all sexualized business further engenders pimping, by normalizing sexual performance for money. This is made worse with the line that sex is work.

“Sex work” as a catch-all term

Rarely is the word “worker” so arbitrarily attached to any trade (or multiple trades), without any regard to class as it is with sex trades. Yet the bourgeois feminists of the “sex positivist” variety will insist that “sex worker” is a legitimate and useful category, like “service industry worker.” While it is true that sexualized professions are organized along industrial lines (including aspects of reproductive labor), prostitution, sexual entertainment, and so on do not even constitute a single industry, and this fact certainly doesn’t qualify everyone in these industries as “workers.”

Attempts to treat “sex work” as a coherent scientific category run into trouble immediately. In the case of prostitutes, a slave is not a worker, and a small business venture does not make one a worker either. A stripper is ultimately a performer. No one would assert that a professional comedian or actor is a “worker,” just as professional athletes are not “workers” and so cannot be lumped into the category of “athletic worker.” A stripper, like all performers and entertainers, has a totally different relationship to production from a worker, given the category of workers as it is understood by Marxists. Even in instances where they do not own the venue or website, these professionals still mainly own their own means of production, making them part of the petty bourgeoisie and not part of the proletariat. In the instance of those carrying out their trade in strip clubs, the stripper most often tips out the staff and pays the club a portion of her earnings. For workers, this relationship is the other way around: a hostess at a club or restaurant, like the rest of the general staff, is paid a wage by the business itself (even if she is forced to rely on tips) and thus experiences exploitation of her labor power.

Like a craftsman or small merchant who rents a booth or a stand, the “cam girl,” like the stripper, is merely paying a rent or service fee to the club or website.

Furthermore, unlike workers, these people are making a brand for themselves, cultivating a clientele that follows them from outlet to outlet.

Women in pornography in some cases are coerced or trafficked and therefore have a relationship to production more like that of a pimped prostitute. In other cases, the individual has an agent and is free to take contracts, as an actress would—and no professional actress can be classified as a worker. Therefore the overwhelming majority of people engaged in pornography in the US, who occupy one of these two relationships to production, cannot be scientifically understood as workers.

It is far more apt to say that, of those whom (apologists of sexism) call “sex workers” who aren’t engaged in prostitution, the majority are *small-scale sex-capitalists* of the petty-bourgeois class. The term does not hold the same appeal as “sex worker” for these apologists precisely because it does not serve the purpose of sanitizing sexual exploitation, violence, and rape. While there is much discussion about rape culture, there exists a massive blind spot in its organization through the sex trades.

Sanitization of rape and sexual violence through terminology

“To describe prostitution as sex work and a prostitute as a sex worker means to give legitimacy to sexual exploitation of helpless women and children. It means ignoring the basic factors, which push women and children into prostitution such as poverty, violence and inequalities. It tries to make the profession look dignified and as a ‘job like any other job’”

—New Vistas Publications, originally printed in *People’s March*, an organ of the Communist Party of India (Maoist)

The term “sex work” was coined in the 1970s by Carol Leigh, for exactly the purpose identified and criticized in the above quotation. Leigh heads an NGO called BAYSWAN (Bay Area Sex Worker Advocacy Network). A large part of the

financing for this organization comes from its collaboration with law enforcement.

As with all efforts to sanitize rape and other violence against women with the term “sex work,” BAYSWAN uses the term as a catch-all to include anyone in the “adult entertainment” industries, as well as street prostitutes. Its ambiguous inclusion of “massage parlor employees” is just an obscurantist way of providing ideological legitimization to brothels, most typically attached to human trafficking and the sexual abuse of undocumented women. While BAYSWAN claims to provide social benefits and other types of help to these women, their liaison work with the police speaks the loudest to their actual class position. The police are nothing more than the strong arm of the bourgeois state. Typical of NGOs in imperialist countries, BAYSWAN serves as a managerial department delegating scraps from the master’s table to some of the most destitute. This is not undertaken in the interests of the people but in the interest of maintaining and reproducing the rule of the imperialist class at home. It is important to state that the main purpose of BAYSWAN, and other NGOs like it, is not to rehabilitate women out of prostitution but instead to normalize the abuse they face, so that their trade is seen as comparable to any normal job, and accepted like any other.

The typical liberal and postmodernist analyses of the oppression faced by prostitutes hold that its roots lie in socially imposed “stigma” rather than in the exploitive nature of capitalism—as if workers who were proud of their assembly-line jobs would be any less abused and exploited. Even proletarian jobs under capitalism that maintain some shoddy “integrity” in the social sense or at least lack “stigma” are still alienating for the worker and operate on exploitation of the workers’ labor. But again, prostitution is unlike any proletarian job, as nothing is produced or reproduced, and the “labor” itself is not socially necessary. In fact, for women as a whole and particularly for women of the proletariat, it is socially destructive.

For the Marxist, not recognizing prostitutes and entertainers as proletarians is a matter of political economy and not of any kind of outdated moralism.

Marxism does not blame the victims, in this case women forced into sexual violence and exploitation due to economic hardships.

Marxists have never evaluated prostitution in moral terms but instead have insisted on examining it in political-economic terms and, as always, with a class analysis. This is why Lenin considered bourgeois women to be engaged in prostitution. Lenin also grasped the progressive aspect of those would-be defenders of prostitutes, but he drew the line at defending prostitution itself. In his conversations with Clara Zetkin in 1920, he explained how this moral impulse can turn into a backward idea:

“I have heard some peculiar things on this matter from Russian and German comrades. I must tell you. I was told that a talented woman communist in Hamburg is publishing a paper for prostitutes and that she wants to organize them for the revolutionary fight. Rosa acted and felt as a communist when in an article she championed the cause of the prostitutes who were imprisoned for any transgression of police regulations in carrying on their dreary trade. They are, unfortunately, doubly sacrificed by bourgeois society. First, by its accursed property system, and, secondly, by its accursed moral hypocrisy. That is obvious. Only he who is brutal or short-sighted can forget it. But still, that is not at all the same thing as considering prostitutes—how shall I put it?—to be a special revolutionary militant section, as organizing them and publishing a factory paper for them. Aren't there really any other working women in Germany to organize, for whom a paper can be issued, who must be drawn into your struggles? The other is only a diseased excrescence. It reminds me of the literary fashion of painting every prostitute as a sweet Madonna. The origin of that was healthy, too: social sympathy, rebellion against the virtuous hypocrisy of the respectable bourgeois. But the healthy part became corrupted and degenerate.”

While addressing the means that bourgeois forces use to “combat” prostitution (or, in reality, to maintain it in whatever form they need it to take in a given historical circumstance), Lenin was equally critical: “What means of struggle were proposed by the elegant bourgeois delegates to the congress? Mainly two

methods—religion and police. They are, it appears, the valid and reliable methods of combating prostitution.”

Lenin did not argue for the legal recognition of prostitution to combat social stigma, but for its end, through socialist revolution, which destroys the root economic causes of it. We must understand that even after socialist revolution, exploitation does not vanish overnight; it is done away with in the processes of the dictatorship of the proletariat and, critically, with cultural revolution. Marxists, while insisting that prostitution is not “sex work,” still stand firm against the hypocritical moralization of the bourgeoisie, who create and preserve the very conditions that force women into prostitution.

What is crucial to understand in the position of the great Lenin is that he simultaneously opposed the organizing of prostitutes *as prostitutes* for the revolution while at the same time condemning the bourgeois moralism that helps reproduce prostitution and deepens the oppression of prostitutes. After the revolution, Lenin and those who held the revolutionary line after his premature death worked tirelessly to abolish prostitution. We will get more into the experience of the socialist projects’ approaches to prostitution in later sections.

Arguments for legalization

Those most committed to the sanitization of rape and sexual violence are the most vocal advocates for the legalization of prostitution, which Marxists emphatically oppose. Legalization, far from securing “workers’ rights” in the instance of prostitution, only opens the floodgates for major investment of capital on the part of imperialists. With legalization, the pimp becomes protected by law—taking on a new form, and the prostitute legally owes and pays him a portion of her earnings. With legalization come legal recruitment and the widespread indoctrination of women and girls to prepare them for the trade.

Arguments that legal recognition protects the employee are based on bourgeois moralism and not Marxist political economy—and profound naiveté or ignorance of the actual workings of capitalism. Miners, factory workers, and fast food workers all have laws that are in place (usually hard-won through class struggle) that are supposed to protect them, yet as long as capitalism persists they are hounded, worked to death, and exploited without mercy. The legal recognition of these trades has not stopped the boss from stepping on our necks.

The idea that legal recognition will somehow limit the use of trafficked girls and women is also absurd. Pornography has been legal for decades, and the flow of black-market pornography and coerced women has not gone away. For that matter, many workers are hired illegally for all sorts of trades, hyper-exploited, and then discarded like old shoes. This would be magnified with legal prostitution. Countries with legal recognition of prostitution can and do see an increase in sex tourism;^[12] people from all over the world can go exploit and dominate women in these countries, the only difference being that in these places the bourgeois State can tax it officially rather than unofficially through payoffs.

“Prostitution Is Sexual Violence,” first printed in *People’s March*, an organ of the Communist Party of India (Maoist), explains the global forces behind prostitution in this way:

“Firstly, the sex trade is now organized on a global basis just as any other multinational enterprise. It has become a transnational industry. It is one of the most developed and specialized industries [and] offers a wide range of services to the customers, and has most innovative market strategies to attract clients all over the world. The principal players and beneficiaries of the sex industry are cohesive and organized. The intricate web of actors involved in the sex trade today includes not just the prostitutes and the client, but an entire syndicate consisting of the pimps, the brothel owners, the police, the politicians and the local doctors. The principal actors connected to the sex trade are not confined by narrow national or territorial boundaries in the

context of a globalized world. They operate both legally as well as clandestinely and it is believed that the profits ... to the organizations of [the] sex-industry currently equal those flowing out of the global illegal trade in arms and narcotics. Moreover [it is] like any [of the] other multinational enterprises, such as the tourism industry, entertainment industry, travel and transportation industry, international media industry, underground narcotics and crime industry and so on.”

From this they draw the following conclusion:

“Thus the magnitude, expanse, organization, role of capital accumulation and range of market strategies employed to sell sexual services make the contemporary global sex industry qualitatively different from the old practice of prostitution and sex trade.”

Suffice it to say that genuine Marxists must insist that any legalization in the US would be the further bane of women in the nations oppressed by US imperialism. As “Prostitution is Sexual Violence” puts it,

“in fact this argument [for legalization] is being promoted to make it easy to legalize the import of prostitutes to the imperialist countries and other centers of tourism.”

They highlight the dialectical relationship between the sex trades of the imperialist and oppressed nations. We will quote the pamphlet at length:

“As Engels succinctly put it, it is ‘the absolute domination of the male over the female sex as the fundamental law of society.’ She is a victim of patriarchal oppression within the profession. Once a woman enters the trade, there is no way out. She is completely at the mercy of the sex-starved customer, the pimp and the police. Physical assaults and rapes are a daily occurrence. More than half of the prostituted women in the Third World countries had contracted HIV/AIDs. A 1985 Canadian report on the sex industry reported that the women in prostitution in that country suffer [a] mortality rate 40 times the national

average. It could be even worse in countries like India. All this proves that the argument that once prostitution is legalized it can be more effectively regulated[,] making it safe for all those involved, that the spread of HIV can be slowed, that sex workers can have access to health and so on, are sheer fraud. The fact is that all forms of sexual commodification, whether legalized or not, lead to an increase in the level of abusive and exploitative activity.

The interest of the State in permitting legalization is not the prostitute and her rights but to check the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. It involves heavy regulation of prostitution through a whole host of zoning and licensing laws. Zoning segregates the prostitutes into a separate locality and their civil liberties are restricted outside the specified zone. Licensing means issue of licenses, registration and the disbursement of health cards to the women. Legalization makes it mandatory for the women to undergo medical check-ups regularly or face imprisonment.

Legalizing prostitution is legalizing violence.”

We must look beyond the ideological sanitizers of sexual violence, who speak loudly from academic, activist, and “harm reduction” circles and look closer at the actual economic forces behind these advocates. It is the commercial sex industry that stands to benefit the most from legalized prostitution, and so they are its biggest backers. Legalization is just a moral shield to protect and secure greater profits from the continued sexual abuse of women. With legalization, small brothels can become big chains, and whole corporations can be built up; those involved legally and illegally in the sex industry who possess the most capital are in the best position to reap the profits. The same issue exists with the legalization of the recreational use of marijuana: the small-time grower/dealer gets swallowed up by the white corporate elite, while oppressed-nations people remain incarcerated for their role in the trade. Legalization, in the final instance, benefits only the ruling class.

The Indian Maoists address the question of legalization succinctly:

“Legalization of prostitution is not a solution because legalization implies men’s self-evident right to be customers. Accepting services offered through a normal job is neither violent nor abusive. Legalizing it as a normal occupation would be an acceptance of the division of labor, which men have created, a division, where women’s real occupational choices are far narrower than men’s. Legalization will not remove the harmful effects suffered by the women. Women will still be forced to protect themselves against a massive invasion of strange men, as well as the physical violence.

Legalization means [the imposition] of regulation by the State to ensure the continuation and perpetuation of prostitution. It implies that they have to pay taxes, i.e., the prostitute needs to serve more customers to get the money needed. Legalization means that more men will become customers, and more women are needed as prostitutes, and more women, especially women in poverty, will be forced into prostitution. Legalizing prostitution will only increase the chances of exploitation. The experiences of the countries where prostitution was legalized also show how this [has] given [a] big boost to the trade and [has] increased sexual abuse. For instance, in Australia and in some states in the US where legalization was implemented, it was found that there was an alarming increase in the number of illegal brothels too along with an increase in the legal trade.”

Prostitution, through allowing the purchase of access to women’s bodies, harms all women, and not just those in the trade—legalization, far from being harm reduction, just increases social harm for all women. Recruitment is one of the cornerstones of pimping. With legalization, the horrors of recruitment and the pressure to be recruited take on dystopian proportions.

American exceptionalism: The legacies of revisionism and settler-colonialism

The women’s struggle was going strong in the Communist Party of the USA—up until Earl Browder became general secretary of the Party and began implementing his arch-revisionist line. The revisionist ideology that overtook the CPUSA—Browderism and then William Z. Foster’s continuation of it—was

like a prototype of the revisionism that would take hold in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Even though the latter would completely consume the former, the former was in many ways its forerunner. Foster, like Brezhnev, would come out against his predecessor—and just as it was with Brezhnev's condemnations, this was only superficial politicking that still carried forward, and in fact fortified, the revisionist position. This revisionism brought deep harm to the women's movement, with a lasting stain on the US left today that extends far beyond the husk that calls itself the CPUSA.

Browderism successfully liquidated not only the program of the Party but the Party itself in 1944. It comes as no shock that Browder's wife led the liquidation of the women's struggle against antirevisionist women in the Party like Mary Inman. Inman wrote a great deal on the question of prostitution, devoting three chapters to it in her book *In Woman's Defense*. To understand the question of prostitution today, it is important to grasp the reverberating effects of Browderism. Rightist lines that seek to either sanitize prostitution by dressing it up as “sex work” or misconstrue prostitutes as a revolutionary subject all result in part from a faith in American exceptionalism—first, in that they all seek to establish a reformist, class-collaborationist approach to prostitution; and second and more importantly, because they divorce the phenomenon from imperialism. It is important to remember that the bourgeois definition of “work” is anything you do for money. In this way they can frame owners and bosses as workers alongside those they exploit, since any job (legal or illegal) can therefore be misconstrued as work.

Many of these rightists (who are abundant in progressive struggles as well as in every revisionist organization) will concede that sex-based tourism in the Third World and human trafficking are, in principle at least, something to be opposed. They take no major issue with the writings on the subject from the Maoists in India, including the text “Prostitution Is Sexual Violence.” But when it comes to applying these universal principles at home in their imperialist country, they stir up the ghost of American exceptionalism. For reasons they cannot explain without their belief in this exceptionalism. They impose an artificial disconnect: here in the First World (not just in the US but clearly in Canada also, with the

opportunists in the fake PCR-RCP), prostitutes are now workers, and furthermore an important part of the proletariat!—and to hell with actually studying nearly 200 years of Communist agitation and propaganda on the matter! They charge those who do assert the correct historical position with being outdated dogmatists. To oppose prostitution from the Marxist position, just as Marxists have always opposed it, earns one a volley of buzzwords and condemnation as a SWERF (that is, “sex worker exclusionary radical feminist”)—even while (a) “sex work” is a made-up term that runs counter to Marxist political economy and (b) Marxists explicitly reject radical feminism on a fundamental level. Without any economic analysis, the American exceptionalists have made defending prostitution a prerequisite for being a leftist, not only defending it from a moral standpoint but even going so far as to frame degradation and abuse as empowering. Revisionism still plays its part in turning a thing into its opposite.

Mary Inman described the continuum of revisionism aptly:

“Furthermore, wrecking on the Woman Question has not only continued since the ousting of Browder, but has even been accelerated under the leadership of Dennis (ably abetted by Foster, who warned against an ‘over correction of errors’ at a time when nothing had been done to stop their liquidatory practices affecting Communist work amongst women).” (*13 Years of CPUSA Misleadership on the Woman Question*)

The liquidation of Communist work among women today is assisted tremendously by postmodernism, which has practically been established as “common sense” for the left and occupies a near-hegemonic position in mainstream US activist movements. And of course, postmodernist cretins agree with Browder that the class struggle itself is mitigated in a country like the US, where “free women” can “freely choose” prostitution and it is backward to pass critical judgment on the trade of women.

Inman referred to this thinking as the “culture of prostitution”:

“Prostitution has been laid at women’s door, and it is said that she enters the practice from choice because it suits her nature, and is one of the attributes of Eve. Nor is this all. Prostitution has created its own degenerate philosophy, which has penetrated into circles not directly affected by it.” (*In Woman’s Defense*)

The contemporary apologists still maintain that prostitution is a choice, by insisting they are workers like any other who are free to choose a career (within the confines of their class and circumstance). Even though they do not resort to Scripture to justify their views, the same metaphysics finds traction.

Inman contributes valuable criticism of bourgeois culture’s portrayal of prostitutes in films as free-spirited travelers who select their own johns. Writing in the 1930s and 40s, Inman portrays this superstructural device, which has remained in currency since the time of her writing:

“Persons who acquired their opinions about prostitution from such as Mae West pictures, wherein the talented star portrayed the woman of questionable character who went freely about the country having adventures, knowing romance, wearing swell clothes and dominating the situation in which she found herself, selecting carefully her lovers and avoiding those men who did not appeal to her esthetic tastes, in fact roving, wise-cracking, free-lance, exploited by no one, will have the wrong picture of the real lives of such women.” (*In Woman’s Defense*)

We can cite obvious examples like the film *Pretty Woman*, but the message is driven home in the more up-to-date postmodern approaches in films and television shows, where the term “sex worker” has fully replaced the term “prostitute,” and “prostitute” is now viewed as nothing more than a sexist slur. The culture of prostitution still exists, finding its niche in the phony progressivism of postmodernism, which tirelessly seeks to pass off a fanciful illusion as the truth.

On the website *Mel Magazine* we find articles like “The Most Realistic Sex-Worker Portrayals in Pop Culture, According to Sex Workers.” In this article we find such gems as the following: “*The Deuce* is a sweaty buffet of debauchery calling back to the kind of heroin-soaked freedom Janis Joplin sang about.” Only the most profoundly deluded petty-bourgeois dilettante would conflate heroin with freedom, as it exists mainly as a weapon to keep the lower classes enchained, robbing them of even the most basic freedoms.

The author continues, “The protagonist is Candy, a clever veteran escort played by the excellent, but oddly cast Maggie Gyllenhaal, who walks the tracks, pimp-free. Unfazed and visibly bored, Candy works alone while her cohorts—mostly large and lovely black women—get smacked around by their white regulars and bullied by their pimps. She says to one fast-talking hopeful, ‘No one makes money off this pussy but me.’ Candy’s optimism in this regard is admirable but naïve (capitalism, for instance); still, she has more agency than most of the show’s other characters.”

The tokenization and abuse of Black women is merely unpleasant background noise for the free-spirited “Candy,” whom the author finds immediately relatable. No mention is made of the fact this devil-may-care character rises throughout the series to become a well-paid pornographer and exploiter of other women. The only real criticism of the show put forward by the article is on the basis of crude identity politics—they complain that the show was written by men and not co-written by “sex workers.” This is the best they can come up with when parroting the culture of prostitution today.

For the petty-bourgeois dilettante, “sex workers” are often imagined as struggling heroines, usually white women who choose prostitution as a clever way of bucking the system, and thus they view it as a rebellious act against capitalism itself. They are far removed from the mass tragedy and genocide that the women of the Third World face. Nor can they fathom the anguish of the people of the internal colonies in the US, where prostitution is the most prevalent.

The “sex worker” image constructed by bourgeois intellectuals has a special allure for the petty bourgeoisie: it evokes the myth of class ascension (like that of the fictional Candy mentioned above). With this myth we find a girl—most likely from a troubled background—who grinds her way toward becoming a small business proprietor. Maybe she becomes a pornographer producing the films after starring in them. For the identity politics crowd, this is thrilling because now exploited women are the ones exploiting women. They are not at all concerned that exploitation remains intact and has now simply found a better way to apologize for itself. This rags-to-riches story so often told is a powerful device in the service of ruling-class management of class relationships under capitalism. After all, their argument goes, this is just the unchained agency of free modern women.

In the following passage, Inman might as well be writing in the present day on the question of those who argue for the existence of agency in prostitution by rebranding it “sex work”:

“There is a noticeable tendency in much of the literature on prostitution to confuse a wanted sex act with prostitution, and efforts are made to show by indirection, or otherwise, that they are either the same or that the former leads into the later.” (*In Woman’s Defense*)

Of course, she also recognized that the phenomenon is not exclusive to women from the working class:

“The scope of prostitution is wider than the working-class women, for by no means are all the daughters of the middle-class families secure, nor, for that matter, are daughters from professional and upper-class families where fortunes were affected by economic breakdown.” (*In Woman’s Defense*)

Anyone “freely choosing” “sex work” without the pressure of economic conditions is not experiencing the reality of the declassed women Inman is writing about, or of the majority of women trapped in prostitution in the US for that matter.

Browderism did not limit its assaults only to the women's struggle. It also directed attacks against the national liberation struggles of the internal colonies, and a major casualty of this time was the Communist work among the Black Nation. The work among the Black Nation was more or less eroded by the Popular Front period of the Communist International, and it was none other than Popular Frontism that gave powerful impulse to the rightists in the Party, led by Browder and then Foster.

The national question has all but gone from the program of the CPUSA and only a few of the revisionist relics of the New Communist Movement still uphold it even superficially. And even given their acknowledgment of the necessity of this work, no meaningful struggles are led to conquer the power of self-determination for the internal colonies. And it is perfectly natural for these types who insist on delinking prostitution from colonialism to be seduced into the quagmire of prostitution apologia. No honest study of colonialism can go without mentioning the settlers breaking the colonized into prostitution, through direct violent coercion as well as the violence of economic coercion, both equal in their atrocity.

Even cursory examinations of the real conditions faced by indigenous people in the US and people in the internal colonies—even studies carried out by bourgeois researchers—can highlight the way settler-colonialism manifests in prostitution, as the following passage reveals:

“Many AI/AN [American Indian and Alaskan Native] people live in adverse social and physical environments that place them at high risk of exposure to traumatic events with rates of violent victimization more than twice the national average. High rates of poverty, homelessness, and chronic health problems in AI/AN communities create vulnerability to prostitution and trafficking among AI/AN women by increasing economic stress and decreasing the ability to resist predators. AI/AN women are subject to high rates of childhood sexual assaults, domestic violence, and rape both on and off reservations. The vast majority of prostituted women were sexually assaulted as children, usually by multiple perpetrators, and were revictimized as adults in

prostitution as they experienced being hunted, dominated, harassed, pimped, assaulted, battered, and sometimes murdered by sex buyers, pimps, and traffickers.” (Farley, Deer, Golding, et al., *Prostitution and Trafficking of American/Indian Alaska Native Women in Minnesota*; citations removed from quotation for brevity)

The argument that prostitution is a free choice, combined with the disproportionately high representation of Black and native women in prostitution, is nothing short of the thinly veiled racism of the petty bourgeoisie.

It is as absurd and cruel to divorce these facts from the US settler-colonial project as it would be to pretend that South African apartheid had nothing to do with prostitution in that country, as elaborated on here:

“Indigenous South African women are at great risk for all of the factors that increase vulnerability to prostitution: family and community violence including an epidemic of sexual violence, life-threatening poverty, lack of educational and job opportunities, lack of health services throughout their lifetimes, and lack of culturally appropriate social services that would help them escape prostitution. When alternatives to prostitution are not available—although it can appear to be a choice—prostitution is coerced by social harms such as child abuse, racism, sexism, and poverty. All of these forms of violence against women, including prostitution, are related.” (Madlala-Routledge, Farley, Barengayabo, et al., “‘I feel like I’m still living under apartheid’: Racialized Sexual Exploitation of 100 Women in South African Prostitution”)

While bourgeois feminist researchers can come up with no actual method of abolishing prostitution, they can be useful insofar as their data can be verified. Socialism, meanwhile, has direct means of both fighting and abolishing prostitution successfully.

According to Lenin, “no amount of ‘moral indignation’ (hypocritical in 99 cases out of 100) about prostitution can do anything against this trade in female flesh;

so long as wage-slavery exists, inevitably prostitution too will exist. All the oppressed and exploited classes throughout the history of human societies have always been forced (and it is in this that their exploitation consists) to give up to their oppressors, first, their unpaid labor and, second, their women as concubines for the ‘masters.’”

The great socialist projects’ approaches to combating and abolishing prostitution

“We are now approaching a social revolution in which the economic foundations of monogamy as they have existed hitherto will disappear just as surely as those of its complement—prostitution.”

—Engels, *Origin of the Family*

“Not only have the people in the Soviet Union abolished prostitution, but wherever the people have become the dominant economic power, even in part of the country, they have abolished prostitution, for example in the districts in China controlled by the people’s movements.”

—Mary Inman, *In Woman’s Defense*

Engels was speaking of a hypothetical socialist revolution, but one that would inevitably take place based on a concrete analysis of concrete conditions. This social revolution would erupt in Russia in 1917 and have world-changing consequence:

“The workers’ revolution in Russia has shattered the basis of capitalism and has struck a blow at the former dependence of women upon men. All citizens are equal before the work collective. They are equally obliged to work for the common good and are equally eligible to the support of the collective when they need it. A woman provides for herself not by marriage but by the part she plays in production and the contribution she makes to the people’s wealth.”
(Kollontai, “Prostitution and Ways of Fighting It”)

Kollontai—understanding that society maintained much of its old superstructure post-revolution as well as widespread conditions of economic hardship, low productive capacity, and other difficulties resulting from the still-developing economic base—firmly grasped that the revolution, while having abolished the main causes of these things (private property, etc.) still had much to do in the struggle against prostitution that persisted in these conditions.

She took up the charge to lead the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in this effort:

“Some people might say that since prostitution will have no place once the power of the workers and the basis of communism are strengthened, no special campaign is necessary. This type of argument fails to take into account the harmful and disuniting effect that prostitution has on the construction of a new communist society.”

The above quotation should be particularly salient for Maoists who grasp that revolution must continue under the dictatorship of the proletariat to align society with the new socialist base.

She further insisted that the prostitution that persisted under the proletarian dictatorship posed a great risk to social unity, to class unity, and to the economic construction of the Soviet Union. Her position was that prostitution was a private enterprise running counter to the workers’ republic and hence had to be abolished.

And great changes had indeed begun to take place in the workers’ republic, revolutionizing both the base and the superstructure. Merchants of any sort were now considered speculators, and all citizens were to be involved in productive labor. Kollontai writes,

“We do not, therefore, condemn prostitution and fight against it as a special category but as an aspect of labor desertion. To us in the workers’ republic it is not important whether a woman sells herself to one man or to many, whether

she is classed as a professional prostitute selling her favors to a succession of clients or as a wife selling herself to her husband. All women who avoid work and do not take part in production or in caring for children are liable, on the same basis as prostitutes, to be forced to work.”

In the period of tsarist Russia, just prior to the revolution, prostitution was regulated but not illegal. There was punishment for procuring and pimping but not for prostitution. The revolution stepped in to shake the world and change everything. This included the lives of women in prostitution, who were now to be provided productive jobs.

Given that the conditions which give rise to prostitution were being combated, and that former prostitutes were undergoing political education and engaged in labor, prostitution could not remain the force that it had been in tsarist Russia. Women were mobilized in Soviet society, and prostitution did not come back in force until capitalist restoration post-Khrushchev.

China, having the oldest brothels in the world, surpassing even those of the Netherlands, had much to accomplish after Liberation in 1949, approaches developed in the liberated areas, where prostitution had been abolished must now be applied country wide. Pre-revolutionary China, like tsarist Russia, had only regulated prostitution rather than legally banning it. In pre-revolutionary China there were “licensed prostitutes,” who were some of the worst victims of social oppression. These were called “mist and flower maidens.” After the victory of the revolution, these women were provided lodging and education in socialist reformatories. Most crucially, these women were liberated and taught the differences between the old and new societies.

One of the first acts of the socialist State in the People’s Republic of China was the abolition of old marriage laws that treated women as the property of their husbands. The overthrow of these laws benefited the former prostitutes, many of whom were women and children sold into lives of sexual slavery by husbands or fathers trying to avoid starvation. The liberation of China from the yoke of imperialist and colonial domination reverberated through all of Chinese society

(and in fact throughout the whole world), with Mao's great declaration that "women hold up half the sky" signaling a new age where women would come to carry out half of production.

The women's movement found its continuation and further flourished in the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, when Jiang Qing helped to lead an assault on the old culture, which at best portrayed women as little more than accomplices to male revolutionaries—and at worst as property. Notably, this can be seen in the remake of the Chinese classic "The Bride with White Hair," wherein the heroine, instead of relying on a male soldier as in the original, sees to her own liberation. And the old society's conceptions of prostitution came under similar attack.

With the persecution of Comrade Jiang and her three comrades, who represented the Communist line against the reactionary line of Deng Xiaoping and his clique, came an assault on the women's movement of an even greater magnitude than the one that occurred in the US.

Among many other comparable measures, Deng removed women from such jobs as factory worker and train driver and threw them into office administrator positions.[13] Gendered labor that had been combated during the Cultural Revolution found its full expression in the Deng years.[14] Sex-based advertising and prostitution made a big comeback.[15] Female stereotyping made a return even in children's books, training a new generation for the restored capitalist mode of production.[16] The Japanese film *Yearning for Home* that depicted prostitutes was aired on state TV and defended by the Dengite-run *Beijing Review* against critics who insisted that the film harmed young women and ran counter to the revolution. The old operas that had been banned—ones like "The Drunken Beauty," about an emperor and his concubines—were performed at the Peking Opera. Pornography and prostitution were restored with capitalism.

Of course, the existing People's Wars in Peru, Turkey, India, and the Philippines provide living examples of how to regard prostitution, how to end it in Communist-controlled base areas, and how to organize women out of the trade

and into the People's Army. Unlike bourgeois or imperialist armies, People's Armies have no need for prostitution in "boosting the morale" of male troops, and so bands of prostitutes do not follow the soldiers. People's soldiers are upstanding and fortified against such low behavior.

Before becoming a full-blown revisionist, Parvati described the effect of People's War on the women peasants of Nepal:

"People's War has given a revolutionary alternative life to young aspiring men and women. Women's lives, particularly in rural areas, are so monotonous, set in a repeated pattern of reproductive activities. [With] marriage being arranged at much younger age[s], they have no way of escaping from this beaten track life cycle. For aspiring women to venture out of village means almost getting trapped into prostitution or being trafficked to India (it is estimated that about 150,000 women from Nepal are trafficked to urban centers of India!) or are trapped to [low-paying] sweat shops where sexual harassment is rampant. Thus for such aspiring women, the People's War offers them [a] challenging opportunity to work side by side with men on equal term[s] and to prove their worth mentally and physically." ("Women's Participation in People's War in Nepal")

Conclusion

Many apologists for prostitution refuse to hear analysis on the question from anyone who is not "a sex worker." Others still will claim that they are or have been "sex workers" themselves, and are therefore beyond the need for an objective class analysis. Few have actually studied the economic forces behind prostitution, getting deeper into what is actually being bought and sold, who owns the business, what class forces are in contradiction, and so on. Many still refuse to explore prostitution as an economic phenomenon—one occurring in a world in the thrall of imperialism at that. They have (likely before even reading this article) come to the conclusion that the only possible criticisms of prostitution are moral ones, ones that intend to stigmatize the prostitute for daring to defy the chastity sometimes imposed on women. Like the bourgeois

religious hypocrite, they cannot fathom prostitution beyond moral objection—morality is the only framework they can find.

As discussed above, Marxists, unlike any of the above-mentioned camps, do not view prostitution (or almost anything else) in terms of morality, but in terms of class struggle—this means we criticize on the basis of an economic analysis. It is, after all, economic conditions that provide impulse to the trade in the first place. Moral objection does not rate here.

There are those who will say they are Marxists, but that they are “not dogmatists”—thereby justifying their clean break with 200 years of analysis on the matter. They may not be dogmatic Marxists, but they are dogmatists nonetheless: dogmatists of postmodernism, of identity politics, of third-wave feminism, and other degenerate bourgeois ideology. They do not so much object to the conclusions of Marxism (at least not most of the time), and they may even have a strong dislike of capitalism. What they oppose is the Marxist method—the same method that is universal and ever-improving, which has led comrades throughout history to develop clear lines on the matter of prostitution. This method and framework for analysis has been sharpened through discovery and mainly through violent class struggle. It has made new discoveries (a scientific analysis of modern imperialism, an understanding of the necessity and forms of proletarian dictatorship, cultural revolution, etc.) along the way. None of the apologists of prostitution can offer a single development, discovery, or condition that fundamentally alters the historic Marxist analysis of prostitution.

Marxists have never understood prostitution as simply the plight of “fallen women” who were just “raised wrong” in slums or other harmful conditions. Marxism has never sought to blame women for the conditions that force them into prostitution. Yet accusing all critics of prostitution of this thinking is the knee-jerk reaction of the apologist. This is the only response they can imagine from those who do not see the trade as “empowering” or “a job like any other.” No job, legal or illegal in the capitalist system, is empowering; all jobs without exception are alienating.

So how do the sanitizers of anti-woman violence come to their distorted views? Well, when an adventurous and impulsive petty-bourgeois dilettante, like one of Mae West's characters, willingly chooses "sex work" (as a growing number of petty-bourgeois people are claiming) and finds the "stigma" to be the only uncomfortable part, all while never experiencing the raw and inhuman degradation that is imposed on most women in these trades—her goal can only be to sanitize the whole thing. In their attempts to be seen as better than the majority, they work to rebrand any trade that has to do with sex or that has been sexualized—now framing entertainers and performers and even enslaved women as "workers," now not only defending prostitution as a trade but even preaching its virtue to anyone they can guilt into listening. Some of them will even insist against all reason that these trades must be allowed to continue under the socialist system. But, of course, a socialist society cannot "legalize" or "nationalize" prostitution without the state becoming a pimp. These women who claim that "sex work" empowers them, at the same time, are acknowledging that regular working-class jobs are disempowering. This speaks volumes about their class stand and ambitions, and their detestation of the working class. They would rather be sexually exploited than engage in production alongside the proletariat—these can only be considered sham Marxists, and likened to compradors among women. For these it is not economic poverty or low social status or colonialism that drives them to the trade—it is the mere threat, faced by all petty bourgeoisie, of forced integration into the proletariat. They are in solidarity with the rest of their class in labor desertion.

Feminism emerged with dual aspects of progress and reaction. It has existed with these contradictions ever since and has principally become a tool of the bourgeoisie, in a buffet of bourgeois feminisms. The worst of these take facets of women's oppression and simply re-dress them as their opposites, women's empowerment. Now the most degrading trades imposed upon women are the most championed. The petty-bourgeois sex adventurer will brag about making more than the stupid women at work in maid service, food service, transportation, and factory work. She will say that she is smarter and has managed to get out of the rat race. She identifies her trade as labor desertion,

and *she is correct*. But she is incorrect that this somehow makes her choice the correct one while the women of the proletariat are just sheep. It is one thing to have an incorrect idea—it is another to spread it like gospel.

The petty-bourgeois sex-capitalist has nothing in common with working women. She lives a life of bourgeois decadence and is a commercial for misogyny. She insists that it is a good and normal thing for women to be able to be rented. She gives men a fair price, so as to reproduce the idea within themselves and among men broadly, that women are a commodity. All the women who struggle against this collectively form a sort of picket line, and the petty-bourgeois sex-capitalist gleefully crosses it. She is uninhibited.

For the Communist in the women's struggle, the line is perfectly clear: we must serve the people. Inman writes,

“The struggle against prostitution is the struggle against the capitalist class. Since prostitution has an economic basis and the woman enters it because of economic insecurity, one form of the struggle must be economic: demands for a living wage for all women who work.

And for those denied a role in industry or social production, either directly or indirectly in legitimate service, demands must be raised that they be given compensation. Social production in general must be made to bear the responsibility of their support until such a time as they can be given a part in such work.

But an effective struggle against prostitution must also attack and expose the whole cynical, decadent moral structure that supports sex-subjugation, and the role of sex vigilantes who then dog the footsteps of subject women.” (Inman, *In Woman's Defense*)

Thus our aim is not to stigmatize the women forced into prostitution but to justify their liberation from slavery with a Marxist class analysis.

Notes

1. Sarah Handley-Cousins, "Prostitutes!" National Museum of Civil War Medicine website.
2. Melissa Gira Grant, "When Prostitution Wasn't a Crime," *AlterNet*.
3. rights4girls.org, "Racial & Gender Disparities in the Sex Trade."
4. Devon D. Brewer, John J. Potterat, and Stephen Q. Muth, "Clients of Prostitute Women."
5. Matthias Gafni, "Oakland Police Scandal: How Often Are Cops Having Sex with Prostitutes?" *Mercury News* (Bay Area).
6. Jo-Anne Madeleine Stoltz, Kate Shannon, Thomas Kerr, et al., "Associations between Childhood Maltreatment and Sex Work in a Cohort of Drug-Using Youth," *Social Science & Medicine* 65, no. 6, 1214–21.
7. Janie Har, "Is the Average Age of Entry into Sex Trafficking between 12 and 14 Years Old?" *PolitiFact*; Emi Koyama, "The Average Age of Entry into Prostitution Is NOT 13," *eminism.com*.
8. Howard N. Snyder, "Arrest in the United States, 1990-2010," U.S. Dept. of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.
9. Erin Fuchs, "Atlanta's Underground Sex Trade Is Booming," *Business Insider*.
10. Melissa Farley, "Risks of Prostitution," *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research* 3, no. 1, 97–108.

11. Meredith Dank, Bilal Khan, P. Mitchell Downey, et al. “Estimating the Size and Structure of the Underground Commercial Sex Economy in Eight Major US Cities,” Urban Institute.
12. Barbara Kavemann, “Findings of a Study on the Impact of the German Prostitution Act,” Social Science Women’s Research Institute at the Protestant University of Applied Sciences Freiburg.
13. Hong Guo, “The Impacts of Economic Reform on Women in China,” MA thesis, University of Regina, 1997.
14. New Vistas Publications, *Women in the Chinese Revolution (1921–1950)*.
15. Elaine Jeffreys, *China, Sex and Prostitution*.
16. New Vistas Publications, *Women in the Chinese Revolution*.

PREVIOUS POST

New Year Statement from Struggle Sessions

NEXT POST

Enemies of the Communist Party of Peru

Leave a Reply

Enter your comment here...

Search ...

ARCHIVES

December 2021

November 2021

October 2021

September 2021

August 2021

July 2021

June 2021

May 2021

April 2021

March 2021

February 2021

January 2021

November 2020

October 2020

July 2020

June 2020

May 2020

April 2020

March 2020

February 2020

January 2020

December 2019

November 2019

October 2019

August 2019

July 2019

June 2019

May 2019

April 2019

February 2019

January 2019

December 2018

November 2018

October 2018

September 2018

August 2018

July 2018

June 2018

BLOG AT WORDPRESS.COM.