

City Hall
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place room 244
San Francisco, CA 94102

December 14, 2007

Dear San Francisco Board of Supervisor,

Sex Workers Outreach Project believes that the criminalization of prostitution is a direct cause for violence and stigma perpetrated against sex workers. Predators have used criminalization as an excuse to murder prostitutes. The very fact that prostitutes are nothing but criminals and the ideal that they are easy prey because nobody cares makes them number one targets for violence. Decriminalization is one of the first steps to taking away the stigma related to prostitution. When we are no longer criminals, we will not fear arrest if we report violence against us. If our occupation is legal we will be able to organize and fight for labor rights enforcement in our workplaces.

We need to protect prostitutes. The number one cause of death for prostitutes is homicide. Our attempt to abolish prostitution over the last hundred years has resulted in a burgeoning multi billion dollar social services industry, a burgeoning women's prison population and the continued stigmatization and marginalization of our community's most vulnerable women. The perpetrators of a gang rape in Pennsylvania had their charges reduced from sexual assault to theft of services because the Judge said the victim was a prostitute. Prostitutes and their testimony are not viewed as credible, which is why serial killers Gary Ridgway and Robert Pickton were able to murder prostitutes for many years. While an Oakland City Councilman was shaming johns by putting their faces on billboards his son was busy beating and raping prostitutes on the streets.

We implore the cooperation of the Mayor with the Board of Supervisors to issue a resolution supporting the decriminalization of prostitution and make arresting prostitutes the lowest police priority. A sincere effort must be made to address the issue of violence against sex workers by investigating alternatives to arrest and incarceration of prostitutes and their clients.

Sincerely,

Robyn Few
Administrative Committee Member
Sex Workers Outreach Project USA