

When we examine sex as a trade, the combination of philosophy, cultural precedence, religious influence and politics made each country select how to handle it in its own way. In Singapore, sex for money is open and commonplace. Denmark women can be legal prostitutes so long as it is not their sole means of income. Canada, France and Mexico allow it. Prostitutes must be contained within brothels in the Netherlands, unlike within England and Wales where prostitution is limited to individual providers. Israel, the historical stage for the Bible, allows it, too. Meanwhile, the United States has made prostitution illegal (misdemeanor) in all states, except certain counties of Nevada.

Even though it is quite natural on a biological level for males and females to host desires and have intimate relations with many partners it would probably be a very unproductive line of reasoning when considering the legalization of prostitution. Humankind no longer succumbs to animal behavior and has built infrastructures that depend on us expunging primitive mannerisms. Unlike the animal kingdom, we deal with sexuality without force. Nevertheless, there is still room for prostitution within civilized societies, since sex can be considered to be a service traded for goods, services, relationships, and money. . . .

The Benefits of Legalization

Most everywhere in the United States, our legal system penalizes prostitutes and their customers for what they do as consenting adults. Money is still spent on law enforcement efforts to catch prostitutes and their customers. Once caught, justice departments have to process these people through very expensive systems.

What are the end results? Police personnel and courtrooms are overburdened with these cases, having little or no impact on prostitution. The prostitutes and their customers pay their fines and are back to the streets in no time in a re-

VIEWPOINT

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Prostitution Should Be Legalized

Mark Liberator

Rather than waste tax dollars trying to prevent prostitution, governments should legalize and regulate the practice, argues Mark Liberator in the following viewpoint. Prohibiting prostitution forces the industry underground, he claims, putting prostitutes and their customers at risk. If prostitution were legal, Liberator maintains, prostitutes would not be exploited and abused by pimps and organized crime bosses. Regulation would also control the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, he asserts, because prostitutes would be required to undergo regular medical examinations. Liberator, a high school mathematics teacher, publishes the e-magazine, the Liberator.

As you read, consider the following questions:

1. According to Liberator, what different strategies do countries use to handle prostitution?
2. What are the end results of penalizing prostitution, in the author's view?
3. In the author's opinion, how many teens are prostituted each year in the United States?

Mark Liberator, “Legalized Prostitution: Regulating the Oldest Profession,” *Liberator*, December 21, 2004. www.liberator.net. Reproduced by permission of the author.

volving door process. Catch and release may work for recreational fishing but it has no deterring effect on prostitution.

Making prostitution legal will allow the act to be managed instead of ignored. Pimps and organized crime figures, who regularly treat their workers on subhuman levels, would no longer control women. In some countries, prostitute rings buy and sell women on the black market, force their women to comply through violence and create unhealthy working conditions. When prostitutes operate independently and in secret, many times they become abused by their own customers.

Making the Invisible Visible

Legalizing prostitution would prevent underground prostitution that occurs today. When men want to pay for sex, they find prostitutes. These people work in massage parlors, escort services, strip bars and modeling agencies or still work corners as traditional streetwalkers. There are legitimate parlors, dating services, bars and agencies but of the hundreds that exist within newspaper classified advertisements and telephone directories, there are a large number that provide sexual services. A routine search through Google's Internet news engine for 'prostitution' routinely reveals connections between prostitution and these falsetto agencies.

It is estimated that 100,000 to 3 million teens are nearly invisibly prostituted per year in the United States. If we allow prostitution to remain hidden from view and basically invisible to the law as it is today, we allow a number of teens to be swept up into prostitution every year. When adult women decide to exchange money for sex, it is a personal choice open to them under the philosophy of a free, democratic society. When troubled minors who do not yet have the social survival skills decide to prostitute, they are often manipulated by opportunists who exploit these teens, typically leading to horrific ends. Legalizing prostitution will help prevent these instances through regulation.

Legalized, regulated prostitution has many benefits. Encounters can happen within controlled environments that bring about safety for both the customers and the prostitutes. Prostitutes would no longer be strong-armed by pimps or organized crime rings. Underage prostitution would be curtailed. There would also be health-safety improvements.

The Health and Safety Benefits

The status quo is a poor health-safety plan. With sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) like syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia and herpes, prostitutes must be monitored to prevent the spread of these afflictions. Chancroid, an STD typically found in third world nations, is occurring in places throughout the U.S. due to transmission brought on through illegal prostitution. Chancroid makes ulcers in the vagina that assist with the spread of HIV/AIDS. . . .

R. Steen cited a practical example of how government can help its citizens. It makes practical sense to monitor prostitution and what better way is there to monitor it than by legalizing it and regulating it? Legalization would require prostitutes to undergo regular medical examinations. STDs would be prevented from being spread as well as other communicable ailments like hepatitis and tuberculosis. It would also reduce gender violence, allow women to escape prostitution, if they so choose, and prevent women from becoming infertile as a consequence to obtaining certain STDs.

The Role of Government

Whether one is a liberal or conservative, Republican or Democrat, the role of government is to carry out necessary duties its citizens cannot perform. Politicians are elected to government positions to solve the problems countries face. Some Democratic politicians insist government should be designed to act as a safety net for people who need help, by providing citizens with various social programs including public safety

and healthcare entitlements. Other Republican representatives believe in freedom of choice through responsible action and rather institute high standards in education and healthcare to enable citizens with opportunities. Libertarians feel compelled to ensure civil rights and allow citizens to be self-governing members of society.

In these cases, the issue of morality aside, it can be plainly seen how each political view contains strong elements supporting legalization. Maintaining the status quo has the U.S. throwing tax dollars away by spending it on law enforcement, criminal justice and prisons. The U.S. healthcare system is currently reactionary at best; it passively handles STDs after they occur instead of instituting mechanisms to prevent them from happening in the first place. . . .

The best way to understand the current state of affairs concerning prostitution is to entertain an analogy. Pretend government is a business. Politicians would be the managers and prostitution would be a certain procedure the company had to manage. Would a successful business ignore a procedure when it performed poorly? Would it allow a poor procedure to continue or would a successful business instead re-think its position and improve it? All successful companies must evolve over time if they are to stay in business and excel. Fortunately, the U.S. Constitution allows its citizens to view government like a dynamic business because it is a work in progress. Laws can change and adapt to meet the demands of a modern civilization. It is a far better strategy than hoping it will go away and clean up itself.

Where are the limits for two consenting adults in privacy? How government is shaped to handle that question will decide how women's rights, social programs, public healthcare, the safety of youth and possibly the general safety of citizens are valued. If moral obstacles prevent citizens from obtaining a government that helps its people while preserving freedoms, then a paradigm shift must be considered. A movement away

Recognizing the Rights of Adults

Legalizing prostitution would not be a moral endorsement of paid sex, any more than the 1st Amendment is a moral endorsement of supermarket tabloids. It would just be a recognition of the right of adults to make their own choices about sins of the flesh—and of the eternal futility of trying to stop them.

Steve Chapman, Chicago Tribune, July 14, 2005.

from values that are harmful is difficult only if one decides to cling to outdated, self-destructive traditions.

Politicians should be careful how they address the philosophical limits of adult privacy. A number of people believe government should have no right deciding how adults conduct their sexual lives, even when an exchange of money is involved. . . .

Answering the Critics

The critics of legalized prostitution insist sex for money is wrong because it is harmful to prostitutes. They claim prostitutes are victims of physical abuse and frequently suffer from homelessness, alcoholism and dependency on other drugs. These critics report that prostitutes have often been sexually and/or physically abused while growing up.

What critics do not report is a plan to help these workers. Their rationale is a status quo model, which does absolutely nothing to help these women. Instead of managing the problem through the medical and social interventions accompanied by regulation of the industry, critics of legalized prostitution would rather adopt prohibition and cold abandonment.

When critics mention neighborhood safety, they do not offer meaningful alternatives. Their plan is to heighten police

patrols, encourage undercover sting operations, and stiffen penalties. . . . [Prohibition] drives the industry further underground, making it harder to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS and various other sexually transmitted diseases in a community.

If critics of prostitution wanted to truly help prostitutes and the neighborhoods where prostitution occurs, they would reconsider their position. Prohibitionists retain their view as a result of moral codes, not because of unbiased scientific study. Research shows the many benefits of legalization. Allowing prohibitionist propaganda to drive laws and the way civil liberties are viewed will guarantee: drug dependency will not be abated, physical abuse will continue, and STDs will spread. Most important, the women who need help will continue their lives on the same harmful paths. . . .

Drawing Conclusions

Sexual relations are handled differently in countries around the world. Most countries encourage varied forms of monogamy, others polygyny [the practice of having more than one wife]. Even in the case of monogamy, there are numerous countries that impose no restrictions on prostitution, unlike a majority of the communities within the United States. . . .

The implementation of [the] prohibition [of alcohol] was a result of an abolitionist philosophy and caused great harm to the country through lost taxes, increased crime rates and higher suicide rates. Similarly, when the U.S. abandoned its abolitionist stand on abortion, the country benefited from fewer deaths from botched back alley abortions. This proved prohibitionist thinking to be baseless and actually detrimental to communities.

There are many benefits to legalized prostitution. The benefits include (1) allowing law enforcement agencies to respond to more important crimes, (2) freeing justice systems from

nuisance cases, (3) helping women who are trapped by prostitution, and (4) preventing teens from being ensnared into prostitution.

When data from countries that ban prostitution is compared with data from countries that do not, many startling discoveries can be observed. Countries without anti-prostitution laws have less murders, less rapes, and prosecute/imprison less people. HIV/AIDS is less of a problem; suicide rates are lower as are divorce rates, too.

Critics of the legalization of prostitution offer no alternative to a troublesome problem. These people would rather adopt the status quo model, which virtually abandons lower strata, low socio-economic prostitutes. Instead of managing the problem, these critics view the continued downward spiral of this subgroup as acceptable.

The critics of legalized prostitution rest comfortably within relatively new moral codes. The religions that now reject prostitution once used to manage it. However, even though religionists publicly denounce prostitution, too many hypocritically entertain like services and commit adultery. The Catholic Church has covered up institutional pedophilia at the expense of demeaning religious values and the lives of those who aspire to follow them.

Enlightened people within civilized societies pride themselves on the contributions made to others who are less fortunate. Low strata prostitutes clearly rest within the domain of the less fortunate, but the countries who cling to anti-prostitution laws choose to abandon these people and thereby negatively affect the crime, health, and general safety of those nations. One must reconsider whether or not those countries are truly civilized.