



#Notalljohns: Notes from the hearings on Bill C-36

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The hearings on [Bill C-36](#), the federal government's proposed prostitution law, continued today. You can [watch all of the testimonies, which began on Monday, on CPAC](#).

Today's hearings featured, among many others, [john-advocate](#), Chris Atchison ([begins at about 10:30](#)), who began his testimony by stating that he is not an advocate "for any individual, group, organization, or moral position on the sex industry." Atchison, in his own words, "stud[ies] and does research with adults who are involved in the purchase of sexual services." To be clear, [Atchison's work](#) focuses on destigmatizing johns and he advocates for their decriminalization. He is not a neutral party on the issue (not that I believe anyone should be or is neutral on this issue).

Regarding the question of whether "prostitution is inherently exploitative," Atchison argued, essentially, that the "bad" johns don't represent the majority as the majority of clients he's surveyed "provide no indication that they threaten, force, coerce, deceive or abuse a position of power or authority over a sex worker." He notes that a minority of "clients" do exhibit "exploitative" behaviour but emphasizes a number of times that *most* do not ([#notalljohns](#)). Atchison says that we are all wrong-wrong about there being a power imbalance between buyer and seller (an imbalance that favours "the client," to be specific) because the johns *he* talked to said so. In fact, "they felt the service provider they engaged with had more control or power or that the control or power was equally distributed."



The trouble with the way Atchison frames the discussion of exploitation and violence in the sex industry is that:

1) He individualizes the interactions — he doesn't see the system of prostitution as a form of gendered oppression (or as a system at all, really). He prefers to see prostitution as simply a series of isolated, individual

transactions.

2) Few johns who consider themselves to be “nice” or “good” johns are going to see a power imbalance. They already see themselves as victims of being underlaid, hence having to resort to paying for sex, *and* they consider the exchange of money for sex to be a fair trade — like seeing a barber or a physiotherapist. They are also patting themselves on the backs for having managed not to murder anyone in their johnning, so naturally they are going to tell someone like Atchison, whose research *aims to prove* johns are just nice, normal guys, that what they are doing is totes respectful and decent.

In any case, why we care what men who buy sex from vulnerable women think about women's liberation or gender equality is beyond me because if they had any understanding or concern for women's human rights and ending patriarchy *they wouldn't be buying sex from prostitutes*. Do you know any feminist men who buy sex? Would you laugh in their faces if they told you they desired an end to male power and violence against women just after they'd gotten a bj from an Aboriginal woman on the Downtown Eastside? I would.

Atchison wants the discussion of exploitation and abuse to be about *those other johns over there*. But too bad!

Because prostitution exists upon and because of a foundation of inequality that makes women into objects that exist for consumption and male pleasure. Some *individual* johns are more physically violent than others, sure. But we don't know which ones those are until they become violent, as



Trisha Baptie: He was a 'nice' john until he pulled a crowbar out #C36JUST

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Trisha Baptie noted in her testimony, nor is physical violence the whole conversation. The fact that prostitutes experience higher rates of PTSD than war veterans do speaks to that.

Beyond that, there is a level of coercion involved every single time a man buys sex from a woman (regardless of what he says or feels or thinks) because she is not there willingly. She is there because she needs the money. You know what we call sex that is desired by one party but not the other? Guess. Yeah... You got it.

But the real question we are all asking is what *about* the men?! Atchison goes on to claim that “violence and victimization are not asymmetrical.”

“Many of the clients that I’ve spoken to over the years,” he says, “have also experienced violent and non-violent victimization themselves either at the hands of a sex worker or of an industry owner, manager, madam, or pimp.”

I bet you guys were just worrying about violence against *women* in prostitution, weren’t you.

Misandry!

Atchison concludes by destroying all of our arguments with logic/truth bombs:

“The belief that demand is solely responsible for the existence of the sex industry ignores the fact that in many cases supply produces demand. It’s hypocritical and discriminatory, in a society where sex and sexuality are used liberally to sell all sorts of goods and services, to criminalize the purchase of direct contact sexual services while at the same time sanctioning the sale of such services.”

True that. And you know how feminists are always saying dumb things like “prostitution and pornography impact all women” and “prostitution makes women into objects to be bought and sold” and “see how objectification begets violence against women?” You know? How that happens? You know how Bill C-36 states right there at the beginning that “**the objectification of the human body and the commodification of sexual activity**” causes “social harm?” You know.

So yeah, I guess it *would* be hypocritical to criminalize the purchase of sex if we didn’t care about women’s lives, the global status of women, and addressing the larger problem of objectification. But we got you covered.

And regarding “supply” producing “demand” — what does this mean exactly? That prostitution is the fault of women because *they exist*? And are broke? And have various orifices within which men want to stick their dicks into for a cool \$5-500? Cool victim-blaming, bro.

The hearings continue tomorrow. Hopefully with less sexist, individualistic dumbery.