

# Survivors Say No Full Decriminalization of Prostitution

An open letter from Survivors of Prostitution and Trafficking

June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Dear Presidential Candidates,

We, the undersigned survivors of prostitution and sex trafficking, have experienced years of abuse, violence, objectification, and dehumanization in the sex trade. We know first-hand the devastating harm and long-term trauma that happens as a result of being exploited in an industry predicated on racial, gender, and income inequality.

We are aware that candidates running for President are being asked for their positions on proposals to decriminalize the sex trade, and we are deeply alarmed, honestly horrified, by recent statements that suggest an openness to decriminalizing the sex trade in its entirety. We urge presidential candidates to learn from survivors the truth about the pervasive harms and suffering perpetrated by sex buyers, pimps, traffickers, and other exploiters before issuing statements about the sex trade.

At a time when we are culturally taking a stand against violence and harassment towards women and marginalized groups, creating spaces of inclusion and opportunity, why would we take a step backward by allowing these very groups to be further exposed to the harms of prostitution as long as it is monetized?

To be clear, we support decriminalizing people sold in prostitution, as we care deeply about their safety and well-being. We know all too well that marginalized groups are at higher risk for exploitation and therefore are especially vulnerable to the harms of the sex trade. But decriminalizing the sex trade in its entirety would have disastrous consequences. Do not be confused- full decriminalization means allowing pimps, sex buyers, and brothel owners to operate with impunity. Sex trafficking (including that of children) and organized crime increases when pimping and sex buying are legalized.

As survivors, our voices and lived experiences are essential to these discussions. We are eager to share our perspectives and have a productive dialogue with all Presidential candidates and others running for elected office. However, we will not be spoken for or have our voices hijacked by anyone claiming that trafficking survivors support full decriminalization of pimps, buyers, and brothel owners. We will no longer stand by while our truths are misunderstood or misrepresented to support the misguided aims of the pro-prostitution “de facto” progressive political agenda.

The vast majority of survivors of prostitution and trafficking want to put an end to the buying and selling of vulnerable people and know first hand that the best way to do so is to ensure that pimping and sex buying remain behaviors that aren't encouraged or tolerated.

Respectfully,

Rev. Dr. Marian Hatcher, Survivor Leader  
SPACE International U.S.A. – Member  
sAmbassador-At-Large, United Nations

Rebecca Bender, MACT  
CEO & Founder: RBI, Survivor Leader

This list of signers is from June 25, 2019. If you want to sign on to the survivors' or the allies' statement, please contact [marianhatcher@yahoo.com](mailto:marianhatcher@yahoo.com).

**Signees:\***

This list represents the signatures collected by June 25, 2019.  
If you want to sign on to the survivors' or the allies' statement, please contact:  
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April De Los Santos, Survivor Mentor, One More Child  
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Visionary, Writer, Advocate, Social Worker, Ethics Monitor, etc...  
Purple Hearts Missions Possible & Healthy Horizons {The Original};  
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Sherry Lynn Dooley  
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Sonia Dunlap, Shade  
Stacie Spriggs  
Stacy Reed, Supervisor of Mentoring Services, RIA House  
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\* Disclaimer: An additional seven survivors expressed support for the letter, but wished for their names to remain private and confidential. (Subject to audit.)

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