**Legalise the Sex Work Industry**

It is indeed progress that this matter is being investigated, for which I congratulate you.

Sex Work has been maligned for thousands of years and the girls that operate in it are regarded as lesser beings.

People fail to understand:” **It’s what they do, not who they are.”**

Over the past 6 months, I have interviewed 7 girls involved in sex work. I relate one of their stories, and the other 5 are not dissimilar. Let’s call her Jane for want of a name.

Jane was 18 when unexpectedly her father died. This left her mother with 3 young children (Jane the eldest). The shock came when they discovered that Jane’s father had made no provision for an untimely death and the family was over a hundred thousand in debt. The mother has a lowly paid job and could in no way manage to keep a roof over their heads.

Jane, a beautiful girl decided to trade on her looks. She knew men found her attractive and so by entering the sex industry. She could make far more money than finding a clerical job, or shop assistant or anything else an unqualified school leaver could. She could single handedly, feed the family and keep a house, and pay the school fees of her siblings. She saved herself and 3 other people from poverty and life on the street.

Her entrance into sex work she managed very carefully. As a young vulnerable girl she decided to join a massage parlour. Upmarket, discreet and well managed, she was assured of high end customers and most importantly a drug free safe working environment.

After a year she ventured out on her own as she now had a client list that would sustain her and most importantly she was paying off the family debt.

Jumping ahead to last month when I met her, she has accumulated close to R1million in assets: she owns a restaurant, shares in a manufacturing company. She has created employment for 25 people that now feed 25 families. Jane is studying towards a higher diploma in business. Her siblings are now in high school and very well cared for. Her plan is to leave the industry at the end of the year and concentrate on her businesses.

As mentioned above, this story is similar for all of these girls. One of the others was divorced by a vindictive man and left the marriage with 2 children and aged 40, unqualified and got no maintenance nor child support. She operates from a quiet suburb and takes excellent care of the children: both are in good schools. She is also studying part time.

Again I reiterate, it’s what they do not who they are. These a super girls and were it not for a ridiculous society they would be regarded as upstanding citizens.

What interested me as well, was the way these and other girls operate in the sex industry.

The assumption that the whole sex industry is one huge den of drugs, pimps and a seedy underworld is far from the truth. It is also a fallacy that they “destroy the morals of society” Many of the customers are married men but as they told me, rather have a one hour engagement with a call girl than go out and have an affair. Affairs destroy marriages and have far worse consequences on whole families, than a non-emotional encounter with a person of the opposite sex. Another surprise was the girls saying that many of their clients, just pay them for their company and not physical interaction.

*It is the objective of a government to pass and enforce laws that protect the people. It is not the objective of a government to pass laws that dictate the morals of the people. The state is not a church.*

The state at this time with the archaic Calvinistic laws do nothing to protect the girls of the industry. There are thousands of cases of the girls getting assaulted / stolen from not only by (sick) clients but also the police themselves.

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It is illogical that a sex worker has to confess to committing a crime when trying to get some form a justice when assaulted by the client. In admitting that the said accused was in her company for sex when the assault / theft/ or whatever took place, they are declaring themselves criminals.

Just as every other citizen of the country deserves and is entitled to the protection of the state, so are the sex workers.

 Bluntly put: why are they different to doctors or motor mechanics because they use a different part of their bodies to earn a living.??????

Legalising the profession would allow the workers their rights in terms of protection, their rights to medical assistance and they would grow the state coffers by becoming tax payers.

A.M O’Kelly

tonyokelly@mweb.co.za