

Voluntary Sex Work and Stigma in the United States

Brandy Marie Ball

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS IN HISTORY/MUSEUM
STUDIES.

University of Central Oklahoma

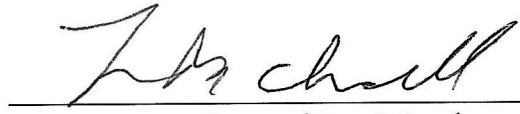
Spring 2025

THESIS APPROVAL

The abstract and thesis of Brandy Marie Ball for the Master of Arts in History-Museum Studies was submitted to the graduate college on May 8, 2025, and approved by the undersigned committee.

COMMITTEE APPROVAL:


Committee Chairperson


Committee Member


Committee Member

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Abstract.....	4
II.	Introduction.....	5-8
III.	Chapter One: Historiography.....	9-19
IV.	Chapter Two: Brief history and terminology importance.....	20-29
V.	Chapter Three: Types of Sex Work.....	30-34
VI.	Chapter Four: Early Sex Work in Oklahoma.....	35-48
VII.	Chapter Five: Sex Work in Modern Oklahoma.....	49-53
VIII.	Chapter Six: Stigma.....	54-62
IX.	Chapter Seven: Advocating and Legalizing Sex Work.....	63-75
X.	Conclusion.....	76-80
XI.	Appendix A: Sex Workers' stories.....	81-87
XII.	Appendix B: Example terms for sex workers and brothels.....	88-89
XIII.	Appendix C: Hell's Half Acre maps.....	90-91
XIV.	Appendix D: Folk Medicine for Women's Health in the early 20 th century.....	92-94
XV.	Bibliography.....	95-100

ABSTRACT

This study explores voluntary sex work in the United States with two chapters exploring sex work in Oklahoma in the early 20th century in Hell's Half Acre and the current sex work hotspots in metropolitan Oklahoma City. This study emphasizes *voluntary* sex work in which a human being *chooses* sex work to differentiate it from forced sex work, such as a husband forcing his wife into sex work, or forced human trafficking, such as being kidnapped, drugged, and forced into this industry. The stigma surrounding sex work has not diminished over time, however, it now constitutes a type of civil death for the sex worker, yet the stigma for the sex client has decreased over time. Intersectional sex workers, such as women or trans women of color, have seen an increase in stigma since the 1970s in the United States. This study also examines how societal stigma has impacted sex workers in Oklahoma by exploring the trends in the early 20th century and modern sex practices in Oklahoma. I argue that sex work and stigma have deep roots in Oklahoma that have contributed to the country's stigma due to the Moral Purity Movement that originated in the southern United States. Oklahoma's statehood condition of prohibiting alcohol, and by extension, sex work, also influenced the rest of the United States that these prohibitions were necessary to preserve the moral values and to drive away these vices and disregard sex workers as human beings.

INTRODUCTION

Patriarchal society and traditional Christianity in the United States has perceived sex work to be a vile profession and sex workers to be the lowest form of human being. This perception roughly began in the eighteenth century as sex workers provided some comfort to the men of the Continental Army and led to the spread of sexually transmitted infections. Naturally, the men were not held responsible for their part in the sexual escapades, and the “fallen women” received all the blame. The stigma attached to this profession has not diminished but has grown to include a type of “civil death” of the sex worker. This change in societal stigma over time has proven that sex workers will continue to be perceived as vile creatures, but perhaps it is the stigma of sex in general that needs to be addressed before change can occur in the profession itself.

This study will answer the following questions: How does society perceive sex workers, and where did this view come from? How has sexual stigma changed over time? How does the Madonna/whore dichotomy affect societal perceptions of sex workers? How do societal views of the “ideal woman” affect how girls and women see themselves as a person and subsequently as a sexual being? How did sex work evolve as a profession? How do whorephobia and slut-shaming affect societal views of sex? Why do sex workers choose their profession? What are the popular types of sex work, and what stigma occurs within the industry? Is sex work “real” work? How do sex positivity and sex work mesh in the industry? What is the experience between sex workers and clients/johns? What is the difference between sex work and human trafficking? How does stigma affect the sex work industry and law enforcement? How do decriminalization, human rights, and laws affect the sex worker industry? Why is advocacy important for sex workers?

This study will mostly center on female and transgender sex workers and the challenges they face in the industry, such as stigma and intersectionality. According to Kimberlé Crenshaw, the intersectionality concept describes how social categories like race, gender, class, and sexual orientation interact to create unique experiences of discrimination and disadvantage.¹ For example, a woman sex worker of Asian ethnicity will experience challenges that are very different from that of a black trans woman, and yet both will experience varying degrees of discrimination and stigma. A white male sex worker will experience less stigma and discrimination than a black trans woman or an Asian woman, because he isn't of color and is a man.

“Sex workers” is a broad category that includes everything from erotic dancing to domination, from phone sex to street prostitution.² However, beneath this label, these people are not just sex workers; they are partners, friends, and community members who face the same challenges as we do daily: managing money, juggling family and other intimate relationships in addition to legal restrictions and policing, confronting stigma, and the challenges in organizing collectively.³ Those who choose this profession often enter it not just for economic gain; they find freedom, sexual expression, flexibility, and, above all, the right to say “no.” There is a great deal of hypocrisy and prudishness surrounding the sex industry because sex workers have to touch their clients in intimate ways. However, professionals touch clients, patients, and customers in many professions. For example, massage therapists are comfortable doing bodywork and touching strangers. Doctors have intimate knowledge of the human body.

¹ Kimberlé Crenshaw, “The urgency of intersectionality,” TEDTalk.com, San Francisco, California, October 27, 2016, 18 minutes, 49 seconds.

² Alys Willman and Antonia Levy, “Introduction: Beyond the Sex in Sex Work,” *Sex Work Matters: Exploring Money, Power, and Intimacy in the Sex Industry* (New York: Zed Books, 2010), 1.

³ Willman and Levy, “Introduction: Beyond the Sex in Sex Work,” 1.

Aestheticians who do Brazilian waxes and anal bleaching need to be very comfortable touching stranger's body parts. We expect these professionals to touch us with care and respect, and we pay them for their services. Yet sex work carries with it the heavy weight of stigmatization of disgrace, credibility, or a spoiled social identity.⁴ So why is sex work so different, and how can we change the stigma surrounding this "sensitive" occupation?

When I set out for my bachelor's degree in 2018, I wanted to focus all my essays on some element of women's history. I wanted to see how far women had come in history and how past trends contributed to current trends. My first leg of research led me from the 1848 Seneca Convention to the 19th Amendment. My second leg led me to the 1920s flappers and the stigma accrued by these ladies rebelling against the nuclear family and its restrictions. My third leg involved the Women's Liberation Movement from the 1960s to the 1970s. For my fourth leg, I researched sexual harassment in the 1980s; due to this research, I opted for investigating domestic violence against women in the 1990s. I was debating my sixth leg of research when I came across a story about a teacher trying to supplement her income by creating adult content on OnlyFans and reading the comments posted on Facebook. I was not bothered by her actions because of my own experience. I worked in the public school system from 2011 to 2024 as a teacher for the discipline-challenged. Due to my measly paycheck from the school district, I was not surprised that this teacher tried to find new ways to make ends meet. Teaching is considered a female-dominated profession, yet it is one of the lowest paid occupations (I earned \$24,00/year pre-tax). Some sex workers utilize websites such as OnlyFans and make way more than teachers. The sex work industry is also dominated mainly by women, and they are paid so much more than

⁴ Paul Berthe, "The Stigmatization Behind Sex Work," May 4, 2018.

people realize.⁵ Most of those who commented on the teacher/OnlyFans story seemed to go straight for, “How dare she? AND she continues to teach? We don’t want that kind of influence on our kids.” Meanwhile, my inner monologue starts spouting, “What difference does it make? She’s providing for herself and her family, doing what she has to in a world committed to disempowering women.” I was raised in a single-mom home, and she instilled in us the basic need to be self-sufficient: have a job, car, home, and endless supply of double-A batteries; basically, how to live without a man (although the need for batteries seems to be obsolete considering most are rechargeable now). Mom was a teacher as well, and I saw first-hand just how difficult it was trying to make ends meet on a pitiful teacher salary; she often worked two or three jobs at a time (none were in the sex industry) while going for her master’s degree at the University of Central Oklahoma. In essence, the comments of the teacher/OnlyFans enraged me so much that I wanted to deconstruct the stigma surrounding the sex industry and how it affects these independent, self-sufficient women.

One of the problems I have encountered in this research is that the stigma is so significant that sex workers did not start to share their own stories until the new millennium, which made researching early and mid-century sex work in Oklahoma, and by extension the United States, challenging. Another problem I’ve encountered is the lack of vice books that were common in the early 1900s. For example, New Orleans has a “Blue Book,” which is essentially a guidebook to saloons, dance halls, bars, clubs, prostitution establishments, among other institutions of vice.⁶

⁵ Alys Willman, “Let’s Talk About Money,” *Sex Work Matters: Exploring Money, Power, and Intimacy in the Sex Industry* (New York: Zed Books, 2010).

⁶ “Rare Books and Periodicals: Blue Books,” *The Historic New Orleans Collections*, April 1, 2023, <https://www.hnoc.org>.

I suspect that the absence of such a guidebook is due to Oklahoma being in the Bible Belt and its residents trying to hide this vice community from outsiders.

Chapter One is an introduction history of sex work in the United States. Terminology and language matters when describing a person in the sex work industry. In the early twentieth century, the term “prostitute” was used to describe the *profession*, not the worker. This terminology changed after the Mann Act was passed in 1910. I also point out that sex work and sex industry are umbrella terms. There are many occupations within the industry, such as escort, porn, massage therapist with happy endings, streetwalker, client, camera personnel, security, and many more. Professional sex workers and clients alike despise lurs such as “prostitute” or “john.” Carol Leigh changed the terminology of someone employed in the sex industry as a “sex worker” in the late 1970s and early 1980s. I also explored where the term “red-light district” originated and why. I further explain the similarities and differences between brothel operations and the lives of streetwalkers. My study explores the societal views of the Madonna/whore dichotomy and the sexual double standard and how it applies to the sex industry. Finally, I explain that there are very few occupations where women make more money than men; the sex industry is one of them. For example, a high-end escort could make up to \$16,000 in one night, depending on the client.

Chapter Two is the historiography and how the study of historical sex work has changed over time. A collection of sex worker stories was taken from Jill Nagle’s *Whores and Other Feminists* as told by Priscilla Alexander, Norma Jean Almodovar, Tawnya Dudash, Vicky Funari, and many others. Their professions range from peepshows, stripping, streetwalkers, porn stars, dominatrix, and even a former cop-turned sex worker. This collection is supported by *Sex and Stigma: Stories of Everyday Life in Nevada’s Legal Brothels* by Sara Jane Blithe, Anna

Wiederhold Wolfe, and Breanna Mohr. Other contributors to this segment are Lola Davina, Sesali Bowen, Andrea Werhun, and Natalie West.

Melinda Chateauvert, Richard Branson, Jan Mackell Collins, Meredith Ralston, Ruth Rosen, and Michael Rutter provided the history of sex work in the Midwest. Albert McRill, Clara Nipper, David Farris, J.L. Franklin, Mary Ann Blockowiak, and Marilyn Hudson were instrumental in providing details on early Oklahoma history and the roles of sex workers from 1900-1915. Works by Norman Jackman, Richard O'Toole, Gilbert Geis, Gabe Hart, Andrew Allen and many others contributed insight into the self-esteem and stigma among sex workers. Arguments made by Priscilla Alexander, Cheryl Overs, Bebe Loff, Laura Agustin, Barbara Brents, Kathryn Hausbeck, Erin Fuchs, Crystal Jackson, and Annie Sprinkle consist of decriminalization and legalization support of sex work in the United States.

In Chapter Three, I detail brothel madam Big Anne Wynn and her reign over Hell's Half Acre in downtown Oklahoma City, in what is now a courthouse, offices of judges, county commissioner, and the state Department of Health. While Big Anne controlled the white sex workers, Martha Fleming maintained control over Alabaster Row, comprised of African Americans, Native Americans, and Asian sex workers. I also explore how Carry Nation terrorized saloons, and, by extension, the brothels. In addition, I also note that the "Flying Squadron" was the so-called vice police before statehood.

The combination of Carry Nation and the Flying Squadron provided a strong campaign for the Moral Purity Movement that led to prohibition as a condition of statehood. This was only strengthened by the passage of the Mann Act in 1910.

In Chapter Four, I note that even with the passage of the Mann Act, the May Rooms in Tulsa remained an active brothel from 1930 to 1978. Tulsa didn't start cracking down on brothels until 1941, and disappointment spread throughout the military. I also explore the stigma surrounding the sex industry in modern Oklahoma and current hotspots for impromptu casual sex.

Chapter Five explores the stigma within the sex industry in addition to the stigma outside of it. Jill Nagle, Melinda Chateauvert, and Marie Louise Janssen expand on the "whore stigma" and slut-shaming on both sides of the industry. Next I describe that client deal with minor legal infractions and may even attend John Schools. Sex workers who are outed deal with a type of civil death; they could be barred access to jobs, public programs, drug treatments, low-income housing, and scholarships. The sex worker also faces discrimination, harassment, excommunication, eviction, removal of children, abuse, theft, rape, and murder. Stigma and prejudices prevent some sex workers from reporting rape, abuse, and observations of sex trafficking to the authorities.

I also point out sex work and law enforcement harassment made by Oklahoma City Police officer Daniel Holtzclaw and how he targeted sex workers because they were easy targets and not likely to report any abuse he would inflict. I also explain how former cop-turned sex worker Norma Jean Almodovar observed police abuse toward sex workers.

In Chapter Six, I investigate whether the emotional labor that sex workers experience counts as actual *work*. I also explain Nevada brothel laws and how it has changed the landscape in the sex industry. I explore that sex workers are prevented from unionizing and gathering in groups for work or support. This prevents them from declaring what they want and deserve the same human rights as other workers. It also prevents them from finding other sex workers who

have retired from the industry, and gain information on how to transition into other employment while utilizing the skills they learned in the industry, such as marketing, sales, finance, and many others. I also note that sex work activism may gain more ground if merged with other stigmatized groups that deal with human rights, such as the LGBTQIA+ community. If these groups merged on common ground, they would have a much stronger fight for sexual citizenship, protection of sexual rights, the right to sexual privacy, civil partnerships, and consensual sex without the state's intervention. By connecting the fight for the right to work with the battle against whorephobia, racism, and transphobia, it is possible to connect sexual labor with race, gender, class, and sexual orientation.

Voluntary sex workers typically choose their profession not only for economic gain, but also for sexual freedom, expression, and flexibility while maintaining the right to say “no” to any potential or current client. The primary desired outcome of this project is to diminish the uncomfortable taboo in discussing the sex work occupation and reduce the amount of stigma surrounding it. Sex work should be treated like any other profession. They should feel comfortable disclosing their occupation and skills without fear of discrimination against possible employers, friends, and families. I argue that today's societal norms should be reconsidered according to current cultural influences rather than those imposed on society in the early 1900s, when public anxiety was high over prostitution and disease. Additionally, I examine how societal stigma has impacted sex workers in Oklahoma by looking into sex work in the early 1900s in Oklahoma City and modern sex work practices.

CHAPTER ONE: HISTORIOGRAPHY

Although pre-statehood records are difficult to find, I was able to locate three newspaper articles from *The Oklahoman* about sex work and alcohol. These articles show how attitudes regarding sex work and alcohol began to change from 1903 to 1913. The first article, “Girl Ruined by Violence,” is dated February 4, 1903. This article details the importation of two German girls being forced into sex work at one of Ann Wynn’s establishments. One of the girls, Lucy Patt, filed a suit against Ann for damages of twenty thousand dollars (\$717,029.55 in 2025). The petition states that on January 25, 1903, Lucy Patt was forced into the house of prostitution on West Second Street, conducted by Annie Wynn. Patt states that Annie induced her to drink beer that contained “knock out drops,” from which she became dazed, stupid, and partially unconscious. Patt was then unlawfully imprisoned for the purpose and intent to be subjected to shame, infamy, and disgrace by compelling her to submit to unlawful intercourse with two brutal men, George C. Harrison and John Harmon. Garrison was charged with rape and sent to Lansing for ten years. John Harmon and Anne Wynn received no punishment. In the aftermath of the trial, Mayor Van Winkle ordered the arrests of all keepers of bawdy houses, saloons selling liquor after midnight, and all persons conducting houses or engaging in gambling. Police Chief Emrick refused to enforce the mayor’s proclamation and said, “They say they have paid big sums for the guarantee of protection.”⁷

Two years later, we can see that the Army wants to keep liquor and light wines available for soldiers in the canteen so that the soldiers aren’t “forced” to patronize the saloons and doggeries. In an article titled “All Officers favor Army Canteen,” Secretary of War Brigadier General Constant Williams urges the restoration of the army canteen. While he praises the temperance societies for their influence, he states they have teamed up against the army canteen,

⁷ “Girl Ruined by Violence,” *The Oklahoman*, February 4, 1903.

the whisky guild, and saloon keepers. In essence, General Williams is attempting to argue for liquor and wines to be sold at the army canteen, so soldiers would not have to leave the garrison for some relaxation and fun. This article shows that temperance societies have gained enough ground to shut down the army canteen and that soldiers had to go elsewhere for alcohol and, by extension, gambling and prostitution.⁸

The third article, which appeared in 1913, was after Oklahoma's statehood (1907) and the Mann Act (1910) passage. The Mann Act is widely referred to as the White Slave Traffic Act, resulting in the criminalization of knowingly transporting women and girls across state or federal borders for "prostitution or debauchery, or for any other immoral purpose," and also making the coercion of women and girls for "immoral acts" as a federal offense.⁹ With the passage of the Mann Act, temperance societies undoubtedly felt victory. Furthermore, it encouraged them to continue their work with the help of Dr. E.R. Fulkerson, a pastor of the First Presbyterian church. Dr. Fulkerson spoke about twenty years of experience in moral crusades when he gave his speech on "A View of the World's White Slave Market." According to Dr. Fulkerson, eighty percent of all men between the ages of 18 and 30 years are diseased as a result of vice. As he recounted his experiences, Fulkerson told of the scenes he had witnessed in several large cities in the United States and foreign lands. In Japan, he saw many American girls from good families brought to the East for immoral purposes and distributed throughout Asia. Most girls were ruined by ignorance and a lack of knowledge about protecting themselves. Fulkerson continued to say, "I have found that the white slave traffic is an adjunct of the liquor trade. Where you find liquor, you will find prostitution. The public dance halls where liquor is sold are where most girls meet

⁸ "Army Canteen is Favored by All Officers," *The Oklahoman*, October 10, 1905.

⁹ Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1918* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1982), 19.

their Waterloo. You have laws against prostitution, and still it goes on. You will always have prostitution.” This societal obsession with the “white slave trade” led to the marriage of prostitution and sex trafficking in both the public eye and federal legislation. Prostitution has always been a controversial profession. The sensationalization of “white slavery” created the inaccurate belief that all sex workers are trapped within the industry and desperate to escape. It was this obsession that led people to believe today that sex work is equal to sex trafficking instead of simply a woman’s profession. This is a crucial point in Oklahoma’s social history because it changed how people saw sex workers; sex workers were no longer in their occupation willingly; they were now sex trafficking victims.

J.L. Franklin’s “The Fight for Prohibition in Oklahoma Territory” provided essential background information, but is very limited and reads like a brief overview.¹⁰ He discusses the formation of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the Anti-Saloon Leagues but gives little credit to individual women. For instance, Carry Nation greatly influenced the WCTU, and her outspoken nature coupled with her ax usage at bars and saloons.¹¹ Franklin only mentions Carry in passing and only devotes six sentences to her influence. Franklin also leaves out all of WCTU’s goals – to reduce alcohol consumption, abolish the liquor trade, and secure abstinence pledges. I suspect that J.L. Franklin is a man due to his limited scope of perception of women’s societies. This is apparent in Mary Ann Blochowiak’s “Woman with a Hatchet: Carry Nation Comes to Oklahoma Territory,” written twelve years later. Blochowiak goes into greater detail in describing Carry’s “mission.” Franklin’s article failed to mention the possible bias on Carry Nation’s part that led her to bully her way through the Midwest. Nation came to believe

¹⁰ J.L. Franklin, “The Fight for Prohibition in Oklahoma Territory,” *Social Science Quarterly*, 49, no. 4 (March 1969): 876-878.

¹¹ Mary Ann Blochowiak, “Woman with a Hatchet: Carry Nation Comes to Oklahoma Territory,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 1981.

that her marriage and her daughter were cursed as a result of a drunken husband and distracted mother. It was her husband who filed for divorce on the grounds of cruelty and desertion. Instead of fixing things inside her family, she lashed out and attacked the vices of others by questioning their decisions and demanding that men stop smoking and drinking. However, what is missing from Blochowiak's article is the mention of men's leagues that were formed to fight against the alcohol ban. Undoubtedly, the men who formed the Liquor Men's Association, German American Association, and the Citizens League gave Carry a wide berth while trying to keep their alcohol rights.¹²

While the rest of the United States was not ready to part with alcohol, they did try to part with the Social Evil known to them as prostitution. Ruth Rosen investigates the Social Evil in her book, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1918*.¹³ Rosen argues that reformers viewed the Social Evil as a "moral contagion," "infectious disease," or a "curse." The reformer's campaign linked prostitution with liquor and crime, and insisted that individual and public corruption stemmed from these vices. They even went as far as declaring prostitutes as "feeble-minded" – why else would they choose that life? The label "feeble-minded" referred to prostitutes' refusal or failure to conform to middle-class values and behavioral problems. Courts even established clinics to test for "feeble-mindedness" among female criminals (prostitutes). By 1913, twelve states had laws that permitted the sterilization of criminals, feeble-minded, moral and sexual perverts, epileptics, and rapists. However, Rosen also points out a detail lost with Franklin's and Blochowiak's articles. Why were women attacking other women? As it turns out, married men were bringing home venereal diseases (today known as sexually transmitted

¹² J.L. Franklin, "The Fight for Prohibition in Oklahoma Territory," *Social Science Quarterly*, 49, no. 4 (March 1969): 876-878.

¹³ Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1918* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1982), 52.

infections). Male reformers wanted to abolish prostitution to uphold the patriarchal authority and “protect” women from knowledge of or contact with sordid realities. Female reformers sought to assert some authority over their domain – their home – that men had supposedly granted them. In essence, men wanted prostitution gone because they could not control the sex workers and hide engagements from their wives. Married women wanted prostitution gone, so their husbands would stop bringing home venereal diseases. So, married women went after single women because of their husbands’ infidelity.

Voices of sex workers did not start to become public until the new millennium because of the societal stigma surrounding the sex industry. Frédérique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander¹⁴ wrote and collected perspectives from actual sex workers in the field. Alexander argues that there is a better way to coexist with prostitution than to hit it with stigma and negativity. Being called a whore keeps women from exploring, experiencing, and naming their own sexuality (even at a young age). Alexander also argues that sex work exists in part because of the status and power differentials between men and women in most societies. This imbalance is reflected in the double standards of sexual behavior and economic power for men and women, with men institutionally having more access to and control of money than women. She further argues that there should be occupational programs run by former sex workers who have a complex understanding of the positive aspects of sex work and the negative aspects, such as stigmatization, isolation, sexual and physical abuse, and the experience of arrest and incarceration, and have made the transition themselves. Instead, religious organizations attempt to “convert” the sex worker back to the approved societal norm.¹⁵ In the same book, Sarah Wynter argues that men have promoted the

¹⁴ Frédérique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander, *Sex Work: Writings by Women in the Sex Industry* (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1998), Kindle, 3140.

¹⁵ Frédérique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander, *Sex Work: Writings by Women in the Sex Industry* (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1998), Kindle, 3744.

cultural myth that women actively prostitute as a pleasurable economic alternative to low-paying labor while conveniently ignoring the conditions that ensure women's inequality and the preconditions that make women vulnerable to prostitution. The myth is so pervasive that when women come forward and expose their working conditions, they are often perceived as liars or considered to be the exception rather than the rule.¹⁶

Jan MacKell's *Brothels, Bordellos, and Bad Girls*¹⁷ provides unique insight into the sex industry in the Midwest from 1860 to 1930. She argues that madams and sex workers tried to stay on the good side of the law despite engaging in illegal sex practices. For example, they donated to local charities, schools, hospitals, and churches. They even took in the sick, the poor, and the orphaned. They also contributed involuntarily by paying court monthly fees, and their building rent was significantly higher than that of any legitimate business in town. During the 1918 influenza epidemic, many sex workers worked as nurses, and during the Depression in the 1930s, they were known to leave food at the backdoors of respectable homes without thanks or credit.

Despite trying to balance their vice professions with positive actions, these sex workers were still shunned by the patriarchal society. Furthermore, MacKell argues that in the 1890s, Denver adopted an ordinance requiring sex workers to wear yellow armbands to identify them as such. In response, two madams, Mattie Silks and Jennie Rogers, told their sex workers to dress in yellow from head to toe and parade around town as a metaphorical "fuck you" to the patriarchal society. Their ploy worked; the ordinance was repealed shortly thereafter.¹⁸ Prohibitionists even

¹⁶ Sarah Wynter, "Whisper: Women Hurt in Systems of Prostitution Engaged in Revolt," *Sex Work: Writings by Women in the Sex Industry* (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1998), Kindle, 4664.

¹⁷ Jan Mackell, *Brothels, Bordellos, and Bad Girls: Prostitution in Colorado, 1860-1930* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 7, 45, 60.

¹⁸ Jan MacKell, *Brothels Bordellos and Bad Girls: Prostitution in Colorado, 1860-1930* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 204-205.

went as far as setting fires to whorehouses, denying water to saloons, and murdering sex workers. Yet, still, the madams and sex workers continued to plod along until the 1894 flood that damaged the red-light district in Colorado. City officials cleaned up only the areas NOT in the red-light district. Despite all their positive actions in the community, the sex workers were pushed out just because of their profession.¹⁹

Michael Rutter's *Upstairs Girls: Prostitution in the American West*²⁰ argues that the stigma around sex work was so strong that a moral woman refused even to admit that sex workers existed. The societal code demanded that a "good woman" completely ignore the "lady of the evening" at all times so their sin did not rebound and infect the "good woman." Conversely, a sex worker initiating some association with a decent woman or children on the street would be the fastest way for that sex worker to be physically thrown out of town. Popular folklore suggested that a "good, decent woman" with a pure heart was immune to the effects of venereal disease. It took the responsibility off the wandering husband and placed it on his wife's shoulders, should she become infected.²¹ People believed that sex workers could contract venereal disease because their hearts were not pure – they were fallen women. Rutter also argues that many sex workers served as undercover laundresses on forts since nearly all women were not allowed on a military base. There were a few soldiers who supplemented their pay by marrying a sex worker (wives were allowed on base) and having her work at the fort; essentially, the soldier became her pimp.²² Rutter also notes that the White Hat, an organization that started in the Midwest, had some political influence, but members could be quite violent. Sex workers

¹⁹ Jan MacKell, *Brothels Bordellos and Bad Girls: Prostitution in Colorado, 1860-1930* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 230-233.

²⁰ Michael Rutter, *Upstairs Girls: Prostitution in the American West* (Helena: Farcountry Press, 2005), Kindle, 93.

²¹ Michael Rutter, *Upstairs Girls: Prostitution in the American West* (Helena: Farcountry Press, 2005), Kindle, 1147.

²² Michael Rutter, *Upstairs Girls: Prostitution in the American West* (Helena: Farcountry Press, 2005), Kindle, 668.

were beaten and cast out of the community. The White Hat also attacked and assaulted drunks, vagrants, and men who did not support their families. The White Hat also teamed up with the WCTU and fought against alcohol establishments, prostitution, and pornography.²³

This whorephobia can be seen today as many women are raised to think of sex workers as “bad women.” Thierry Schaffauser²⁴ argues that whorephobia affects all women, not just the sex workers. Whorephobia can be defined as the fear or hatred of sex workers. She further argues that in most languages, the most common sexist insults are “whore” or “slut” which makes women want to distance themselves from the stigma associated with those words, and from those who incarnate it. The whore stigma is a way to control women and to limit their autonomy – whether it is economic, sexual, professional, or simply freedom of movement. Whorephobia operates as a way of controlling and policing women’s behavior, just as homophobia does for men.

Meredith Ralston’s *Slut-Shaming, Whorephobia, and the Unfinished Sexual Revolution*²⁵ has similar arguments to Thierry Schaffauser. Ralston demonstrates the damaging connections between slut-shaming and whorephobia by showing how whorephobia contributes directly to the fear and degradation of women’s sexuality and argues that overcoming the sexual double standard and good girl privilege/bad girl stigma is the unfinished sexual revolution for women. Ralston further states that the common denominator is the sexual double standard: women’s sexuality is somehow harmful or threatening, sex for women is dangerous or degrading, and men’s sexual desires are more important than the sexual desires of women or girls. Girls’ sexuality is all about sexiness: all about looking sexy and pleasing boys. Boys’ sexuality is about

²³ Michael Rutter, *Upstairs Girls: Prostitution in the American West* (Helena: Farcountry Press, 2005), Kindle, 1394.

²⁴ Thierry Schaffauser, “Whorephobia affects all women,” *The Guardian*, June 23, 2010.

²⁵ Meredith Ralston, *Slut-Shaming, Whorephobia, and the Unfinished Sexual Revolution* (Chicago: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2021), 6.

their own pleasure and “scoring” as much as possible. It is much easier to condemn sex work as a practice and the clients of sex workers than to look at how our continuing stigma against sex work contributes to the sexual double standard.

Melinda Chateauvert’s *Sex Workers Unite: A History of the Movement from Stonewall to Slutwalk*²⁶ argues that whorephobia is a sex panic reflecting the deep-seated belief that identity politics and civil rights required weeding out members for gender nonconformity, sexual deviancy, and drug dependency. Chateauvert also argues that human rights for sex workers means recognizing them as human beings fully capable of making decisions about their lives, to move freely in cities and to migrate to other nations, to defend themselves against violence and threats to their health, to enjoy the respect of fellow citizens and the public servants who are supposed to protect them (you know, like regular citizens have protection). Sex workers want access to public resources and meaningful participation in autonomy politics. Criminalization is a human rights issue because it disregards the fundamental principles of self-determination, bodily integrity, and sexual freedom. Chateauvert further comments that women’s control over their own bodies is a fundamental issue, and sex workers rejected claims that they were oppressed and sexually victimized. Men were inferior because they had to pay women money for sex. As sex workers, they chose their sexual partners and negotiated the acts to be performed and the price their customers would pay. If every woman required men to pay for sex, women would rule the world.

My work builds upon these authors by examining historical sex work in the Midwest of the United States and by exploring how temperance societies influenced not only the Midwest but the country itself. Madams and sex workers often set up shop in mining and railroad states,

²⁶ Melinda Chateauvert, *Sex Workers Unite: A History of the Movement from Stonewall to Slutwalk* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013), 6-7.

such as Colorado, Kansas, and Oklahoma. It was not uncommon to see madams and sex workers travel from one state to the next so that their “wares” did not relegate them as being “old-timers.” These states not only influenced the attitudes and stigma of sex work, but they also used their influence on the rest of the country on how to deal with sex workers – from making the sex workers wear yellow armbands, trying to beat or burn them out of the area, and “praying” them out. These states heavily contributed to the negative stigma surrounding the sex industry (no matter what the occupation in the industry) that remains in effect today. I devote two chapters to exploring historical prostitution and modern sex practices in Oklahoma. I argue that patriarchal attitudes continue to influence the industry because they cannot control the women or what they voluntarily do with their bodies. I also argue that the sexual double standard that many of us have learned from birth only benefits men and discourages girls/women from taking control of their own autonomy and sexual pleasures. I further argue that voluntary sex workers want to get rid of sex trafficking, but to do that, they must first gain fundamental human rights that are lacking in the sex industry.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORY OF SEX WORK IN THE UNITED STATES

TERMINOLOGY

How does language affect how society views sex workers and the word “sex” in general? The terms ‘sex work’ and ‘sex industry’ are umbrella terms to describe persons who provide a variety of erotic services. A ‘sex worker’ may be employed as a phone sex operator, porn star, dominatrix, stripper, etc., but not necessarily as a ‘prostitute’ because the person may not engage in direct sexual contact with a paying client.²⁷ The term ‘sex worker’ does not merely describe the streetwalkers we often see in person or the media. There are many forms of direct and indirect sex work that are encompassed in the ‘sex industry.’

How many words come to mind when you think of sex workers? Since the sex industry has been around for a very, very long time, there are countless words to describe them; streetwalker, harlot, escort, prostitute, (see Appendix B).²⁸ Researchers and writers have explored the power of language and how it affects our perceptions of a word. The word “prostitute” is no different. For instance, Melissa Gira Grant observed that the word “prostitute” was used as a verb in the sixteenth century. Prostitution was something one *did* as a profession and not something one *was* as an identity. “Prostitute” became a noun in the nineteenth century to become an identity instead of just an act. This identity transformation was intentionally employed to create a class that could be imagined, located, and controlled by the law and the upper class. Likewise, the patriarchal society created the ‘good women’ who are chaste, virginal, pure, and respectable, and conversely, ‘bad women’ who are promiscuous, whores, and sluts who refuse to adhere to standard societal rules of appropriate women's behavior. On one side of this spectrum are the ‘prudes,’ and on the other end, they are labeled as tarts, strumpets, fallen women, or

²⁷ Laura Agustín, “The (Crying) Need for Different Kinds of Research,” *Sex Work Matters: Exploring Money, Power, and Intimacy in the Sex Industry* (New York: Zed Books, 2010), 31.

²⁸ See more word variations for sex workers and brothels in Appendix B.

streetwalkers. This social order labels women who do not have enough sex, too much sex, or just the right amount of sex to fit in the very narrow category of respectable women.²⁹

Carol Leigh, known as the “Scarlot Harlot” in 1978, coined the gender-neutral term ‘sex work.’ Using this new terminology, it can describe the many occupations within the sex industry, not just those who have direct contact with clients but also those who work in the industry in a support capacity, such as security personnel, film and technical crews, and other behind-the-scenes workers. Carol Leigh contributed this new terminology as a feminist contribution to the English language. The usage of the term ‘sex work’ or ‘sex worker’ acknowledges the work they do rather than by status definition. This, in effect, transforms the identity back into a profession, such as in the sixteenth century.³⁰

Other terms such as ‘tricks’ or ‘johns’ perpetuate the notion that someone is despicable in a sex work transaction. These terms have changed over time to ‘clients’ for those who pay for sexual services. Strip clubs prefer the term ‘patron.’ Professional sex workers do not use the term ‘customer’ because customers purchase goods. Sex workers do not sell their bodies; instead, they offer their time, skills, attention, and performances – just like massage therapists, doctors, and other professionals do in exchange for money.³¹ Furthermore, ‘clients or patrons’ do not like to use the word ‘prostitute’ because it sounds filthy and lower-class; they would rather use terms like ‘escort’ or ‘erotic professionals’ because it sounds more tasteful and high-class.³² Thus, the power of language occurs on all sides of the sex industry.

²⁹ Erin Sanders-McDonagh, “Prostitution and the politics of respectability: sex work, stigma, and representations of Other,” *Reconfiguring Stigma in Studies of Sex for Sale* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 67-68.

³⁰ Carol Leigh, “Inventing Sex Work,” *Whores and Other Feminists* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 229.

³¹ Lois Davina, *Thriving in Sex Work: Heartfelt Advice for Staying Sane in the Sex Industry* (Oakland: The Erotic as Power Press, 2017), 7.

³² Andrea Werchun, *Modern Whore: A Memoir* (South Korea: Strange Light Publishing, 2022), 143.

RED-LIGHT DISTRICTS IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

Where did the term “red-light district” come from? Red-light districts began popping up as the railroads were built in the United States. The term “red-light district” originated when railroad men left their red signal lanterns outside a brothel or a tent while paying a visit to a sex worker so that they could be found in an emergency.³³

How does race affect the hierarchy in the sex industry? Sex work seems to have always been separated by a racial hierarchy. For instance, in the early twentieth century, French women were at the very top of the hierarchy; sometimes, men would ride several hundred miles for a French sex worker. Next would be the fair-skinned Caucasian women, followed by Mexican women, Indians, black women, and Chinese women.³⁴ The well-refined courtesans worked in parlor houses managed by madams and a “bully” (a bouncer). These courtesans received training in “charm schools,” where they were required to be beautiful, intelligent, educated, and sophisticated.³⁵ Streetwalkers, or “crib prostitutes,” dealt with the unsavory squalor of their surroundings by servicing thirteen to thirty clients a night to receive a fraction of what the higher-class sex workers made. The high traffic and poverty made the low-class prostitute’s work an intolerable, inhumane, and debilitating experience.³⁶

Today, beautiful, educated, and intelligent escorts are still at the top of the sex worker hierarchy. These women tend to be Caucasian and are either college graduates or are working

³³ Jan MacKell, *Brothels, Bordellos, and Bad Girls: Prostitution in Colorado, 1860-1930* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 1.

³⁴ Michael Rutter, *Upstairs Girls: Prostitution in the American West* (Helena: Farcountry Press, 2005), 212. Kindle edition.

³⁵ Jan MacKell, *Brothels, Bordellos, and Bad Girls: Prostitution in Colorado, 1860-1930* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 6.

³⁶ Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1918* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1982), 98.

while they attend college; tuition is costly, and many people view student loans as a lifetime monkey on their backs. Street sex workers remain at the bottom of the hierarchy and typically encompass all ethnicities. The media usually displays images of these street sex workers when reporting prostitution, although this is a small percentage of the sex industry as a whole.³⁷³⁸³⁹

Where did the perception that sex workers are “dirty” or “gross” come from? There is evidence of the profession becoming stigmatized during this century, and of course, it centers around disease. Popular folklore suggests that a “good, decent” woman who had a pure heart was immune to the effects of sexually transmitted infections. The men bore no responsibility for transmitting the infection to their wives. People believed that sex workers contracted sexually transmitted diseases because their hearts were not pure due to their status as “fallen women.”⁴⁰ “Good and decent” women refused to acknowledge the existence of their “fallen sisters” at all times as if the sex workers’ sins could rub off and infect them. At the same time, a sex worker initiating association with a “good and decent” woman or children on the street would be the fastest way for that “fallen sister” to be physically thrown out of town.⁴¹

Why did people pursue the occupation of a sex worker? Many women and transgender persons enter the sex industry for various reasons. Economic factors such as poverty, fragile family economies, and supplemental income paired with social/personal problems in family life, such as emotional deprivation, generational conflict, and a double standard of sexual conduct for

³⁷ Sesali Bowen, *Bad Fat Black Girl: Notes from a Trap Feminist* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2021), 176.

³⁸ Meredith Ralston, *Slut-Shaming, Whorephobia, and the Unfinished Sexual Revolution* (Chicago: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2021), 97.

³⁹ Marie-Louise Janssen, “Sex work activism and intersectionality: the role of stigma in uniting sex workers,” *Reconfiguring Stigma in Studies of Sex for Sale* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 90-91.

⁴⁰ Michael Rutter, *Upstairs Girls: Prostitution in the American West* (Helena: Farcountry Press, 2005), 1147. Kindle edition.

⁴¹ Michael Rutter, *Upstairs Girls: Prostitution in the American West* (Helena: Farcountry Press, 2005), 93. Kindle edition.

women, influenced these “fallen women” to lean towards the prostitution profession. Like today, poverty directly affects women’s choice to enter sex work. The low wages paid to women workers and the desire for upward mobility also influenced their decision.⁴² Many sex workers still aspired to become courtesans for more money and less traffic in their private areas.

THE SEXUAL DOUBLE STANDARD: MADONNA/WHORE AND GOOD GIRL/BAD GIRL

How does the sexual double standard and the Madonna/whore dichotomy affect how society views sex? Good or respectable women are not supposed to like sex; they should only have sex to procreate. Their life ambitions are to find a husband, have children, and manage a household with a picket fence. Male-dominated society has reduced women to a sexual identity – wife, spinster, lesbian, whore⁴³ Women have been led to believe this for years. How do these societal views affect girls and women, and how do they affect how they see themselves?

The sexual double standard is deeply ingrained into society’s grassroots. Peggy Orenstein argues in her book, *Girls and Sex* that girls are caught between being “prudes” and socially irrelevant and being “sluts” and socially ostracized. There is no middle ground to secure respectability. However, boys never have to make this choice; a male who has sex with multiple females in one week would be congratulated and perceived as a player. A girl who did the same would be called a slut and face severe punishment by their peers and by society.⁴⁴ The “good girl” persona is deeply ingrained into the female upbringing. Good girls are supposed to be polite and passive and always put other people first. This can also be seen in how a woman measures

⁴² Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1918* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1982), 147.

⁴³ Melinda Chateauvert, *Sex Workers Unite: A History of the Movement from Stonewall to Slutwalk* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013), 21.

⁴⁴ Meredith Ralston, *Slut-Shaming, Whorephobia, and the Unfinished Sexual Revolution* (Chicago: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2021), 26-27.

her sexual experience – if her male partner had an orgasm, then it was “good sex.” Boys and men measure the experience based on their own sexual satisfaction – whether they orgasmed or their own pleasure. The woman’s pleasure is not considered and perceived as irrelevant.⁴⁵ This straitjacket of patriarchal control severely limits how women understand their bodies and their basic human needs as sexual beings.

According to the patriarchy, “good girls” or “Madonnas” provide social respectability and legitimate children. “Proper” women are taught to equate sex with intimacy. At the same time, men are more easily able to distinguish between the two and enjoy erotic pleasures with the intimate restrictions that women face.⁴⁶ Hence the expression, “boys or men sow their oats.” Tawnya Dudash expands on this and argues that until recently, the socially acceptable zones for women to experience sexual desire existed only in heterosexual marriage. Promiscuity, queer sex, and sadomasochistic sex are considered violations of the social “rules” regarding female sexuality. People who see these as social violations seek to control female sexuality⁴⁷ based on centuries of patriarchal sexual reins.

In the television show, *Orange is the New Black*, there is a scene in which some of the women have never seen their private parts up close and are encouraged by a transgender woman to take a compact mirror into the bathroom and take a look at their own bodies. This shy attitude of knowing our own bodies is deeply rooted in the “good girl” upbringing. Good girls are discouraged from exploring their sexuality through sight, let alone through touch. Only bad girls or potential “whores” learn about their sexuality through masturbation or promiscuity.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Mary Elizabeth Williams, “Consent Alone is a Low Bar for Sex,” www.salon.com, March 28, 2016.

⁴⁶ Teri Goodson, “A Prostitute Joins NOW,” *Whores and Other Feminists* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 250-251.

⁴⁷ Tawnya Dudash, “Peepshow Feminism,” *Whores and Other Feminists* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 111.

⁴⁸ Meredith Ralston, *Slut-Shaming, Whorephobia, and the Unfinished Sexual Revolution* (Chicago: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2021), 187.

Furthermore, from an early age, women receive countless messages about what their bodies should look like and how they relate to their own bodies. Women are “trained” to emulate these images to achieve the “ideal” feminine beauty; those who feel they fall short are reflected in their self-image and self-esteem.⁴⁹ Women are taught to be careful of how they dress so that they are not considered “whores” or “potentially easy.” The bad girls who choose to embrace their bodies and sexual desires are automatically stigmatized whether they are sex workers or not. As Meredith Ralston argues, girls and women are constantly under surveillance in terms of appearance, and they are judged more severely than men. Dress codes, victim blaming, and sexual double standards are rooted in the desire to control women’s sexuality.⁵⁰

The term “whore stigma” was coined by Gail Pheterson in 1996 and refers to the dehumanization of some women based on their sexual activity. The whore stigma can be used against any woman or group of women who challenge male entitlement. The “whore stigma” term is often used synonymously with the classification of “bad girl.” These “bad girls,” whether sex workers or women, are stigmatized as such due to their work, color, class, sexuality, or history of abuse and are subject to stereotypes, violence, and humiliation set forth by patriarchal social control. Girls are classified and stigmatized as whores once they have been exposed to sex, whether by force or by choice.⁵¹ As discussed before, there is a very delicate balance between not being a prude and not being a whore. This stigma is as accurate in the early nineteenth century as today. For example, Donald Trump’s lawyer, Rudy Giuliani, tried to discredit Stormy Daniels because of her profession as a sex worker. Giuliani stated that Daniels’s claims should not be

⁴⁹ Tawnya Dudash, “Peepshow Feminism,” *Whores and Other Feminists* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 104.

⁵⁰ Meredith Ralston, *Slut-Shaming, Whorephobia, and the Unfinished Sexual Revolution* (Chicago: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2021), 200.

⁵¹ Meredith Ralston, *Slut-Shaming, Whorephobia, and the Unfinished Sexual Revolution* (Chicago: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2021), 51.

believed and that she should not be respected.⁵² This whore stigma sets a precedent that sex workers and, by extension, women who embrace their sexuality are judged as being “bad” because of their sexual partners or their profession.⁵³

TRANSACTIONAL COMMITMENTS

Looking at prostitution through a broad lens, some argue that it isn’t all that different from marriage or dating. Nineteenth-century German philosopher Friedrich Engels compared prostitution to marriage under capitalism: “Marriage among the upper classes was always a marriage of ‘convenience’ and often of a crass form of prostitution.” Women exchange their pedigree and legitimate children in return for protection and financial security. He further argues that a wife does not hire out her body like a prostitute does but sells it into slavery for their spouse’s lifetime. He also acknowledges the sexual double standard in the observation that if a woman has sex outside of marriage, it is considered adultery; if a man does the same, then it is regarded as a slight moral blemish.⁵⁴

Sesali Bowen is a perfect example of Crenshaw’s concept of intersectionality; Sesali is a plus-size, Black American woman, so the stigma possibilities don’t just center on the “woman” part, she will also experience stigma as a plus-size person, stigma as a Black American, and stigma as a sex worker. Sesali Bowen, a “trap feminist,” makes a similar observation to Engels in today’s dating and marriage world. She argues that we may not want to admit just how common transactional sex is. Today’s practices around sex, dating, relationships, and marriage extend

⁵² Dana Bash and Maegan Vazquez, “Giuliani defends comments about Stormy Daniels’ credibility,” CNN.com, June 7, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/07/politics/rudy-giuliani-stormy-daniels-credibility/index.html>.

⁵³ Meredith Ralston, *Slut-Shaming, Whorephobia, and the Unfinished Sexual Revolution* (Chicago: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2021), 52.

⁵⁴ Meredith Ralston, *Slut-Shaming, Whorephobia, and the Unfinished Sexual Revolution* (Chicago: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2021), 92-93.

beyond our desire to connect with a person we love. We tend to negotiate and receive something of value in return for performing sexually. For example, a woman may use the popular dating app Tinder to secure a companion and for the free dinner that usually comes with the date. Chances are at least one woman has that friend who refuses to have sex with a potential partner in the hopes of locking down a commitment is, in essence, bartering sex for trust and security.⁵⁵ Sex is as transactional today as it was in the nineteenth century. Bryn Greenwood agrees with Bowen that sex work is part of the barter economy, like trading sex for groceries. The only difference between sex work and other work is that American culture continues to place a high moral value on concepts like virginity and sexual purity.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Sesali Bowen, *Bad Fat Black Girl: Notes from a Trap Feminist* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2021), 163. Kindle edition.

⁵⁶ Bryn Greenwood, "Sex work encompasses more than what we see on TV, and it saved my from poverty," *The Lily*, August 27, 2019.

CHAPTER THREE: TYPES OF SEX WORK

ENTERING SEX WORK

It is highly frustrating that well-paid, female-dominated careers are limited to modeling and those in the sex industry, such as stripping, as an escort, and a porn star. To make as much money as men, women are relegated to taking their clothes off and being seen as sexual objects, not as actual people. A woman's most significant capital is her body in a sexist society that can be sold in the form of entertainment. Melissa Petro interviewed waitress-turned-strippers Theresa and Lauren and found that stripping is less restrictive than waitressing. Both women worked as waitresses in a strip club, and they reported that for every drink order, they would make one or two dollars while under the watchful eye of management. As a dancer, they would pay the house fee, and then it was up to them to make the money. The dancer could sit and relax with a drink without being bothered, or she could work all night. There's a sense of freedom and setting their own terms as dancers.⁵⁷ The dancers also see the immediate reward at the end of the night instead of waiting for the measly paycheck as they would in the male-dominated corporate world. Others, such as Andrea Werhun, see strip clubs as modern temples that celebrate sexuality and not as the societal view that these clubs should be shrouded in fear, darkness, and shame. She feels that the "body should be celebrated, not shamed; where desires are sources of pleasure, not pain; a place where bodily delights are considered as divine as those self-denying virtues of purity and virginity. A place where whores are not only holy but exalted for their wisdom."⁵⁸

Women in the sex industry are not just down on their luck and have had to resort to stripping; many *choose it*, but it is the patriarchal system that places value or worth on the person, regardless of their occupation. The same can be said in regards to a woman versus a trans

⁵⁷ Melissa Petro, "Selling Sex: Women's Participation in the Sex Industry," *Sex Work Matters: Exploring Money, Power, and Intimacy in the Sex Industry* (New York: Zed Books, 2010), 161.

⁵⁸ Andrea Werhun, *Modern Whore: A Memoir* (South Korea: Strange Light Publishing, 2022), 15-16.

women; some people would pay less for a trans woman, because they don't have "all the womanly parts." They are not brainless; many are Ph.D. candidates, teachers, comedians, law students, and novelists. Besides the financial gain, women also choose this field because of its flexibility, which allows them to have more freedom in life – spending time with their kids, writing that novel or dissertation, or even having the ability to splurge on designer shoes. Vicky Funari, a peepshow sex worker, states that there is no standard sex worker, and that each woman has her own reasons for working, her own responses of boredom, pleasure, power, and trauma, and her own ideas about the work and her place in it. Sex work can be oppressive or freeing; it can be just another assembly-line job, an artistic act that pays well, or comic relief from realities.⁵⁹

Sex-positive feminists see empowerment and freedom for the women who choose sex work as an occupation because they hold more sexual power when selling sex; the sex worker's attention and erotic services come at a price, which activates her power.⁶⁰ Many sex workers are thrilled when they feel in control of their own sexual power and pleasure. Sex-positive feminists feel that there is absolutely no shame in being a sexual person. After all, sex is how humans have survived, and every person is a product of the erotic. They also feel that there is no shame in getting paid to be a sexual person. As Lola Davina argues, there's no shame in benefitting from being human – professional cooks, artists, singers, models, actors, and writers do, and sex workers are no different.⁶¹ Nina Hartley, a porn star, points out the rewarding factors in her

⁵⁹ Vicky Funari, "Naked, Naughty, Nasty: Peep Show Reflections," *Whores and Other Feminists* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 28.

⁶⁰ Sarah Jane Blithe, Anna Wiederhold Wolfe, and Breanna Mohr, *Sex and Stigma: Stories of Everyday Life in Nevada's Legal Brothels* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 37.

⁶¹ Lola Davina, *Thriving in Sex Work: Heartfelt Advice for Staying Sane in the Sex Industry* (Oakland: The Erotic as Power Press, 2017), 51.

occupation, “increased self-awareness and self-confidence, sexual variety, creative erotic expression, exhibitionism, fantasy fulfillment, and economic gain.”⁶²

Sex work has evolved from the streetwalkers and brothels of the nineteenth century; it now encompasses at least twenty-five occupations within the industry. These occupations are divided into direct sexual contact and indirect contact. Examples of direct contact are streetwalkers, porn, brothel sex workers, escorts, clubs/bars/pubs, and all-male venues such as barbershops, bathhouses, saunas, and mining camps. Examples of indirect contact are lap dancing, stripping, massage parlor, femme libre, and dominatrix.⁶³ The sex industry not only faces stigma from the outside world; it also exists within it. Those who abide by no-contact rules, such as phone sex operators, camera girls, and strippers, think they are better than those who offer more. Providers who provide contact services, such as kink providers and erotic-massage givers, believe they have the moral high ground over sex workers who provide full service to their clients. There is even elitism among full-service providers from those who work online, at higher rates, and with privileged backgrounds toward those who work the streets, have pimps, those struggling with addiction, or those who work at lower rates and high-risk circumstances to ensure their own survival.⁶⁴

Professional dominance is a part of the sex industry, but most do not have sex with their clients. They feel their work is about power, education, therapy, ritual, or erotic power exchange. Pro doms engage in sadomasochism, dominance and submission, or bondage and discipline. Their activities include bondage, spanking, whipping, painful stimulation of the nipples and

⁶² Nina Hartley, “In the Flesh: A Porn Star’s Journey,” *Whores and Other Feminists* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 58.

⁶³ ProCon.org, “What are the different types of prostitution?” Britannica ProCon.org, April 23, 2008.

⁶⁴ Sesali Bowen, *Bad Fat Black Girl: Notes from a Trap Feminist* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2021), 171.

genitals, “puppy” or “pony” training, and feminization (cross-dressing) of male clients. Fetish elements may include leather, rubber, high-heeled shoes or boots, or suggestive cosplay of mommy, nurse, or schoolteacher roles. Like other occupations in the sex industry, negotiations and boundaries are outlined before beginning and are strictly adhered to during the session. Those who are against sex work find it difficult to argue that pro doms operate against their will when trying to discuss human trafficking and sex work. Instead, they regard dominatrices as “imitation men” since all expressions of power and dominance are branded as inherently male.⁶⁵

However, those against sex work have no trouble aligning human trafficking with a professional submissive. Their narrow perspective cannot comprehend that she is not a “sex slave” but rather a professional who has agreed to act out a pre-negotiated fantasy for a set period of time. It requires a great deal of skill to make a client think he’s getting what he wants when he’s not; the professional submissive learns to *appear* submissive while controlling the interaction. Professional submissives liken the encounter to that of a service-industry job, such as a waitress or secretary, but with much better pay.⁶⁶ In addition, since many men prefer older women to be their pro doms, aging out of the industry is not really a concern among these sex workers.

⁶⁵ Liz Highleyman, “Professional Dominance: Power, Money, and Identity,” *Whores and Other Feminists* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 146-147.

⁶⁶ Liz Highleyman, “Professional Dominance: Power, Money, and Identity,” *Whores and Other Feminists* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 147-148.

CHAPTER FOUR: SEX WORK IN OKLAHOMA, 1889-1979

HELL'S HALF-ACRE

According to the Oklahoma Historical Society and Oklahoma's National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum, there were five land runs in Oklahoma, starting in 1889 and ending in 1895. Illinois representative William M. Springer added a section to the annual Indian Appropriations bill, which authorized the current U.S. president to open the lands to settlement through a proclamation issuance. This rider authorized settlement under the Homestead Act of 1862, denying the original settlers their squatters' rights (regardless of whether they were there first). The original settlers were to be evicted, and a land run would settle the lands. President Grover Cleveland signed the Springer Amendment into law on March 2, 1889. President Benjamin Harrison issued a proclamation on March 23, 1889, to settle the 1,887,796 acres. In what would become known as the Land Run of 1889, eligible persons were authorized to enter the race at noon on April 22, 1889, to occupy a quarter section (160 acres). Oklahoma's first land run opened in all or part of the present counties of Canadian, Cleveland, Kingfisher, Logan, Oklahoma, and Payne. Tent cities emerged at the first settlements of Oklahoma City, Kingfisher, El Reno, Norman, Guthrie, and Stillwater.⁶⁷ Among these tent cities, Hell's Half-Acre was born in Oklahoma City in 1889.

On April 22, 1889, a gunshot signaled the chaotic opening of the unassigned lands in Oklahoma. Within hours, what would become downtown Oklahoma City was populated by thousands of settlers in tents on their land lots. The tent city was divided into blocks by crude versions of streets traveled by commuters today. Eventually, a mayor and city council established laws, and a small police department was formed. These men were corruptible and were

⁶⁷ "Rushes to Statehood: The Oklahoma Land Runs," National Cowboy Museum, January 21, 2025, <https://nationalcowboymuseum.org/explore/rushes-statehood-oklahoma-land-runs/>.

influenced by businesses that provided alcohol, gambling, and prostitution. In short, the madams and gamblers ran the city and paid off city officials and the so-called police department. The vice district ran from Second Street to Reno and between Walker and Santa Fe (formerly called Front Street). This violent crime and vice-ridden area became known as “Hell’s Half-Acre (see Appendix C for map).”⁶⁸ The vice problem grew unabated because Oklahoma City needed money, men outnumbered women four to one, and respect for law and order was laughable. Establishments included the Red Onion, Rattlesnake Jack’s, and John Burgess’s first club, all selling liquor twenty-four hours a day. Among the vice-ridden businesses, the most notorious madam, Anne Wynn, came to work in Hell’s Half-Acre.⁶⁹

Anne Wynn was born into a family of eighteen in Illinois between 1863 and 1865 (conflicting reports of birth year). At age 17, she traveled in a stagecoach to Leadville, Colorado, with a motley group – a merchant, lawyer, gambler, preacher, and three girls seeking their own life path. At the time, Leadville was at its peak of lawlessness, with violence and crime so common that the newspapers styled the period the “Reign of the Footpads” (footpad was a British term for a highwayman or robber). In this environment, Anne married a saloonkeeper and learned while operating a brothel. In 1888, her husband parted ways and left Anne with substantial money.⁷⁰

Anne Wynn came to Oklahoma on April 22, 1889, and pitched her tent near what is now E.K. Gaylord Blvd. As she would later become known, Big Anne was an attractive, militant blonde of commanding size and presence. She did not look like a brothel owner; she was always

⁶⁸ David Farris, “Big Anne Wynn and Hell’s Half-Acre,” *Edmond Life and Leisure*, 2015.

⁶⁹ Aaron Lee Bachhofer II, “The Emergence and Evolution of the Gay and Bisexual Male Subculture in Oklahoma, 1889-2005,” OKEQ History Project, 2006, 20.

⁷⁰ “Hell’s Half-Acre,” okchistory.com, August 3, 2009.

well dressed and confidently walked on the street. The first brothel Big Anne established was at the corner of N. Walker Ave and W. Second Street, or what is now Robert S. Kerr, several blocks northwest of Hell's Half-Acre. Predominantly located where the Cox Convention Center now resides, the area was filled with saloons, brothels, and gambling parlors. This red-light district was Big Anne's empire. Robert S. Kerr was known as Harlots' Lane, and the land now occupied by the Oklahoma City Museum of Art, a Bank of America, courthouses, and offices of city officials once hosted dens of sin. Anne's "Arlington" was a low-key and quiet brothel for those seeking seclusion and privacy. Next to the Arlington and across from Noah's Ark (a weather-beaten shack that maintained the wildest reputation) was Big Anne's Place, which completed the triangle of the most infamous bawdy houses. Big Anne's was part brothel, dance hall, and saloon.⁷¹ Anne's businesses flourished, and she accumulated wealth to pay off the police and other authorities while gathering "dirt" on the respectable men in town who visited her brothels. She became part of the business community and found her way into various social circles in Oklahoma City. Anne used the knowledge she had gained in Leadville to control and collude with the city's thieves, gamblers, drunks, sex workers, and shady dealmakers. She used her charm to gain popularity with important businessmen and civic leaders, and her pocketbook earned her favors with both clerks and politicians, ensuring that bond money and court testimony were available when she ran into the law.⁷²

In 1903, Anne became involved in a scandalous rape case where two young German girls stated that they had been lured into one of her houses under false pretenses and attacked (see first article in historiography). Chief Justice J.H. Burford gave the accused, George C. Garrison, ten

⁷¹ "Hell's Half-Acre," okchistory.com, August 3, 2009.

⁷² Farris, "Big Anne and Hell's Half-Acre," *Edmond Life and Leisure*, 2015.

years in the state penitentiary. Anne was freed after testifying that the city all but endorsed her brothel. Anne operated a house of prostitution and a bar without a permit by paying off the cops. In her testimony, she revealed that each month she paid a police officer \$26 for her brothel, and each sex worker paid the officer \$10 (today's \$900 and \$346, respectively).⁷³ Anne reigned over Hell's Half-Acre for 18 years. Her downfall began in 1907, when her brothel caught fire, killing at least three people inside. Anne was accused of covering the murders with arson. Eventually, the charges were dropped, but Anne's wealth had dried up due to lawyer fees. She undoubtedly noticed that Oklahoma was heading towards prohibition. She decided to move on towards California with her husband, Bailey, where she died around 1910 (the death record cannot be found).⁷⁴

Anne was not the only madam in Hell's Half-Acre; she collaborated with other madams to gain control over sex work in her red-light district. This included Martha Fleming, aka "Old Zulu." She ran the sex work business in the African American quarters of Oklahoma City until about 1907. Some claimed that Big Anne used her as a necessary link to the African American vice trade and the money that could be made there. Others speculate that Anne and Martha often worked together to corner the vice market. In the segregated world of the land run and the years following, one of the most vital areas of Hell's Half-Acre was something called Alabaster Row. This line of brothels and cribs served the socially disenfranchised of the territory: the African Americans, Native Americans, and the Asian populations. In 1907, Old Zulu was religiously converted in the Pentecostal mission led by Harry P. Lott in the old California Street's "Blue Front Saloon."⁷⁵ On north Broadway, or "Battle Row" as dubbed by residents for the number of

⁷³ "Hell's Half-Acre," okchistory.com, August 3, 2009.

⁷⁴ Marilyn Hudson, *Tales of Hell's Half-Acre* (Norman: Whorl Books, 2011), 13-14.

⁷⁵ Hudson, *Tales of Hell's Half-Acre*, 15-16.

daily fights, was the Vendome, operated by Ethel Clopton. The Vendome boasted girls, Belgian rugs, and the highest prices in town. Next door was the Commercial Saloon, and across the street were the Black and Rogers Saloon and the Two Johns Saloon, John Burgess's second club, the roughest and most notorious watering holes in Oklahoma City's history. The Two Johns saw more illegal action, political wrangling, and underworld dealings than any other Oklahoma City drinking establishment. Ironically, the Two Johns was located next to City Hall, which never seemed to cause the saloon any grief until mandatory prohibition started in 1907.⁷⁶

While the vice districts were up and running, the prohibitionists gained momentum in their quests. The Oklahoma Anti-Saloon League had formed in 1898 and clearly stated its policy: "The saloon must go." This League prided itself as "the church in action." With the church as its base, the league's influence pervaded the territory and endeavored to expose the lawlessness of the saloons, to show that they opened on Sundays, that some conducted gambling rooms, and that others operated houses of prostitution in conjunction with what already constituted a "morally depraved" business. They wanted Oklahoma to enter the Union with a stainless banner and constitutional prohibition.⁷⁷ Unsurprisingly, this league comprised only men who could not force their values onto those in the vice districts. This league also developed ties to the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU); both of these groups later developed a tight relationship with the Ku Klux Klan in the late 1920s.

The WCTU was the pioneer temperance organization in Oklahoma and Indian territories. The organization had become a powerful social and political force, second only to the Anti-Saloon League. The WCTU attacked liquor interests and vigorously pushed its sobriety

⁷⁶ Bachhofer, "The Emergence and Evolution," 33-34.

⁷⁷ J.L. Franklin, "The Fight for Prohibition in Oklahoma Territory," *Social Science Quarterly* 49, no. 4 (March 1969), 879-880.

campaign throughout the territory. The WCTU's goals were to reduce alcohol consumption, abolish the liquor trade, curtail venereal disease (undoubtedly brought home by their husbands), and secure pledges of abstinence.⁷⁸ The WCTU was delighted when the reputable Carry Nation and her axe came to Oklahoma to support their cause in 1905.

Carry Nation was born Carry Amelia Moore in Kentucky on November 25, 1846. Her mother was said to have suffered the delusion that she was Queen Victoria and died in the Missouri State Hospital for the Insane. Carry married Charles Gloyd in 1867 against her father's objections; this relationship with Gloyd led to her crusades against liquor and fraternal lodges. Gloyd constantly reeked of booze and spent a significant amount of time in the Freemasons' lodge. Carry took their daughter and left him; within six months, Gloyd was dead. Carry came to believe that her marriage to Gloyd was cursed because their daughter developed an ulceration on one cheek, which left a gaping hole and the jaw unable to move. Doctors could not fix the problem, so Carry desperately prayed to God. Their daughter suddenly developed the ability to talk and move her jaw, something she had been unable to do for several years. Carry knew it was a miracle but felt guilty for the hereditary curse on the girl and believed the condition to be the "result of a drunken father and a distracted mother." Eventually, Carry remarried to David Nation, a minister of the Christian Church, and moved to Medicine Lodge, Kansas.⁷⁹

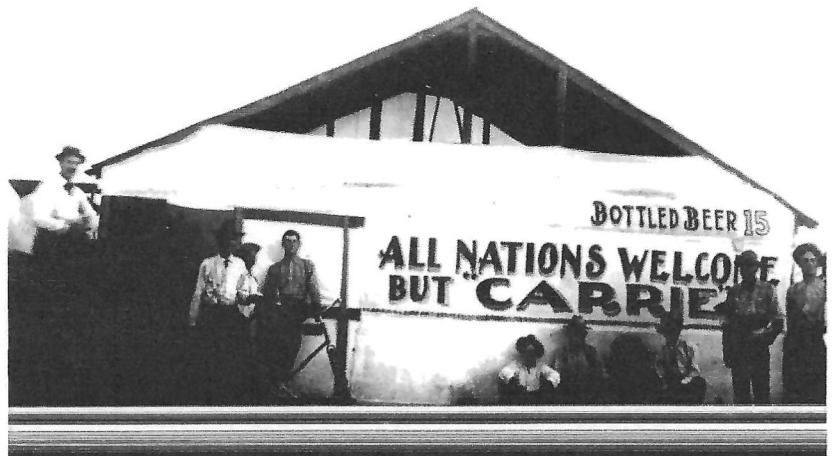
Carry's hatchet reputation started in Kansas in 1899. She became increasingly infuriated with the law violations by saloonkeepers and asked God to use her to save Kansas. She smashed her first saloon in early 1900. Over the next two years, Carry smashed saloons in Wichita, Enterprise, Holt, Topeka, and Kansas City. At first, she used stones and bricks wrapped in

⁷⁸ Franklin, "The Fight for Prohibition," 878.

⁷⁹ Mary Ann Blochowiak, "Woman with a hatchet: Carry Nation comes to Oklahoma Territory," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma*, 1981, 132-134.

newspapers, then switched to an iron rod attached to her cane. She smashed five saloons before taking up the hatchet, which would become her symbol. While she was serving a sentence in a Topeka jail in 1901, she received papers; her husband was seeking a divorce on the grounds of cruelty and desertion due to her crusades. The Nations divorced after 24 years of marriage, and Carry continued her crusades.⁸⁰

Carry came to Oklahoma in January 1905 and spent two years giving speeches, smashing saloons, and founding branches of her Prohibition Federation. The Prohibition Federation appealed greatly, especially for Oklahoman women, because Carry organized it. This organization worked closely with the WCTU, the Anti-Saloon League, and local temperance groups in both territories. In Oklahoma City, she accused the brewers and distillers of controlling the government and being backed by political parties and aided by lawyers who “want saloons, because saloons make criminals and criminals give them a quarter of their business.” According to the Oklahoma Historical Society, Carry’s hatchet reputation even reached saloons in Lawton, and one saloon even painted “All Nations welcome except Carrie” on its exterior.⁸¹



Tensions were already mounting with the collaboration of Carry Nation, the WCTU, and the Anti-Saloon League. When

⁸⁰ Blockowiak, “Woman with a hatchet,” 136.

⁸¹ Linda Wilson, “Nation, Carry Moore (1846-1911),” *Oklahoma Historical Society*, January 23, 2025, <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry?entry=NA006>.

1907 rolled around, the vice district didn't get any better. Henry M. Scales was elected mayor in 1907 through 1910 and brought with him Police Chief Charles Post, who was determined to crack down on gambling and impose morality on Oklahoma City. Post organized the "Flying Squadron," a police task force with the primary objective to raid clubs, saloons, and brothels to check for signs of gambling. At first, the Flying Squadron didn't find much on its raids – gamblers scurried down back stairways, and betting devices were taken up secret stairwells and hidden on the roof. This squadron was relentless, and raids continued day and night, forcing many saloons and brothels to close.⁸²

While there aren't any reports of Carry Nation and Big Anne Wynn squaring off, Anne still had to deal with the city officials who levied an injunction on her brothel along Harlot's Lane. Anne opened another brothel at 312 E. Grand in present-day Bricktown, but only ran into more trouble. On August 27, 1907, a fire broke out at Anne's new two-story brothel, and four people died in the blaze. A coroner's jury insisted that murder had preceded the fire, and the brothel was set ablaze to cover up the murders. Anne was arrested and pleaded not guilty to murder and arson charges. However, this time, no community leaders rushed to pay her \$18,500 bond, and none of her connections came to her aid. Anne's trial started on May 19, 1908, and 150 witnesses were subpoenaed to testify to the charges against her, but the state failed to make its case, and the charges were dropped. Although Anne was victorious, her spirit was broken as the political climate had changed; she could no longer control or throw money around to deal with the city officials. She sold her furniture at The Arlington and moved to Los Angeles.⁸³

⁸² "Hell's Half-Acre," okchistory.com, August 3, 2009.

⁸³ "Hell's Half-Acre," okchistory.com, August 3, 2009.

On September 17, 1907 (while Anne was imprisoned), the people of Oklahoma and Indian territories approved constitutional prohibition for the entire state by a vote of 130,361 to 112,258.⁸⁴ Carry Nation, the WCTU, and the Anti-Saloon League were victorious in their quest to ban alcohol, and by extension, gambling. Riding high, the temperance societies wanted to target the sex workers next. With the help of city and federal officials, they pushed through the Mann Act in 1910 to prevent the transportation of women across state lines for “immoral purposes”; sex workers often traveled state to state so they would always be “fresh meat” and not become “old-timers.” However, they didn’t stop there; reformers argued that a significant cause of prostitution was “feeble-mindedness” and by 1913, twelve states had laws that permitted the sterilization of criminals, the feeble-minded, moral and sexual perverts, epileptics, and rapists. Rather than indicate mental deficiency, the label “feeble-minded” referred to sex workers' refusal or failure to conform to middle-class values and behavioral patterns. Essentially, they were labeled “feeble-minded” because they refused to bow down and conform to societal expectations. Public anxiety peaked from 1911 to 1916 over prostitution. Reformers’ campaign to alert the nation linked sex work to every imaginable form of individual and public corruption. It portrayed American cities as steeped in every kind of iniquity: liquor, crime, and sexual vice. According to Ruth Rosen and Michael Rutter, after a decade of publicity, millions of Americans had become active participants in the anti-vice crusade, setting off a powerful amount of stigma linked to sex work.⁸⁵

The Mann Act and the Moral Purity Movement tried to prohibit sex work in Oklahoma, but there was at least one madam who paid them no heed. According to Clara Nipper, Pauline

⁸⁴ Franklin, “The Fight for Prohibition,” 884.

⁸⁵ Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood*, 15, 21, 23, 37.

Lambert aka Clara Palmer, was a devoted family woman, a Bible school teacher, a mother, and a madam who established and operated the infamous May Rooms bawdy house from 1936 to 1979 under her alias, Pauline, and her children and grandchildren never knew about the May Rooms. Pauline was born Clara Gilliam on March 14, 1890, in Finlay, Tennessee. She married George Sir Spinhouse, followed him to Oklahoma for his job, and produced two children before George's death. After her sons entered adulthood, Pauline married her second husband, Mr. Lambert. Pauline came to Tulsa, Oklahoma, and began renting hotel beds for twenty-five cents a night to professional men, most of whom were in the booming oil business. Shortly thereafter, Pauline began her career as a madam by renting beds with girls already in them for an average time of seventeen minutes per customer. She took forty percent of her girls' earnings.⁸⁶

According to Pauline's legend, clients would enter one narrow staircase; the seventh stair had a loose riser under which a button was installed so that when the stairs were stepped on, the bell next to Pauline's rocking chair in the locked upstairs sitting room rang. Pauline was cautious about new customers and insisted on meeting with them for approval. There were couches lining the room on which the women lounged, waiting to be called upon by Pauline. Once the transaction was complete, the men would leave through a separate exit. Pauline had peepholes looking into the rooms so she could check on her working girls; Pauline claimed that most of her girls were from a wealthy pedigree, and not common streetwalkers. The current owner of the May Rooms property, Michael Sager, said that he found Pauline's chair at the top of the narrow staircase before he remodeled the space. On the chair's arms were numbered buttons with thick electrical cords running from the chair, down the long hallway, to the corresponding numbered

⁸⁶ Clara Nipper, "Sex in the City," This Land, October 8, 2011, <https://www.thislandpress.com/2011/10/08/sex-in-the-city>.

rooms, and attached buzzers. According to legend, Pauline kept a clipboard and watched the clock, and when the time was up, she buzzed the room.⁸⁷

At the peak of the May Rooms' success in the 1930s and 1940s, Pauline employed up to ten working girls. It was an initiation ritual for high school boys to visit the May Rooms. Approximately one of every eight boys in Tulsa became a man in one of the narrow rooms. Coaches arranged victory celebrations for winning football games with Ms. Pauline (double standard, anyone?).⁸⁸ In the 1960s, when Captain Skinner was in charge of the vice department for Tulsa Police, city commissioners ordered him to stop prostitution once and for all. Captain Skinner retorted, "Moses had the power of life and death over the people, and he couldn't do it, and we're supposed to do it with four officers on \$20 a month?" It seems he had more reason not to interfere with Pauline's brothel – Pauline was generous to Tulsa police; any time an officer was killed in the line of duty, Pauline would send the widow and family \$1,000.⁸⁹ Spousal benefits for fallen police officers did not pass into law until 1993.⁹⁰

Joe Lester, a vice officer, succeeded in shutting down the legendary house of prostitution because he "had God on his side." Lester first met Pauline as a rookie cop in 1970. His initial visit was responding to a disturbance call in which a client was trying to beat one of the working girls. Lester revisited the May Rooms in 1975, and Pauline remembered him clearly from their 1970 visit and would not allow him inside, even with a fake driver's license. Lester told Pauline that he was there for "the chicks." Pauline responded, "This isn't your name, you are with TPD,

⁸⁷ Clara Nipper, "Sex in the City," This Land, October 8, 2011, <https://www.thislandpress.com/2011/10/08/sex-in-the-city>.

⁸⁸ Clara Nipper, "Sex in the City," This Land, October 8, 2011, <https://www.thislandpress.com/2011/10/08/sex-in-the-city>.

⁸⁹ Clara Nipper, "Sex in the City," This Land, October 8, 2011, <https://www.thislandpress.com/2011/10/08/sex-in-the-city>.

⁹⁰ Clara Nipper, "Sex in the City," This Land, October 8, 2011, <https://www.thislandpress.com/2011/10/08/sex-in-the-city>.

and this isn't a henhouse, we don't have any chicks." Pauline read the newspaper daily and had a photographic memory for faces.⁹¹

Lester had to be more creative to enter Pauline's May Rooms. To gain a conviction, the sex worker had to name an act and a price. So, Lester staked out the May Rooms and observed as two customers, ages 78 and 80, emerged from the May Rooms. Lester spoke to the men and learned that they had both been with the same sex worker. Lester approached the May Rooms again and explicitly requested that same sex worker and claimed that his "daddy sent him". He finally got inside and was quoted rates for "half and half," and Lester made the arrest and got an injunction on the building as a public nuisance (not as a bawdy house). When Pauline was arrested, she asked, "Why are you doing this to me? I'm only charging \$15." Lester received a court order to close the May Rooms in February 1979 when Pauline was 88 years old. She had been convicted of pandering in 1978 and was facing several years in prison. Pauline's attorneys appealed against the conviction while she was free on bond, and a judge delayed sentencing. Pauline, in a wheelchair, lived in a nursing home in Henryetta while waiting for the court's decision. She died on October 31, 1979, but her story doesn't end there. Per her wishes, her obituary listed her name as Clara Palmer. Meanwhile, her attorneys, unaware of her death, continued to appeal her conviction for more than four years. In December 1983, the appeals were over, and one of Pauline's attorneys asked Presiding Judge Hopper to give Pauline probation. Judge Hopper ordered Pauline's bondsman to produce Pauline or forfeit the bond. It took months for the bondsman to discover that Pauline had died four years prior. Judge Hopper closed

⁹¹ Clara Nipper, "Sex in the City," This Land, October 8, 2011, <https://www.thislandpress.com/2011/10/08/sex-in-the-city>.

Pauline's file by dismissing all charges against the dead woman. Unfortunately, no mug shots of Pauline can be found.⁹²

Anne Wynn, Martha Fleming, and Pauline Lambert found clever ways around vice discovery and punishment; they bribed the corrupt authorities if they couldn't hide their operations. Carry Nation, the WCTU, the Anti-Saloon League, and the "Flying Squadron" tried to banish sex workers from Oklahoma City and Tulsa, and for the most part, succeeded. Oklahoma continued with the framework set forth by prohibitionists and their accompanying stigma standards, and sex workers found themselves positioned on the lowest rung of society, to be viewed with disgust and disdain.

⁹² Clara Nipper, "Sex in the City," *This Land*, October 8, 2011, <https://www.thislandpress.com/2011/10/08/sex-in-the-city>.

CHAPTER FIVE: SEX WORK IN MODERN OKLAHOMA

During the course of writing this thesis, I tried reaching out to current or retired sex workers in Oklahoma, but my efforts were in vain. Oklahoma is a deep-red state, and our First Amendment rights are dwindling, so I suspect that many sex workers are more afraid than ever to come forward and share their stories. I've tried to gain interviews at the following establishments in Oklahoma City: Fancy's, Little Darlings, Déjà vu Showgirls, Romeo's Castle Gentlemen's Club, Bare Assets, Red Dog Saloon, Secrets, Night Trips, Platinum Nights, and Club Eden. I really wish that the sex workers in Oklahoma had responded so that I could include their voices in my thesis. My questions for sex workers were as follows:

1. Are you a current or retired sex worker?
2. Age?
3. Gender?
4. How long have you lived in Oklahoma?
5. How long have you worked in the sex industry?
6. Do you use drugs to cope with the work and stigma? What kind?
7. What do you think about legalizing sex work?
8. Have you ever faced discrimination regarding housing, healthcare, custodial rights, etc.
Please describe the discrimination.
9. How much do you roughly make in a week in this industry?
10. What are some obstacles you face in sex work?
11. Do you think society sees you as a human being?
12. Do you think sex work would be easier and/or safer in a legal brothel?
13. Should a sex worker be categorized as a self-employed contractor?
14. If sex work were legal, would you be inclined to report human trafficking you have observed?
15. Is being a sex worker your only occupation?
16. Do you have feelings of guilt or shame as a sex worker?
17. Does your family know about your occupation?
18. Are you part of a sisterhood that enables sex workers to lean on one another?

19. Reasons why you chose this occupation? Check all that apply: poverty, basic survival, excitement, independence, schedule flexibility, supplemental income, pay for higher education, and untreated mental illness.
20. Have you experienced any occupational hazards? Check all that apply: sexually transmitted infections, discrimination/stigma, depression, isolation, sexual abuse/assault, physical abuse/assault, harassment, or incarceration.
21. Check all that apply for skills you've acquired in the sex industry: client management strategies, negotiation, interpersonal communication, sales skills, organization, marketing, photos and video shoots, blogging, website management, business licensing, time management, and teamwork.
22. Do you participate in a "sisterhood network"? Check all that apply: support each other, organize bad date lists, share information about clients, serve as safety buddies for each other, help others who have experienced victimization, and teach service providers how to serve people in the sex trade without stigma.
23. Have you engaged in other occupations in the sex industry? Check all that apply: solicited clients in the street, park, or other public areas, worked in a brothel, as an escort, solicited clients in a club, pub, bar, or dance hall; solicited clients in a ship, train, or truck stop; bondage and discipline; lap dancing; massage parlor; femme libre; barter sex for goods/services; swingers' clubs; performed sex for drugs; or survival sex (starvation and security).
24. Is there anything you feel is essential to know about this industry?

According to the Oklahoma City Police Department, illegal prostitution hit its peak in the early 1980s with the oil boom. Since then, whorehouses have been closed but sex workers still find a way to work. According to *The Oklahoman*, many arrests were made for prostitution and pandering in 1990. Larry Andrews, who formerly headed the city's vice squad, said that they've arrested nearly one hundred girls every month, and also noted that male prostitution was also a problem. The busiest intersections for prostitution were South Robinson and 44th; SW 29th and

May Ave, NW 7th, 8th, and 9th between Western Ave. and Pennsylvania Ave.; Lincoln Blvd. and Main in downtown Oklahoma City. Vice investigators went on to say that it is difficult to estimate the number of sex workers in Oklahoma City because most girls are transients and travel around on a circuit (just like 20th-century sex workers did). In the 1989-1990 Oklahoma City phone book (before Google), fifty-eight escort services were listed, and perhaps more were in the “Dating Services” section. Escort services sometimes had ten phone lines for just one service; the city tried to appeal to phone companies to pull the plugs on the phones, but the city dropped the request after a bitter fight.⁹³

In 1993, the Oklahoma City Police Department set up a vast prostitution sting that brought 107 arrests in an area notorious for prostitution: NW 9th and Indiana; SW 39th and Robinson; NW 9th and Classen, and the 4600 block of S. Shields. They arrested 82 men, ranging in age from 17 to 81 years. Most places listed are the same as in the above article from 1990.⁹⁴

In 2012, Oklahoma City parks became the ideal place for people to gather for casual sex. Trospen Park, near SE 29th and Eastern Ave. in Oklahoma City, has been infamous for hookups since the 1970s. Police said that Trospen Park is not the only popular sex hangout. Hobie Point at Lake Hefner and Will Rogers Park in northwest Oklahoma City also keep police busy. Still, cars immediately leave the parks when they see a patrol car or a newsvan entering the parking lot.⁹⁵

Even online message boards, such as listings.cruisingforsex.com, mention Hobie Point and Stars and Stripes Park as the best sex spots in Oklahoma City. Messages range from 2002 to 2014, meaning these locations have been well established for at least twelve years.⁹⁶ These

⁹³ Tim Farley, “Sex-for-hire sinks to pre-boom level,” *The Oklahoman*, March 26, 1990.

⁹⁴ Penny Owen, “Prostitution sting brings 107 arrests,” *The Oklahoman*, July 2, 1993.

⁹⁵ “Police: OKC Park Infamous for Casual Sex,” *News on 6*, May 11, 2012.

⁹⁶ “Lake Hefner: Stars and Stripes Park and Hobie Point,” listings.cruisingforsex.com, October 4, 2024.

locations are still rumored to be the best sex spots in 2025. Sex work has been in Oklahoma since before statehood. Nearly 125 years later, the sex industry has grown into about thirty occupations. Although Oklahoma is a deep-red state, sex work continues to grow into the modern age by utilizing the internet and phone apps; sex workers have no trouble finding a way to express themselves sexually.

CHAPTER SIX: STIGMA INSIDE AND OUTSIDE OF THE SEX WORK

COMMUNITY

WHORE STIGMA, SLUT-SHAMING, AND SEX WORK IN RAPE CULTURE

The continuing sexual double standard has resulted in slut-shaming and whore stigma and the good girl or bad girl distinction between women themselves. Slut-shaming and whorephobia allow societal approval to shame, taunt, and marginalize women who refuse to conform to traditional gender roles. It has a severely adverse effect on women who see themselves as sexually active or those who sell sex. By shaming the bad girls, society is allowed to mistreat them and, by extension, control the behaviors of the good girls. Also, within the sexual double standard, women's sexuality is somehow threatening and degrading, but they are encouraged by peers and social media to *look* sexy and please boys. In contrast, the male sexual desire is more important and encouraged to "sow their oats."⁹⁷

We've all heard it – a girl walks down the street in her cute short skirt and is attacked. Or a college coed gets drunk at a party and is raped. Even in movies such as *The Accused* (1988), we see Jodie Foster's character gang-raped in a bar because she was wearing a revealing outfit, and Kelly McGillis's character is a lawyer who has to fight the question, "Did she deserve it because of what she was wearing?" We also see the rape of sex workers who are told, "Well, what did you expect in your line of work?" instead of pursuing the crime. Any female dishonor combined with criminalization always brings into question the credibility and appearance of the victim, whatever her profession might be.

Many female sex workers and transgender sex workers feel that there is no point in reporting sexual assault and violence. There are police reports around the United States that

⁹⁷ Meredith Ralston, *Slut-Shaming, Whorephobia, and the Unfinished Sexual Revolution* (Chicago: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021), 5-6.

violence against sex workers has the phrase “No Humans Involved (NHI)” written on it.⁹⁸

Transwomen sex workers are often deemed “unrapable,” and any violence against transgender sex workers is considered justified because “that’s what you get for trying to fool a man.” It seems that the goal of the criminal justice system, in this case, is to disregard bodily integrity, disempower the victim, and say whatever it takes just to make them disappear.⁹⁹ Sex workers are more subjected to violence because of the idea that rape is just part of the job because they cannot refuse sexual activity (they absolutely can, as we will see later). Any sexual violence against a sex worker is blamed on the sex worker. Many people claim that sex workers who claimed to have been raped degrade the experience of “real” sexual assault victims, and that rape of a sex worker should be considered “theft of services” even if the assault was at gunpoint. Melissa Dittmore argues that the idea that sex workers can’t be raped is a dangerous threat to both sex workers and women in general, which parallels the idea that married women cannot be raped. It wasn’t so long ago that marital rape wasn’t considered rape but rather a “right of access” for the husband. In some countries, this is still true. In any case, rape is still all about controlling women’s sexuality.¹⁰⁰

Nearly every woman has felt the wave of injustice when a woman is raped or seen as sexually assertive – for example, standing on the street without a socially acceptable purpose or a male chaperone. Women must watch where and how they walk, talk, and dress so that their intent is not mistaken. There are some places in the United States where the police will arrest women who are not sex workers but are dressed as such or because they happen to be in an area where

⁹⁸ Melissa Farley and Emily Butler, “Prostitution and Trafficking-Quick Facts,” Prostitution Research and Education.

⁹⁹ Melinda Chateaufort, *Sex Workers Unite: A History of the Movement from Stonewall to Slutwalk* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013), 158-159.

¹⁰⁰ Meredith Ralston, *Slut-Shaming, Whorephobia, and the Unfinished Sexual Revolution* (Chicago: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2021), 71.

sex workers are known to contact customers. For instance, if a woman is decked out in a low-cut dress meant for a club, a party, or just because she felt sexy and confident, some would believe she was trolling for customers instead of waiting for a taxi or Uber. Some people might classify these ladies as “sluts” or “whores” because of age-old conventions regarding female display and behavior that should have a chilling effect on all women.¹⁰¹

SEX WORKERS AND THEIR CLIENTS

Sex workers today have developed a network designed for their safety. They use one another for references and to confirm that the men are who they say they are. They also act as one another's safety contact – the person who receives information on where the sex worker is, who the client is, and how long the session should be. This type of sisterhood also warns other sex workers about any law enforcement stings and any predators to avoid. They also share experience, marketing techniques, and how to retain clients and build a base of regulars.¹⁰² Men spend large sums of money, face shame and guilt, and risk family and societal censure to satisfy their desires, especially those considered unusual or illicit. Many people are terrified of openly expressing sexual fantasies that diverge from society's perception of “normal” and that they cannot give voice to their sexual needs with their partners.¹⁰³ Remember that until recently, women were not supposed to have sexual desires or enjoy sex.

Much of the public believes that men who frequent the services of sex workers are highly desperate creeps who cannot get sex from anywhere else. One stereotype is that sex workers

¹⁰¹ Priscilla Alexander, “Feminism, Sex Workers, and Human Rights,” *Whores and Other Feminists* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 85.

¹⁰² Sesali Bowen, *Bad Fat Black Girl: Notes from a Trap Feminist* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2021), 172.

¹⁰³ Liz Highleyman, “Professional Dominance: Power, Money, and Identity,” *Whores and Other Feminists* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 150.

provide relief to society's "wretched": the old, the unattractive, the unpartnered. This myth gives a modicum of respect to sex workers even as society distances itself from the industry, as if only the young and able-bodied are allowed to have sex in the first place.¹⁰⁴ The truth is that clients are looking for specific experiences that meet their particular needs. Erotic providers give them the space and chance to tap into their sexuality that they cannot express in their everyday lives. The sex worker must provide a body-positive lens to make room for clients with different body types and abilities.¹⁰⁵ Andrea Werhun explains the different examples of the types of clients who procure erotic services: (1) the single, traveling businessman who has no wife, home, or kids. He bounces around from the airport to the hotel while selling his goods. (2) The broken-hearted men fresh out of a long-term relationship are vulnerable, hurting, and need tender loving care. Sex workers experience extremely high emotional labor with this client type. (3) Run-of-the-mill dorks who can't make a move on a real girl if his internet connection depended on it. They tremble with a woman's merest touch and find release very quickly. (4) The typical bachelor isn't interested in dating and wants a quick release without a relationship attachment. (5) Married men who attempt to fool themselves into thinking that they aren't cheating because of the lack of emotional attachment, but refuse to tell their wives about the erotic service. (6) Clients with disabilities typically yearn for conversation, touch, cuddling, and sex – the essential girlfriend experience.¹⁰⁶

Clients who patronize gentlemen's clubs or strip clubs do so for the sexual voyeurism that is legal and wish to avoid the stigma of going to a full-service erotic provider. These clients

¹⁰⁴ Carol Queen, "Sex Radical Politics, Sex-Positive Feminist Thought, and Whore Stigma," *Whores and Other Feminists* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 130.

¹⁰⁵ Sesali Bowen, *Bad Fat Black Girl: Notes from a Trap Feminist* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2021), 174.

¹⁰⁶ Andrea Werhun, *Modern Whore: A Memoir* (South Korea: Strange Light Publishing, 2022), 89-90.

include those who are impotent, disabled, or conventionally unattractive, who are sexually stigmatized as humans, and frequently rejected as partners. Just like strippers, these clients rarely live up to their caricatures. Men pay not to demean women but to watch and talk to them. If a man wanted to degrade a woman, then he would not pay for anything. Money is a form of acknowledgment and appreciation in strip clubs.¹⁰⁷

Clients of erotic providers have only recently been accessible for research because of the stigma surrounding the industry. Researchers have found that clients have different motivations for soliciting erotic providers. Some are widowed or single and have a tough time dating. Others are workaholics who don't have time for relationships but still want closeness and intimacy. This recent research is comparable to Alfred Kinsey's research in the 1940s and outlined the same issues – insufficient outlets, sexual acts not available from unpaid partners, disabled or deformed men, paid sex is cheaper than a wife, fear of rejection, lack of emotional complications, and the desire for sex without the relationship responsibilities.¹⁰⁸

Believe it or not, sex workers have “review boards” in which clients can share their reviews of a sex worker's service online. Sex workers of all types – escorts, rub-and-tuggers, strippers, phone sex operators, street workers, and others are critiqued on anything from their appearance, attitude, permissiveness, intelligence, conversational skills, and a laundry list of available services. Good reviews are good for business, but fabricated bad reviews by “slobbyists” can have lasting effects. If a client has a chip on his shoulder because a sex worker declined, for instance, to do anal, the client can threaten, “If we don't do anal, I'll have to write a

¹⁰⁷ Stacy Reed, “All Stripped Off,” *Whores and Other Feminists* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 185-186.

¹⁰⁸ Meredith Ralston, *Slut-Shaming, Whorephobia, and the Unfinished Sexual Revolution* (Chicago: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021), 114.

bad review.” This puts the sex worker in a difficult position: say no to anal and goodbye to her business or say yes and get raped for a good review.¹⁰⁹

STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION CONTRIBUTE TO SEX WORKERS’ “CIVIL DEATH.”

When a client is “called out” for engaging in the solicitation of sex work, the worst that can happen is money loss or attending a “John School.” The John School has become a legal loophole for men and is a pre-trial diversion program for first-time offenders of alleged prostitution activities. The enrollment fee for this program is tax-deductible. These men attend a weekend-long program and are presented with information on morality, health, sexually transmitted infections, prostitution laws, the prostitution impact on communities, sex addiction, and the harmfulness of prostitution. To drive the point home, they receive testimonies from former sex workers about the violence inflicted on them by “johns” and the damaging effect of prostitution that impacted their lives. Women as first-time offenders do not have this opportunity but instead receive harsher and more long-lasting punishments for their prostitution offenses.¹¹⁰

A client who “outs” a sex worker puts more than money loss at risk. Because sex workers are afraid to tell their friends, families, partners, employers, schools, or landlords about their profession, they are at risk of losing their lives. Sex workers fear discrimination, harassment, excommunication, eviction, removal of children in divorce custody proceedings, abuse, theft, rape, and murder.¹¹¹ Exposing sex workers can also lead to being denied access to jobs and public programs, including drug treatment, low-income housing, and scholarships, and restricting

¹⁰⁹ Andrea Werhun, *Modern Whore: A Memoir* (South Korea: Strange Light Publishing, 2022), 33-34.

¹¹⁰ Jaquelyn Monroe, “Women in Street Prostitution: The Results of Poverty and the Brunt of Inequity,” *Taylor & Francis* online, October 12, 2008.

¹¹¹ Andrea Werhun, *Modern Whore: A Memoir* (South Korea: Strange Light Publishing, 2022), 257.

their ability to obtain professional licenses. Melinda Chateauvert observed that “outed” sex workers experience a form of “civil death” based on these fears that come true for them.¹¹²

Even being exposed as a former sex worker has consequences for those looking to get out of the sex industry and experience a problem of mobility. Due to the stigmatized profession, former sex workers often hide their work history, which creates challenges for advertising their transferable skills, such as client management strategies, negotiation, interpersonal communication, sales skills, organization, marketing, website management, business licensing, strategy, time management, teamwork, and money management.¹¹³

SEX WORK AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

According to Sesali Bowen, the most present danger that sex workers face is law enforcement. Sex workers must find ways to advertise, screen clients, and serve those clients without drawing police attention. If any crimes were committed against sex workers and they try to report them, then they put their own freedom at risk for justice. Unfortunately, dirty cops are among the predators that sex workers encounter.¹¹⁴ For example, most people in Oklahoma are familiar with Oklahoma City police officer Daniel Holtzclaw, who used his position of authority to coerce black sex workers into having sex with him in exchange for not arresting the workers for trumped-up charges.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Melinda Chateauvert, *Sex Workers Unite: A History of the Movement from Stonewall to Slutwalk* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013), 17.

¹¹³ Sarah Jane Blithe, Anna Wiederhold Wolfe, and Breanna Mohr, *Sex and Stigma: Stories of Everyday Life in Nevada's Legal Brothels* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 131.

¹¹⁴ Sesali Bowen, *Bad Fat Black Girl: Notes from a Trap Feminist* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2021), 181.

¹¹⁵ Katerine Koster, “17 Facts About Sexual Violence and Sex Work,” Huffpost, December 4, 2015.

Norma Jean Almodovar experienced both sides of sex work and law enforcement. After ten years of being a traffic officer for the Los Angeles Police Department, she transitioned into becoming a sex worker after talking to a call girl who enjoyed her job. She wanted to expose the hypocrisy in the police abuse of prostitutes within a more extensive system of unchecked police corruption. Sex workers were treated in a degrading manner by the very law agents who were supposed to protect them. During the nightly roll call, male officers described how they rounded up prostitutes in the “whore car” and brought them to the station for booking. There were times when the women were rounded up like cattle and forced to entertain the officers by running a barefoot race on the street. Whoever finished last was arrested and dragged to the police station, booked, fined, and permitted to return to the street early enough to make the money to pay the fine. The women became so immune to this abuse that eventually, they, too, began to think of this violation of their rights as a game and even laughed with the officers when they were tagged for the night.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Norma Jean Almodovar, “Working It,” *Whores and Other Feminists* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 210-211.

**CHAPTER SEVEN: ADVOCACY AND LEGALIZATION OF SEX WORK IN
THE UNITED STATES**

NEVADA'S LEGAL BROTHELS

In the United States, brothels are only legal in Nevada. As of 2019, Nevada's strict laws prohibit prostitution or solicitation except in licensed brothels. These establishments can only be situated in counties with fewer than 700,000 residents in Nevada. They also cannot be within .22 miles (400 yards) of schools or churches. Advertisements of brothels are not allowed in any county, city, or town as prohibited by local ordinances. Sex workers are considered independent contractors and must obtain work cards that say so. They are not allowed to engage in paid sex if they have an HIV-positive test, and they are required to be tested weekly for sexually transmitted infections.¹¹⁷

As independent contractors, legal sex workers must pay for their room and board in the brothels. These fees range from \$20-\$50 per day, but some brothels will waive the fee if a worker books a certain amount in one day. Most rooms have their own bathroom, but some women have to share a communal bathroom. The sex workers supply items like condoms, lubricants, sex toys, hygiene products, mouthwash, soap, baby wipes, and paper towels.¹¹⁸

Legal sex workers and clients are usually grateful for the added protection from outsiders in a typical brothel layout. Most locations have a gate or locked entrance door that requires outsiders to be "buzzed in" by the brothel manager. This buzz alert gives the erotic professionals the chance to hide or present themselves before the guests enter. Shared spaces can be a lounge, a bar, or a restaurant that visitors can utilize regardless of whether they are interested in more intimate service. Offices, sex workers' bedrooms/workspace, and other spaces available for

¹¹⁷ Sarah Jane Blithe, Anna Wiederhold Wolfe, and Breanna Mohr, *Sex and Stigma: Stories of Everyday Life in Nevada's Legal Brothels* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 62.

¹¹⁸ Sarah Jane Blithe, Anna Wiederhold Wolfe, and Breanna Mohr, *Sex and Stigma: Stories of Everyday Life in Nevada's Legal Brothels* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 71.

purchase (like for a hot tub party) are always located beyond this common space that requires additional security access.¹¹⁹ This sense of security prevents possible violence against the professionals by clients. In addition, brothels in many nations have implemented specific measures to ensure workers' safety, such as panic buttons, listening devices, and screening of customers when they enter the brothel.¹²⁰

Since legal sex workers are considered independent contractors, they draft their contracts with the brothel owners and establish mutually agreeable shift schedules. For instance, the Mustang Ranch has reported that some girls choose to be scheduled for two weeks on shift and two weeks off. Before each session, a sex worker and a client go into a room and discuss what the client is looking for, any boundaries, and the price. The brothel receives a fifty percent cut of each transaction, which pays for operating needs, including utilities, laundry services, maintenance, meals, and salaries for floor managers, bartenders, security guards, and other employees.¹²¹

SHOULD SEX WORK BE CONSIDERED AS ACTUAL WORK?

All sex workers agree that sex work is absolutely *work*. Sex work isn't as cut-and-dry as simply having sex and getting paid for it. There's so much more to it. They must create two identities, one for work and the other as "true self." In the work identity, sex workers establish certain body parts and acts that are "off-limits" to clients. For example, in the film *Pretty Woman*, Julia Roberts's character tells Richard Gere's character that she never kisses on the mouth, thus setting a boundary reserved for her work identity. The "true self" is kept at home and reserved

¹¹⁹ Sarah Jane Blithe, Anna Wiederhold Wolfe, and Breanna Mohr, *Sex and Stigma: Stories of Everyday Life in Nevada's Legal Brothels* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 199.

¹²⁰ "Prostitution," University of Minnesota Library, February 8, 2023.

¹²¹ Sarah Jane Blithe, Anna Wiederhold Wolfe, and Breanna Mohr, *Sex and Stigma: Stories of Everyday Life in Nevada's Legal Brothels* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 206.

for their significant other. Street sex workers also set boundaries between the two identities by controlling their emotions with attractive clients and restricting their own pleasures to remind themselves that it is work. Some sex workers even mentally check out to avoid pleasure as a way to remain faithful to their significant other.¹²²

These two identities are critical when providing the most requested experiences in this industry – the girlfriend experience (GFE) and the porn star experience (PSE). The girlfriend experience requires more than just the sexual act; the sex worker engages in intimate behavior as they would in a relationship, such as kissing and cuddling the client. There's a greater need for emotional labor in the girlfriend experience, and it certainly feels like "real" work to the sex worker. The GFE providers distance themselves from the stigma of sex work by comparing their work to non-commercial sex to normalize the exchange of money for sex because clients are paying for an intimate and authentic experience.¹²³

SEX WORK AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING DEBATES

For years, feminists have debated whether to support sex work as a profession. Certain groups see sex work as the ultimate degree of oppression, while others see it as a liberating expression of sexual freedom and power. Ironically, most of these feminists don't include the voices of legal or illegal sex workers. Sex workers are very much against trafficking and sexual coercion. Some of them have even helped trafficking victims trapped by criminals in the sex industry. This kind of trafficking occurs when shady labor contractors or smugglers use an undocumented immigrant's situation to leverage their passport, forced labor without pay, and

¹²² Christina Parreira, "The lady and the tramp: management of stigma in the Nevada brothel," *Reconfiguring Stigma in Studies of Sex for Sale* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 171-172.

¹²³ Christina Parreira, "The lady and the tramp: management of stigma in the Nevada brothel," *Reconfiguring Stigma in Studies of Sex for Sale* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 171-172.

threats to report their “illegal status” to authorities. Forced labor victims are more common in the agricultural industry, the food processing industry, and the food service sectors than in the sex industry.¹²⁴

Prohibitionists think that “prostituted women” cannot make decisions about their own lives. “Prostituted women” also include strippers, whom prohibitionists argue that strippers are “poor deluded girls”. She cannot possibly know what she’s doing. Let us take it upon ourselves to save her from her ignorance and impending ruin.”¹²⁵ The prohibitionists’ campaign focused on three areas: they asserted that “prostituted women” were the victims of patriarchy and discounted alternative critiques of capitalism, the war on drugs, and other systems of oppression. Second, they dismissed sex workers’ stories as fakes, denying they were written by “real” sex workers. Third, positive claims made by sex workers must have been false because “prostituted women” were enslaved by pimps and pornographers who controlled their bodies, thoughts, and speech.¹²⁶

Sex workers complain that the terminology used by the prohibitionists is disempowering, deliberately denying women and men choice, and casts them as “victims” in need of “help” and “rescue” rather than people who have made conscious decisions. The terms “conflate victims of trafficking with sex workers, which is an insult to both groups,” says Lori Adorable, a New York sex worker and college student. She and other sex workers reject the idea that sex workers “sell their bodies.” They insist that the wording “reinforces the same notions that fortify the violence against them: that they maintain no control over their physical selves, and therefore, anything

¹²⁴ Melinda Chateauvert, *Sex Workers Unite: A History of the Movement from Stonewall to Slutwalk* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013), 6.

¹²⁵ Stacy Reed, “All Stripped Off,” *Whores and Other Feminists* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 179.

¹²⁶ Melinda Chateauvert, *Sex Workers Unite: A History of the Movement from Stonewall to Slutwalk* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013), 191-192.

and everything can be done to them.”¹²⁷ Sesali Bowen argues that consensual sex transacted by sex workers is not the same thing as sex trafficking. Sex work involves consenting parties negotiating the terms under which they engage in sex. Trafficked individuals cannot give consent because they’re acting under the authoritarian rule of someone else. Trying to combat sex trafficking by criminalizing the entire sex trade is like trying to regulate sex to prevent rape.¹²⁸ However, she further argues that she knows the ease of “turning a girl out” based on her own experience. A teenage girl is incredibly naïve, and it would be very easy for an attractive neighbor or community member to establish himself as her pimp. If he posed as her boyfriend and asked her to perform sex for money, the teenage brain would find ways to justify it. It looks like an abusive boyfriend, expectations from older family members, or being an agreeable girl for the rich older guy she’s “dating.”¹²⁹

Sex trafficking requires the same dynamic of power and control that is used in abusive romantic relationships. These dynamics are seen in the sex worker-pimp relationships and the sex worker-client relationship. A pimp is considered a criminal who exerts control or is associated with sex workers and lives off the money earned by one or more sex workers. The sex worker endures coercion, threats, intimidation, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, economic abuse, and abuse of male privilege. To be perceived in a favorable light by the pimp or john, a victim might be coerced into engaging in sexual activity that she is not comfortable performing.¹³⁰ Alisa

¹²⁷ Melinda Chateauvert, *Sex Workers Unite: A History of the Movement from Stonewall to Slutwalk* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013), 194.

¹²⁸ Sesali Bowen, *Bad Fat Black Girl: Notes from a Trap Feminist* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2021), 181.

¹²⁹ Sesali Bowen, *Bad Fat Black Girl: Notes from a Trap Feminist* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2021), 179.

¹³⁰ Asha McLachlan, “Sex Trafficking as Domestic Violence,” *New York University Journal of Legislation and Public Policy*, May 19, 2021.

Bernard argues that the only individuals who benefit from your sexual activity are pimps and sex traffickers.¹³¹

Laura Agustín notes that feminist sex worker activist Jo Doezema compares the present-day fixation on “consent” in trafficking debates to the early twentieth-century panic about “white slavery.” Women who were engaged in sex work were divided between forced, and therefore innocent, victims of “white slavery” and “immoral women” who had chosen prostitution and “fallen” from the graces of mainstream society. Society’s way of combating “white slavery” was to pass the Mann Act (1910), which prohibited the transportation of women across state borders for “immoral purposes.” Women who chose prostitution were compared to sewers, cesspits, and trash dumps and needed regulation. According to Doezema, prohibitionists argued that state regulation should be the primary way to control venereal disease. “Innocent” women and girls needed protection from immorality and the temptation of the flesh. Once an “innocent” falls from grace, society felt that it needed protection from the now “immoral women.”¹³²

SEX WORKERS FIGHT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS: LAWS AND DECRIMINALIZATION.

The Erotic Providers' Movement has based its campaign on the “no bad women, just bad laws” slogan to abolish laws criminalizing erotic services and sexual labor. While there are dozens of reasons for decriminalization, U.S. activists are skeptical that government regulation will enhance their rights as workers or even as human beings. Many sex workers do not support legalization that enables state oversight and licensing of sex workers. They believe that such regulation would harshly punish those who refused to be “pimped” by the state. Past regulations

¹³¹ Alisa Bernard, “Surviving Prostitution: Violence was My Experience,” July 13, 2017.

¹³² Laura Agustín, “The (Crying) Need for Different Kinds of Research,” *Sex Work Matters: Exploring Money, Power, and Intimacy in the Sex Industry* (New York: Zed Books, 2010).

imposed mandatory health inspections on workers but not on clients. Movement activists are also against the registration as a sex worker because it becomes a public record,¹³³ which means that sex workers put their “work identity” and “true self” at risk of being exposed and facing the growing stigma of their profession. Because of this public record, many activists foresee issues when they are ready to venture into other forms of work. Indeed, such a record would be included in typical employment background checks.

The erotic provider movement has trouble organizing because, since sex work is illegal, they cannot unionize as legal workers can. It can be argued that the criminalization of sex work and related activities is the primary obstacle to gaining better working conditions for independent sex workers. Criminal conspiracy laws technically prohibit sex workers from meeting to discuss coordinated action. Since it is a crime, planning acts of prostitution or discussing ways to work together constitutes “pimping” or managing prostitutes. The sex workers who share their money for collective purposes are technically pandering.¹³⁴

Sex work remains criminalized in the United States and many other nations, which fosters working conditions that are dangerous and exploitative. Even legal forms of sex work, such as stripping, tend to take place in a work environment where labor laws are bent, broken, or ignored entirely. Many activists, researchers, and organizations within the sex industry argue that the laws that criminalize sex work do not make the work less dangerous, do nothing to end prostitution, and marginalize the stigmatized sex workers. However, even in nations that have legalized or decriminalized sex work, such as the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, the

¹³³ Melinda Chateauvert, *Sex Workers Unite: A History of the Movement from Stonewall to Slutwalk* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013), 4-5.

¹³⁴ Melinda Chateauvert, *Sex Workers Unite: A History of the Movement from Stonewall to Slutwalk* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013), 149.

stigma surrounding the industry has not changed, and sex workers are still having to deal with it.¹³⁵ Sesali Bowen argues that decriminalizing sex work would make it safer for sex workers to do their jobs and, by extension, more accessible to fight sex trafficking. Decriminalizing sex work is unlikely in the United States because society is still tied to its conservative attitudes about the circumstances under which people have sex, and society refuses to acknowledge that sex work is real work.¹³⁶

The prohibitionist perspective is that decriminalizing the customers creates two related problems: decriminalization legitimizes commercial access to women's bodies, and secondly, increases the demand for paid sex, thereby creating more demand for sex trafficking. Prohibitionists look at this Nordic model to eradicate sex work by eliminating the demand for prostitution. Sex worker rights groups want to establish the right to work in safety by decriminalizing the trade itself. Prohibitionists capitalize on the campaign of calling consensual prostitution sex trafficking with the media image of the poor, trafficked victim, and change the narrative from women as criminals to women as victims. However, this narrative erases the women who have chosen to be sex workers and makes their lives more invisible to those who do not have intimate knowledge of sex work. Sex work activists oppose the Nordic model and support the New Zealand model because, in its legal framework, prostitution has been decriminalized fully, and labor laws and health and safety standards support the worker's right to work safely. The model is based on the idea that sex work is work and sex workers should have the same rights as other workers.¹³⁷ The Global Network of Sex Work Projects (GNSWP) says

¹³⁵ Laura Agustin, "The (Crying) Need for Different Kinds of Research," *Sex Work Matters: Exploring Money, Power, and Intimacy in the Sex Industry* (New York: Zed Books, 2010), 63-64.

¹³⁶ Sesali Bowen, *Bad Fat Black Girl: Notes from a Trap Feminist* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2021), 181.

¹³⁷ Cheryl Overs and Bebe Loff, "Toward a legal framework that promotes and protects sex workers' health and human rights," *Health and Human Rights*, 15, no. 1 (June 2013): 192.

sex workers should have the same rights as other workers, including associate and organize; to be protected by the law; to be free from violence; to be free from discrimination; to privacy and freedom from arbitrary interference; to health; to move and migrate; and to work and have free choice of employment.¹³⁸

Whatever their disagreements on how sex work should be legalized, nearly all sex workers believe that they should have fundamental human rights just as every person does. They wish that society would realize that sex workers are fully capable of decision-making in their own lives and do not need to be “rescued” from their chosen profession. This need “to rescue” and “rehabilitate” sex workers only reinforces the discrimination and stigma that surrounds the sex industry. Erotic providers want to move within cities freely and to travel to other nations, to defend themselves against violence and threats to their health, to have the respect of fellow citizens, and to have the respect of the public servants who are supposed to protect them. They further all agree that the criminalization of sex work is a human rights issue because it disregards the fundamental principles of bodily integrity, self-determination, and sexual freedom.¹³⁹

Sex workers' movements have popped up all over the world. They are active in many countries, including Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Mexico, Nepal, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, the Philippines, Senegal, Thailand, Uruguay, and the United Kingdom. Sex worker activists everywhere are adamant that distinguishing *forced* from *voluntary* sex work is absolutely necessary and have stated as such in the First World Whores Congress, “adult prostitution resulting from the *individual decision*.” This statement

¹³⁸ Meredith Ralston, *Slut-Shaming, Whorephobia, and the Unfinished Sexual Revolution* (Chicago: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021), 157-164.

¹³⁹ Melinda Chateauvert, *Sex Workers Unite: A History of the Movement from Stonewall to Slutwalk* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013), 7.

makes all the difference to those who choose this profession as a willful decision. Adult sex workers are deeply concerned about teenagers and children turning to sex work to survive or being “turned out” by a trusted adult.¹⁴⁰

So, what demands do all sex workers agree upon? Their needs are not unreasonable. They want clean and safe places to work with the absolute right to refuse to engage in unsafe sex practices. They want to have the choice to work independently, as a collective, or with a manager. They want the right to form professional associations or organize unions when they work for others – actions that current law defines as illegal pimping, pandering, procuring, or recruiting. Sex workers want access to educational training, such as ways to prevent sexually transmitted infections, self-defense, and reduce other occupational safety and hazards. Current laws classify this type of training as a felony. They want the right to travel across state and country borders to obtain work permits on the same basis as other immigrant workers. Most of all, they want rape, sexual and physical assault, kidnapping, false imprisonment, and fraud to be enforced against the perpetrators. Sex workers should have the same support and regulations that have reduced the harm to workers in coal mines, textile and garment factories, construction sites, chemical and nuclear plants, and other hazardous work sites¹⁴¹ instead of being reduced to workplaces that are unnatural, time-bending, and boundary-warping – like dungeons, strip clubs, and brothels that are soaked in drugs, alcohol, loud music, and bad behavior.¹⁴²

SEX WORK ADVOCACY

¹⁴⁰ Priscilla Alexander, “Feminism, Sex Workers, and Human Rights,” *Whores and Other Feminists* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 92.

¹⁴¹ Priscilla Alexander, “Feminism, Sex Workers, and Human Rights,” *Whores and Other Feminists* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 93.

¹⁴² Lola Davina, *Thriving in Sex Work: Heartfelt Advice for Staying Sane in the Sex Industry* (Oakland: The Erotic as Power Press, 2017), 2.

There is still a great deal to do to improve the lives and working conditions of sex workers everywhere. Sex workers deal with violence and discrimination that have lasting effects on their education, social mobility, occupational opportunities, quality of life, and their health. Activists are highly aware of rights violations such as violence, including rape and murder, inattention to violence by the authorities, disruption of family life when sex workers are denied child custody, and discrimination by health and medical professionals or educational institutions.¹⁴³ Through advocacy, there is now an international network of sex worker organizations. Many sex workers in the industry are out of the “closet” about their work and take pride in their profession. Now, college students are becoming strippers to pay for their education without relying on educational loans. More feminist pornographers are making and distributing their work. Sex businesses owned by women supply fetish toys to not only sex workers but also women (and men) who are embracing their sexuality and the tools to satisfy their desires.¹⁴⁴

Sex worker activists want to empower their sisters to improve their working conditions by removing the stigma and preventing the elimination of their livelihood. Decriminalization of sex work would be highly beneficial so that the sex workers are not at the mercy of police or pimps and so that they could have the same legal protections, benefits, and responsibilities as other workers.¹⁴⁵ Andrea Werhun argues that when sex workers tell their own stories, it has the power to transform ignorance into wisdom and hatred into love. She’s tired of the question, “Is sex work empowering or disempowering?” This question is not posed to women in other industries. Werhun had a desk job and a farm job, which she found depressing and unfulfilling.

¹⁴³ Melissa Hope Ditmore, “Conclusion: Pushing Boundaries in Sex Work Activism and Research,” *Sex Work Matters: Exploring Money, Power, and Intimacy in the Sex Industry* (New York: Zed Books, 2010), 239-240.

¹⁴⁴ Annie Sprinkle, “We’ve Come A Long Way – And We’re Exhausted!” *Whores and Other Feminists* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 66.

¹⁴⁵ Liz Highleyman, “Professional Dominance: Power, Money, and Identity,” *Whores and Other Feminists* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 149.

She found sex work empowering; she had the time to pursue her creative interests, money to pay rent, travel, and college classes because she engaged with clients who enriched her life.¹⁴⁶

Researchers and activists have argued that the sex worker movement should merge with other stigmatized groups that deal with whorephobia and transphobia. It should come as no surprise that the LGBTQIA community continues to experience rising stigma, despite the Stonewall Rebellion in 1969. This Rebellion has been considered as the new wave of a liberation movement that changed the world for queer folks, drag kings and queens, and transgender people of all races, ethnicities, and ages.¹⁴⁷ “Stonewall was not just a riot in the streets; it marked for many the bold beginnings of a militant resistance after years of criminalization, stigma, cruelty, and hiding.”¹⁴⁸ According to Michael Bronski’s *A Queer History of the United States*, in 1984, cities such as San Francisco and New York began initiating to close down bathhouses and sex clubs, claiming that they were public health hazards. It is clear, from selective enforcement and the use of coded language, that these efforts were actually attempts to regulate sexuality rather than promote public health. The HIV/AIDS epidemic of the 1980s was used as an excuse to arrest sex workers. The inability to treat or cure HIV/AIDS caused a panic that allowed people to keep their anxiety and anger tied to the idea of unregulated sexuality.¹⁴⁹ Transgender sex workers (another example of Crenshaw’s intersectionality) experience double stigma and discrimination as sex workers and as transgender persons.

Sex worker activists can work with sex-positive feminists in the creation of a wider front for decreasing slut shaming or join with the LGBTQ movement to fight against transphobia. Sex

¹⁴⁶ Andrea Werhun, *Modern Whore: A Memoir* (South Korea: Strange Light Publishing, 2022), 156.

¹⁴⁷ Jane Fleishman, *The Stonewall Generation* (Boston: Skinner House Books, 2020), xxvi.

¹⁴⁸ Fleishman, *The Stonewall Generation*, xxxv.

¹⁴⁹ Michael Bronski, *A Queer History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011), 227.

workers and LGBTQ people are stigmatized sexual minorities who are constructed as marginal. These groups can form a common ground in claiming sexual citizenship and the protection of their sexual rights, such as the right to sexual privacy, civil partnerships, and consensual sex without intervention from the state. By connecting the fight for the right to work with the battle against whorephobia, racism, transphobia, and homophobia, it is possible to connect sexual labor with race, gender, class, and sexual orientation.¹⁵⁰ According to Bronski, “securing legal equality under United States law has been the major project of the LGBTQIA movement; it is a traditional American approach to acceptance and freedom.”¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Marie-Louise Janssen, “Sex work activism and intersectionality: the role of stigma in uniting sex workers,” *Reconfiguring Stigma in Studies of Sex for Sale* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 94.

¹⁵¹ Bronski, *A Queer History of the United States*, 238.

CONCLUSION

Patriarchal ideology values and justifies male dominance and female subordination. The negative impact of this ideology centers on women, such as the gender pay gap, limited reproduction rights, gender-based violence, gender inequality, and limited opportunities for women. Meanwhile, men gain more power and privilege without any negative outcome. Much of the patriarchal society in the United States perceives women having sex as “bad” or a “threat” outside of marriage, because women are not controlled by another man.

. This narrow-minded society teaches girls and women that their bodies are not their own – they exist solely for a man’s pleasure (as a whore) and to procreate (as a wife). It seems that the patriarchy believes that girls and women should not explore their bodies or masturbate – after all, they are not supposed to like having sex (according to 20th century ideology). If a man has sex with someone other than his wife, he is either praised for “spreading his seed around” or it is ignored (see Engels, 32). When a man brought home a venereal disease to his wife, *she* was to blame because women with a “pure heart” cannot contract the disease according to popular folklore mentioned in chapter two. These patriarchal values are still oozing into today’s culture and society despite women having the ability to live on their own terms. The values have remained the same even though our society is different from the twentieth century. Women can vote, drive, have a checking account or credit card without a man’s signature, own a home, have birth control options, and so much more. So why conform to an outdated, oppressive society in the progressive twenty-first century? They do not match, and we must first unravel this stigma surrounding the female body to make any progress in releasing the stigma around sex work. The good girl/bad girl dichotomy is related to sex work conversations and is heavily influenced by the patriarchy. Slut-shaming and whorephobia allow societal approval to shame, taunt, and marginalize women who refuse to conform to traditional gender roles. By shaming the sexually

active “bad girls”, society is allowed to mistreat them and, by extension, control the behaviors of the “good girl.” Women are taught to be extra mindful of where and how they walk, talk, and dress to avoid mistaken intent. Men are not trained to do this; in fact, they *blame* the woman for appearing “too sexy” and men not being able to resist the temptation.

Sex work came to Oklahoma in 1889 when Anne Wynn established a red-light district in downtown Oklahoma City known as Hell’s Half-Acre. While Anne was setting up shop and paying bribes to authorities, the temperance societies wanted to activate the Moral Purity Movement and get rid of the Social Evil, made up of sex work, gambling, and alcohol. The men who sided with the temperance societies wanted to control “fallen women.” In contrast, their wives wanted sex workers gone because husbands purchased their services and brought home sexually transmitted diseases. The influence of temperance societies, with the help of Carry Nation, led to Oklahoma’s statehood condition of banning alcohol in 1907. Anne tried to continue with business, but lawsuits and a fire in one of her brothels dried up her financial resources. After the temperance societies won their victory with prohibition, they set out to rid other vices such as sex work and gambling. They managed to push out sex workers by influencing legislation to pass the Mann Act of 1910. Even in 1910, gambling was illegal, and now there are restrictions enforced as set forth by Commercial Gambling in Oklahoma 2024, Title 21, §21-982. Alcohol is also legal, as prohibition ended in 1959. When will we follow suit to Nevada and legalize sex work? Even if federal law approves of sex work as a profession, it is unlikely that Oklahoma will adopt the same law because the state is in the Bible Belt and is primarily Republican. However, that will not stop sex workers from making money while expressing their sexual freedom.

Modern sex work in Oklahoma entails more than just being a streetwalker or an escort. Thanks to modern technology, sex workers can utilize phone apps and websites to engage with the public in a no-contact situation, which is extremely beneficial for them during an epidemic, such as COVID (2019) and the measles (2025). Many online sex workers are expanding their business to include fetishes, cosplay, and toys. The old saying “sex sells” is very accurate and highly marketable. The sex industry has also expanded to include porn stars, cam girls, and domination to cater to the “specialties” of the ever-expanding client list. Modern sex practices have also led to the creation of “sisterhoods,” where women share experiences, blacklists, and dangers related to the field.

These sisterhoods are a lifeline for those in the industry. Sex workers experience a “civil death” upon exposure and fear discrimination, harassment, excommunication, eviction, custodial rights, abuse, theft, rape, and murder. When exposed, clients are jailed or required to attend a tax-deductible John School. The sex industry is so stigmatized that retired sex workers often hide their work history, which creates challenges for advertising their transferable skills, such as client management strategies, negotiation, interpersonal communication, sales, organization, marketing, website management, teamwork, and money management.

Sex worker activists want legislation protecting sex workers as they do their jobs. Their demands and needs are not unreasonable. They want a clean and safe workplace with the absolute right to refuse to engage in unsafe sex practices. They want to form professional associations or unions. They want access to educational training to prevent sexually transmitted diseases, self-defense, and reduce other occupational safety and hazards. Most of all, they want rape, sexual and physical assault, kidnapping, false imprisonment, and fraud to be enforced against the perpetrators. Sex workers deal with violence and discrimination that have lasting

effects on their education, social mobility, occupational opportunities, quality of life, and their health. It seems like a small thing to ask to be protected the same way as everyone else in the workforce.

More research is required to establish human rights for everyone, regardless of sex and class. We need to start seeing sex workers as human beings, and not the Social Evil claimed by people who have been dead for decades. Researchers and activists argue that sex workers should merge with other marginalized groups, such as the LGBTQIA+ community, who experience double the stigma and discrimination as sex workers and transgender persons. By uniting these groups, they can form a common ground in claiming sexual citizenship, protection of sexual rights, sexual privacy, civil partnerships, and consensual sex without governmental intervention. Connecting battles against whorephobia, transphobia, homophobia, and racism will connect sexual labor with race, gender, class, and sexual orientation.

APPENDIX A: SEX WORKERS AND THEIR STORIES

This section details the reasons why these women chose to enter the sex industry. These are actual stories of sex workers taken from memoirs and narratives. None of these women were forced into the sex industry, they simply want to share their stories in the hopes of better understanding from those not in the industry. Some of these women opted not to share their location for fear of retribution and possible “civil death”.

Breanna is a sex worker in a Nevada brothel while she goes to community college. She felt she had two personas: a civilian persona and a work persona; she was afraid to let these personas blend. She did not want the clients to know too much about the “real” her, and she feared the stigmatized judgment of her family, friends, and peers. She isn’t ashamed of her profession but carries the societal shame that has repressed her occupation. Breanna gets to choose her hourly rate of \$800-\$1250 for the first year as a sex worker, and the most she made for one client session was \$24,000.¹⁵²

Lacey is a retired sex worker who started working at a brothel to help with school. She continued this occupation because she couldn’t pay all her bills with a regular job. She found an incredible support system in the brothel sisterhood and continues to miss them. She doesn’t believe that prostitution is trafficking – she had a choice to be there and left the profession when it no longer suited her.¹⁵³

Kate came from a perfect family background in South America and became a sex worker in her late 30s. As a sex worker, she was able to buy a house, a car, and property to build an

¹⁵² Breanna Mohr, *Sex and Stigma: Stories of Everyday Life in Nevada’s Legal Brothels* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 81-94.

¹⁵³ Sarah Jane Blithe, Anna Wiederhold Wolfe, and Breanna Mohr, *Sex and Stigma: Stories of Everyday Life in Nevada’s Legal Brothels* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 96-101.

apartment building. She states that she is not bothered by the stigma surrounding her occupation because society doesn't pay her bills.¹⁵⁴

Carrie is a former teacher who entered sex work in her late 40s. She became intrigued by being a brothel sex worker when she attended college in Amsterdam. These days, she is still a sex worker but prefers to be independent and doesn't work in a brothel. She works just one week a month to pay for her child's college education. She is married and open with her husband about her profession; when people find out about her occupation, they often think that her husband is her pimp simply because he's black. She wishes that sex work were legal and feels that the United States is still so based on religion and, by extension, represses sexuality in general.¹⁵⁵

Jodie got into sex work when a guy in a coffee shop said he owned a karaoke bar and that she could make \$500 a day; she made \$600 her first night just by flirting with the customers. Her regular clients eventually became her sugar daddies, and they made her feel like an American geisha. Jodie wanted to be a hooker despite the horror stories she heard from escorts – one of her friends was kidnapped by a pimp, chained to a bed, and raped by ten guys every day. They injected her with drugs, and when they were done with her, they dropped her off in an underpass without shoes. Jodie eventually left the brothel when she saw a Craigslist ad for an exotic dancer. She has worked there for three years and earns about \$1,000 a night – triple what she did in a brothel and doesn't have to pay fees or brothel upkeep. She says dancing is safer and only works

¹⁵⁴ Sarah Jane Blithe, Anna Wiederhold Wolfe, and Breanna Mohr, *Sex and Stigma: Stories of Everyday Life in Nevada's Legal Brothels* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 102-104.

¹⁵⁵ Sarah Jane Blithe, Anna Wiederhold Wolfe, and Breanna Mohr, *Sex and Stigma: Stories of Everyday Life in Nevada's Legal Brothels* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 104-112.

up to six hours daily. Jodie states that sex workers need to be treated like regular workers and deserve the right to work in a safe environment.¹⁵⁶

Sesali Bowen began sex work for the money, and with the help of her networks and sisterhoods, she was able to build her brand and market herself as a black plus-size erotic provider. Many of her clients wanted to relish a lack of control – she misses being mean to white men for money. Other clients were just too busy to commit to dating. She insists that decriminalizing sex work would make it safer for sex workers to do their jobs and even help the police to stop forced sex trafficking. She says that sex work offers women the opportunity for financial freedom and personal growth.¹⁵⁷

Lola Davina has worked as a sex worker in porn sets, dungeons, brothels, sex parties, upscale hotels, and client apartments. Today, she has an M.A. in Human Sexuality Studies and an M.S. in Nonprofit Fundraising; she did her master's thesis on sex work and Social Contact Theory. She advocates that sex work is definitely emotional labor – their job manages the stress, anxiety, anguish, loneliness, lust, and rage of their clients and sex workers. She sees sex as a normal human function and not intrinsically evil or dirty in any way. Sex work in all its forms, including full service, should be legal. Yet at the same time, she believes that there should be fully enforced laws against anyone who profits off someone else's sexuality without their consent – nonconsensual sex work is commodified rape. Lola states that stigma keeps sex workers from living out in the open for fear the straight world will judge them as out of control, lazy, stupid,

¹⁵⁶ Sarah Jane Blithe, Anna Wiederhold Wolfe, and Breanna Mohr, *Sex and Stigma: Stories of Everyday Life in Nevada's Legal Brothels* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 116-124.

¹⁵⁷ Sesali Bowen, *Bad Fat Black Girl: Notes from a Trap Feminist* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2021), 172, 181.

uneducated, flaky, sex-crazed, addicted, diseased, and worthless. These negative stereotypes stick to sex workers, but many people outside the industry fit these descriptions.¹⁵⁸

Vicky Funari works as a peepshow sex worker because she needs money. She chose the job for research for a feminist discussion of sex work. She states that the most challenging part of the job was maintaining the sex worker persona and her true self. She has to construct a being who can see and observe but cannot respond or feel. This separation of her personas has led her to view her regular life as a performance checklist, including her sex life. Even during activities such as driving around, working on her film, and washing dishes, sex enters her mind as a chore, a pointless effort, a performance. This perspective is pretty standard among sex workers who struggle to separate their personas.¹⁵⁹

Nina Hartley began her journey as a porn star and stated that her life is richer and more rewarding for having chosen a sexually oriented occupation. She warns those entering the sex industry that it isn't for the faint of heart and the genuine negatives, such as social and familial repercussions of joining a stigmatized segment of the population, the temptation to spend money as fast as it comes in, the exposure to the seamier side of life, and the difficulty in creating or maintaining intimate, romantic relationships. Once she was elected to the board of directors for the Free Speech Coalition – an organization dedicated to fighting censorship and working toward change in the sex industry – she led many activities, including maintaining a public database of current and past censorship cases, finding a group health insurance carrier for FSC members; supporting store owners whenever possible in their local censorship battles; providing funding

¹⁵⁸ Lola Davina, *Thriving in Sex Work: Heartfelt Advice for Staying Sane in the Sex Industry* (Oakland: The Erotic as Power Press, 2017), 1, 9, 54.

¹⁵⁹ Vicky Funari, "Naked, Naughty, Nasty: Peepshow Reflections," *Whores and Other Feminists* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 25-31.

and setting industry guidelines for HIV testing for performers; and conducting outreach to performers regarding mental/physical health, talent/management relations, and counseling.¹⁶⁰

Liz Highleyman did not fall into sex work because she lacked alternatives. Being a professional dominatrix would be exciting, anti-establishment, enjoyable, educational, and fun. The most interesting and valuable aspect of this sex work is the insight it gave her into human behavior – how people think and what makes them tick. Each type of sex work in the industry is a sexual anthropologist's dream. She had the opportunity to observe and participate in a vast array of sexual fantasies and behaviors. She enjoyed working in an atmosphere in which sex, gender, relationships, and sexuality are topics of everyday discussion. Sex work is a portable career that allows one to travel, move around at will, and have flexible hours and generous time off. She found that a considerable number of clients wrestle with feelings of guilt, self-hatred, and shame about their “perverse” sexual desires. She was able to take on the role of a sex therapist and let her clients know that such desires are normal, acceptable, and worthy of expression. Regardless of their desires, such permission and safety help them shed layers of shame and guilt, permitting clients to enjoy their predilections and regard them with a more relaxed clarity.¹⁶¹

Lucy, a sex worker in Chicago, chose her profession, and she does not feel exploited, degraded, or desperate. Her work empowers her, and she is an advocate of female sexuality, pleasure, and sex positivity. Sex workers like Lucy have a two-hour minimum and make \$200 an hour. She has avoided bad dates for the eighteen years she's been busy, mainly because she

¹⁶⁰ Nina Hartley, “In the Flesh: A Porn Star's Journey,” *Whores and Other Feminists* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 58-59.

¹⁶¹ Liz Highleyman, “Professional Dominance: Power, Money, and Identity,” *Whores and Other Feminists* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 146, 151, 155.

screens, gets references, and has many regulars. For first-time clients, she gets their credit card information, phone numbers, and employment information before she meets them in a hotel room. Lucy has made some observations based on her experience as to why people buy sex. At the top of the list is the ease of negotiation – no multiple dinners, courting, or marriage proposals to get their sexual needs or even brief emotional or intimate needs met. It's a physical stress release. The importance of sex work as emotional labor cannot be measured. Amanda, a sex worker in Lucy's network, says that about twenty to twenty-five percent of her clients don't even want to have sex; they want a conversation and a hug. It breaks her heart.¹⁶²

¹⁶² Meredith Ralston, *Slut-Shaming. Whorephobia, and the Unfinished Sexual Revolution* (Chicago: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021), 20, 96, 107, 117.

APPENDIX B: TERMS FOR SEX WORKERS AND BROTHELS

SEX WORKERS

1. Soiled doves
2. Desert maidens
3. Frail sisters
4. Fallen women
5. Fille de Joie
6. Fair cyprians
7. Nymphé du pave
8. Lewd woman
9. Queen of the night
10. Abandoned woman
11. Painted ladies
12. Laundresses (military camps)
13. Hooker
14. Courtesan
15. Madam
16. Streetwalker
17. Call girl
18. Siren
19. Floozy
20. Temptress
21. Chippie
22. Escort
23. Bawd
24. Harlot
25. Lady of the evening
26. Working girl
27. Camp follower
28. Scarlet woman
29. Lady of pleasure
30. Sporting woman
31. Dolly mop
32. Whore
33. Prostitute
34. Sex worker¹⁶³

BROTHELS

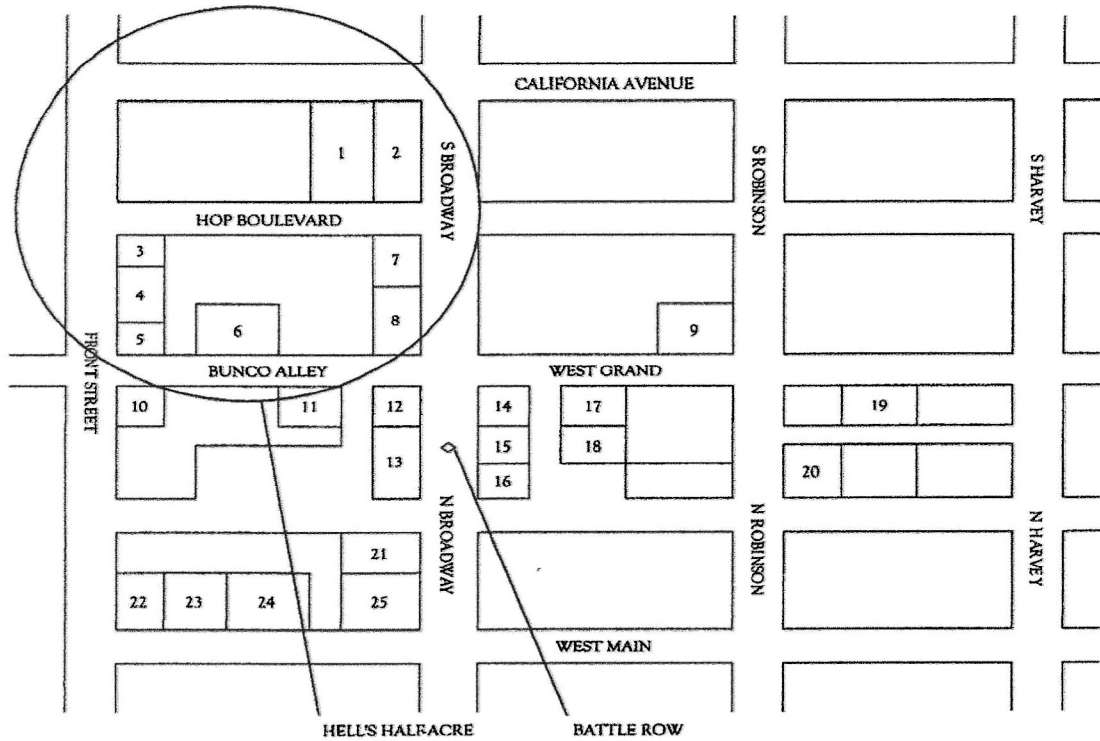
1. Sporting houses
2. Bawdy houses
3. Cat wagon (traveling brothel)
4. Bordellos
5. Saloons
6. Gambling houses
7. Cathouse
8. Disorderly house
9. Bagnio
10. Stew
11. Harem
12. Crib
13. Massage parlor
14. Seraglio
15. Call house
16. Red-light district
17. House of ill repute
18. Knocking shop
19. Creep joint
20. Gentlemen's clubs
21. House with red doors
22. Joy house¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ "Sex worker," Merriam-Webster.com, April 12, 2025, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/sex%20worker>.

¹⁶⁴ "Brothel," Merriam-Webster.com, April 12, 2025, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/brothel>.

APPENDIX C: HELL'S HALF ACRE MAP

Downtown Oklahoma City, 1889-1907



- 1 – Red Onion Saloon
- 2 – Rattlesnake Jake's Saloon
- 3 – Kid Bannister's Bank
- 4 – Big Anne Wynn's Tent
- 5 – John Burgess's Club
- 6 – Southern Club
- 7 – Cottonwood de Bastille
- 8 – First Courthouse Shack
- 9 – Overholser Opera House (1st)
- 10 – Blue Front Saloon
- 11 – Billingsley's Place
- 12 – The Vendome
- 13 – Commercial Saloon
- 14 – City Hall North

- 15 – Two John's Saloon
- 16 – Black and Rogers Saloon
- 17 – Orient Saloon
- 18 – Police Station and County Jail (1st)
- 19 – Overholser Theater
- 20 – OKC Athletic Club
- 21 – Lee Hotel
- 22 – Post Office (1st)
- 23 – City Council Headquarters (1st)
- 24 – Arlington Club
- 25 – First Bank

Aaron Lee Bachhofer II, "The Emergence and Evolution of the Gay and Bisexual Male Subculture in Oklahoma, 1889-2005," OKEQ Project, 2006.

APPENDIX D: FOLK MEDICINE FOR 20TH CENTURY WOMEN

This section illustrates the historical methods that women utilized to maintain their health. These common herbs were likely used in early twentieth century by women, regardless of race, class, ethnicities, or age.

1. Mugwort

- Native to Europe, Asia, and Africa
- Medicinal uses: regulate menstruation and stimulate uterine contractions; treat digestive issues such as indigestion, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.¹⁶⁵

2. Pennyroyal

- Native to Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East
- Medicinal uses: historically used as an abortifacient; to relieve menstrual cramps, digestive issues, respiratory problems, and used as an insect repellent.¹⁶⁶

3. Rue

- Native to the Balkan Peninsula
- Medicinal uses: historically used as an abortifacient; sometimes applied directly to skin to treat arthritis, dislocations, sprains, bone injuries, headaches, tumors, and warts.¹⁶⁷

4. Black Hellebore

- Native to the Middle East
- Poisonous
- Medicinal uses: cancer, nausea, worms, and irregular periods.¹⁶⁸

5. Mistletoe

- Native to Europe and Asia

¹⁶⁵ "Mugwort," *National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health*, January 2021, <https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/mugwort>.

¹⁶⁶ "Pennyroyal," RX List.com, April 12, 2025, <https://www.rxlist.com/supplements/pennyroyal.htm>.

¹⁶⁷ "Rue," Drugs.com, July 22, 2024, <https://www.drugs.com/npp/rue.html>.

¹⁶⁸ "Hellebore," *American Herbal Products Association*, April 2024, https://www.ahpa.org/herbs_in_history_hellebore.

- Medicinal uses: improve circulation and lower blood pressure, respiratory symptoms, depression, and anxiety.¹⁶⁹

6. Savin

- Native to Europe and Asia
- Poisonous
- Medicinal uses: historically used as an abortifacient; for genital warts, and infection of the intestines by parasites.¹⁷⁰

7. Foxglove

- Native to Europe, Western Asia, and northwestern Africa
- Potentially toxic
- Medicinal uses: contains digoxin; heart failure, irregular heartbeat, epilepsy, tuberculosis, constipation, headache, and to cause vomiting.¹⁷¹

8. Queen Anne's lace

- Native to the western hemisphere in the U.S.
- Medicinal uses: aids digestive issues, treats skin infections, seeds used as a contraceptive¹⁷²

9. Bloodroot

- Native to eastern North America
- Poisonous
- Medicinal uses: treat skin conditions, pain relief, and anti-inflammatory. It was believed to have blood-purifying properties and was used to treat various ailments.¹⁷³

10. Aconite

- Native to mountainous parts
- Toxic roots and tubers

¹⁶⁹ "Mistletoe Extracts," *National Cancer Institute*, June 21, 2023, <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment/cam/patient/mistletoe-pdq>.

¹⁷⁰ "Savin tops," *RX List.com*, April 12, 2025, https://www.rxlist.com/supplements/savin_tops.htm.

¹⁷¹ "Foxglove," *American Herbal Products Association*, May 2023, https://www.ahpa.org/herbs_in_history/foxglove.

¹⁷² Visser Meagan, "Queen Anne's Lace Part II: Traditional Use of *Daucus Carota*," *Herbal Academy.com*, October 1, 2020, <https://theherbalacademy.com/blog/daucus-carota-traditional-use/#:~:text=It's%20even%20been%20said%20that,gas%2C%20and%20have%20antiseptic%20properties..>

¹⁷³ Mary L. Predny and James L. Chamberlain, *Bloodroot, Sanguinaria canadensis: An Annotated Bibliography*, 12, https://www.srs.fs.usda.gov/pubs/gtr/gtr_srs086.pdf.

- Medicinal uses: treat migraine pain, reduce fevers, slow heart rate, diarrhea, edema, and some gynecological disorders.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ "Aconite," *Review of Natural Products*, July 2009, <https://www.drugs.com/npc/aconite.html>.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY

- Alexander, Priscilla. "Feminism, Sex Workers, and Human Rights." *Whores and Other Feminists*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Almodovar, Norma Jean. "Working It." *Whores and Other Feminists*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- "All Officers favor Army Canteen." *The Oklahoman*. October 10, 1905.
- "Back in Time: Hell's Half Acre." PBS/OETA. July 14, 2022. 27 minutes, 44 seconds.
- Bernard, Alisa. "Surviving Prostitution: Violence was my experience." World Without Exploitation. July 13, 2017. <https://crosscut.com/2017/07/seattle-prostitution-survivor-violence-police-sting>.
- Blithe, Sarah Jane, Anna Wiederhold Wolfe, and Breanna Mohr. *Sex and Stigma: Stories of Everyday Life in Nevada's Legal Brothels*. New York: New York University Press, 2019.
- Bowen, Sesali. *Bad Fat Black Girl: Notes from a Trap Feminist*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 2021. Kindle edition.
- Davina, Lola. *Thriving in Sex Work: Heartfelt Advice for Staying Sane in the Sex Industry*. Oakland: The Erotic as Power Press, 2017.
- Dudash, Tawnya. "Peepshow Feminism." *Whores and Other Feminists*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Elwell, Greg. "Cover story: *Red Dog* documentary chronicles a childhood spent in one of OKC's longest-running strip clubs." *Oklahoma Gazette*. April 21, 2017.
- Farley, Tim. "Sex-for-hire sinks to pre-boom level, police say." *The Oklahoman*. March 26, 1990.
- Funari, Vicky. "Naked, Naughty, Nasty: Peep Show Reflections." *Whores and Other Feminists*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- "Girl Ruined By Violence." *The Oklahoman*. February 4, 1903.
- Goodson, Teri. "A Prostitute Joins NOW." *Whores and Other Feminists*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Greenwood, Bryn. "Sex work encompasses more than what we see on TV, and it saved me from poverty." *The Lily*. August 27, 2019. <https://www.thelily.com/sex-work-encompasses-more-than-what-we-see-on-tv-and-it-saved-me-from-poverty/>.
- Hartley, Nina. "In the flesh: A Porn Star's Journey." *Whores and Other Feminists*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Highleyman, Liz. "Professional Dominance: Power, Money, and Identity." *Whores and Other Feminists*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Jackman, Norman, Richard O'Toole, and Gilbert Geis. "The Self-Image of the Prostitute." *The Sociological Quarterly*, vol. 4 (Spring 1963): 150-161.

- Johnson, James, director. *American Courtesans*. Gravitas Ventures Studio. 2013. Pluto TV.
- “Lake Hefner: Stars and Stripes Park and Hobie Point.” *Listings.cruisingforsex.com*. September 17, 2024.
- Leigh, Carol. “Inventing Sex Work.” *Whores and Other Feminists*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- MacInnes, Teresa, and Kent Nason, directors. *Buying Sex*. Gravitas Ventures Studio. 2013. Pluto TV.
- McDonnell, Brandy. “Oklahoma Native Luke Dick’s documentary ‘Red Dog,’ about the rowdy 1980s OKC strip club, to premiere at SXSW.” *The Oklahoman*. January 17, 2019.
- McRill, Albert. *This Land*, vol. 4, issue 22. November 15, 2013.
- Morgan, Andy. “‘Trolls’ Replace Straights as Primary Threat to Park Gays.” *The Oklahoman*. May 27, 1984.
- “Moral Clean-Up Needed by City.” *The Oklahoman*. February 24, 1913.
- Nagle, Jill, editor. *Whores and Other Feminists*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Nipper, Clara. “Sex in the City.” *This Land*. October 8, 2011.
- Overs, Cheryl, and Bebe Loff. “Toward a legal framework that promotes and protects sex workers’ health and human rights.” *Health and Human Rights*, vol. 25 (June 2013): 186-196.
- Owen, Penny. “Prostitution sting brings 107 arrests.” *The Oklahoman*. July 2, 1993.
- “Police: OKC Park infamous for casual sex.” *News on 6*. May 11, 2012.
- Queen, Carol. “Sex Radical Politics, Sex-Positive Feminist Thought, and Whore Stigma.” *Whores and Other Feminists*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Red Dog*. Dir. Casey Pinkston. Cleveland: Gravitas Ventures. 2019. One hour 42 minutes.
- Reed, Stacy. “All Stripped Off.” *Whores and Other Feminists*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Schaffauser, Thierry. “Whorephobia affects all women.” *The Guardian*. June 23, 2010.
- Sheiner, Marcy. “Odyssey of a Feminist Pornographer.” *Whores and Other Feminists*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Sprinkle, Annie. “We’ve come a long way – and we’re exhausted!” *Whores and Other Feminists*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Werhun, Andrea. *Modern Whore: A Memoir*. South Korea: Strange Light Publishing, 2022.
- West, Natalie. *We Too: Essays on Sex Work and Survival*. New York: University of New York, 2021.

SECONDARY

- Agustín, Laura. "The (crying) need for different kinds of research." *Sex Work Matters: Exploring Money, Power, and Intimacy in the Sex Industry*. New York: Zed Books, 2010.
- Alexander, Priscilla. "Prostitution: Still a Difficult Issue for Feminists," in *Sex Work: Writings by Women in the Sex Industry*, edited by Frédérique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander. San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1998. Kindle.
- Armstrong, Lynzi. "From social deviant to equal citizen?" *Reconfiguring Stigma in Studies of Sex for Sale*. New York: Routledge, 2022.
- Bachhofer II, Aaron Lee. "The Emergence and Evolution of the Gay and Bisexual Male Subculture in Oklahoma, 1889-2005." OKEQ History Project. 2006.
- "Back in Time: Hell's Half Acre." PBS/OETA. July 14, 2022. 27 minutes, 44 seconds.
- Berthe, Paul. "The Stigmatization Behind Sex Work." May 4, 2018.
<https://www.socialconnectedness.org/the-stigmatization-behind-sex-work/>.
- Bjønness, Jeanett, Lorraine Nencel, and May-Len Skilbrei, editors. *Reconfiguring Stigma in Studies of Sex for Sale*. New York: Routledge, 2022.
- Blochowiak, Mary Ann. "Woman with a hatchet: Carry Nation comes to Oklahoma Territory." *Oklahoma Historical Society*. 1981.
<https://gateway.okhistory.org/ark:/67531/metadc2031396/>
- Branson, Richard. "Sex Workers Rights Movement Timeline History." *International Union of Sex Workers*. October 5, 2023.
- Brents, Barbara and Kathryn Hausbeck. "Sex work now: what the blurring of boundaries around the sex industry means for sex work, research, and activism." *Sex Work Matters: Exploring Money, Power, and Intimacy in the Sex Industry*. New York: Zed Books, 2010.
- Bronski, Michael. *A Queer History of the United States*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2011.
- Campbell, Denele. "Gambling and Prostitution." Wordpress blog. November 1, 2017.
- Chateauvert, Melinda. *Sex Workers Unite: A History of the Movement from Stonewall to Slutwalk*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2013.
- Collins, Jan Mackell. *Brothels, Bordellos, and Bad Girls: Prostitution in Colorado, 1860-1930*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "The urgency of intersectionality." TEDTalk. San Francisco, California. October 27, 2016. 18 minutes, 49 seconds.
https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality?language=en.
- Ditmore, Melissa Hope, Antonia Levy, and Alys Willman, editors. *Sex Work Matters: Exploring Money, Power, and Intimacy in the Sex Industry*. New York: Zed Books, 2010.

- Farley, Melissa, and Emily Butler. "Prostitution and Trafficking-Quick Facts." Prostitution Research and Education. www.prostitutionresearch.com.
- Farris, David. "Big Anne Wynn and Hell's Half Acre." Edmondlifeandleisure.com. September 17, 2024.
- Fleishman, Jane. *The Stonewall Generation*. Boston: Skinner House Books, 2020.
- Franklin, J.L. "The fight for prohibition in Oklahoma Territory. *Social Science Quarterly*, vol. 49, no. 4. March 1969. P. 876-885.
- Fuchs, Erin. "7 reasons why America should legalize prostitution." *Business Insider*. November 13, 2013.
- Hart, Gabe, Andrew Allen, Bonnie St. Aubyn, and Jonathan Mason. "Exploring the relationships between internalized stigma, loneliness, and mental well-being among sex workers. *Sexuality and Culture*, vol. 27. P. 191-210. July 29, 2022.
- "Hell's Half Acre." OKCHistory.com. August 3, 2009.
- Highleyman, Liz. "Professional Dominance: Power, Money, and Identity." *Whores and Other Feminists*. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Hudson, Marilyn. *Tall of Hell's Half-Acre*. Norman: Whorl Books, 2011.
- Jackson, Crystal and Barbara Brents. "Why decriminalizing sex work is good for all women." *Ms. Magazine*. November 1, 2010.
- Janssen, Marie-Louise. "Sex work activism and intersectionality: the role of stigma in uniting sex workers." *Reconfiguring Stigma in Studies of Sex for Sale*. New York: Routledge, 2022.
- Jenkins, J. Philip. "prostitution." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 31, 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/prostitution>.
- Koster, Katherine. "17 Facts about Sexual Violence and Sex Work." December 4, 2015. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/16-facts-about-sexual-ass_b_8711720.
- Lake, Jaboa. "Social Identities, self-perception, and the stigmatization of female prostitutes." *UC Merced Undergraduate Research Journal*, 5 (1). 2013. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5070/M451020766> Retrieved from <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2vd0d2h2>
- MacKell, Jan. *Brothels, Bordellos, and Bad Girls: Prostitution in Colorado, 1860-1930*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004.
- McLachlan, Asha. "Sex Trafficking as Domestic Violence." *New York University Journal of Legislation & Public Policy*. May 19, 2021. <https://nyujlpp.org/quorum/mclachlan-sex-trafficking-as-domestic-violence/>.
- Monroe, Jaquelyn PhD. "Women in Street Prostitution: The Result of Poverty and the Brunt of Inequity." *Taylor & Francis* online. October 12, 2008. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1300/J134v09n03_04.

- Orenstein, Peggy. *Girls and Sex: Navigating the Complicated New Landscape*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2016.
- Petro, Melissa. "Selling Sex: Women's Participation in the Sex Industry." *Sex Work Matters: Exploring Money, Power, and Intimacy in the Sex Industry*. New York: Zed Books, 2010.
- Parreira, Christina. "The lady and the tramp: management of stigma in the Nevada brothel." *Reconfiguring Stigma in Studies of Sex for Sale*. New York: Routledge, 2022.
- ProCon.org. "What Are the Different Types of Prostitution?" Britannica ProCon.Org. April 23, 2008. <https://prostitution.procon.org/questions/what-are-the-different-types-of-prostitution/>.
- "Prostitution." University of Minnesota Library. Accessed February 8, 2023. <https://open.lib.umn.edu/socialproblems/chapter/9-4-prostitution/>.
- "Prostitution." Phillips and Associates. April 10, 2023. <https://www.oklahoma-criminal-defense.com/crimes/prostitution-lawyer>
- Ralston, Meredith. *Shut-Shaming, Whorephobia, and the Unfinished Sexual Revolution*. Chicago: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2021.
- Rosen, Ruth. *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1918*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982.
- Rutter, Michael. *Upstairs Girls: Prostitution in the American West*. Helena: Farcountry Press, 2005.
- Sanders-McDonagh, Erin. "Prostitution and the politics of respectability: sex work, stigma, and representations of the Other." *Reconfiguring Stigma in Studies of Sex for Sale*. New York: Routledge, 2022.
- Stewart, Roy P. *Born Grown: An OKC History*. Oklahoma City: Metro Press, Inc., 1974.
- Williams, Mary Elizabeth Williams. "Consent Alone is a Low Bar for Sex." March 28, 2016. https://www.salon.com/2016/03/28/consent_alone_is_a_low_bar_for_sex_we_have_become_more_comfortable_talking_about_girls_victimization_than_girls_pleasure/
- Willman, Alys and Antonia Levy. "Introduction: Beyond the Sex in Sex Work." *Sex Work Matters: Exploring Money, Power, and Intimacy in the Sex Industry*. New York: Zed Books, 2010.
- Wynter, Sarah. "Whisper: Women Hurt in Systems of Prostitution Engaged in Revolt," in *Sex Work: Writings by Women in the Sex Industry*, edited by Frédérique Delacoste and Priscilla Alexander. San Francisco: Cleis Press, 1998. Kindle.