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### Anti-Sex Trade Turns to Focus on Men Who Buy Sex

By Alizah Salario  
 WeNews correspondent  
 Monday, April 18, 2011

A legal shift in looking at the men who pay for sex is a new focus for anti-sex trafficking activists. The strategy has led to changes in state legislation and educational programs at a growing number of "john schools."

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(WOMENSENEWS)--When Marian Hatcher speaks to men who pay for sex, she tells them about the guy who used her as his punching bag for hours on end, long after she became bruised and bloodied.

"All he wanted to do was hit me," said Hatcher.

A college degree and 17 years of working in a corporate job didn't make Hatcher immune to the perils of sex trafficking after an abusive marriage led her to drugs and eventually to prostitution.

"Suddenly I didn't even know who I was," she said. "My story proves that it could happen to anyone."

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Police officers arrest a perpetrator for engaging in transactional sex.

Credit: Courtesy of Cook County Sheriff's Office, Women's Justice Program, in Chicago.

Now an executive assistant to Cook County Sheriff Thomas J. Dart in the Women's Justice Program in Chicago, Hatcher is dedicated to shifting the punishment for sex trafficking from suppliers to buyers, or "johns."

"Historically, the supplier has been the one punitively handled in the criminal justice system and the john would just get a slap on the wrist," said Hatcher.

That began to change when the first school for johns, know as the First Offender Prostitution Program, opened in San Francisco in the mid-1990s.

Today, approximately 40 john schools serving 50 communities exist nationwide. Though "john school" is the generic term for educational programs for men who engage in transactional sex, each course has its own formal title, such as Chicago's Ammend Program.

By educating men on the consequences of soliciting sex--both for themselves and for sex workers--advocates say these programs raise awareness on the ramifications of sex trafficking and reduce recidivism. The reason behind educating men who pay for sex, says Hatcher, is simple: if there were no customers, there'd be no prostitution.

### Judge Weighs Options

In Illinois, men who are arrested for soliciting sex must pay a fine of as much as \$1000. It's up to the judge to determine if men will be given the option to attend a day-long john school course and then pay a smaller fine. If they do attend the course, the arrest is expunged from their record, according Rachel Durchslag, executive director of the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation.

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The courses don't have their own dedicated buildings and usually take place in multi-use spaces. Education varies across the country, but the core curriculum consists of information about the health and legal consequences of prostitution, the dynamics of pimping and the effects on families and communities. Survivor testimonies also figure significantly.

"You have to personalize it," said Hatcher, who always reminds men who engage in transactional sex that she could be their sister or daughter.

Legislation is also driving the shift toward combating the demand side of prostitution.

Illinois is among a handful of states with a "safe harbor" law that protects underage sex workers from legal consequences.

In Texas, the state legislature voted last month to make it a felony to force children into prostitution and to require anyone convicted of sex trafficking to register as a sex offender. The Georgia House recently voted in favor of higher fines and longer sentences for pimps and johns.

Education at john schools has also evolved, and some locations have started to focus on why men solicit prostitutes in the first place.

"What we're seeing now is this idea of looking at constructs of masculinity," said Durchslag.

She said the schools are debunking myths linking prostitution and manliness and the fantasy notion that a "real man can have sex with beautiful woman anytime he wants."

Durchslag also noted that john schools are educating men on why most women enter prostitution. Many have limited resources and substance abuses issues, and johns perpetuate sex work as a means of supporting their habits as long as they're waiting with their wallets.

"Maybe they're not a physically violent john, but they're helping a violent industry," she said. "John schools look at it [prostitution] as a male demand-driven power relationship."

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**Submitted by sarajane (16 hours ago)**

The real issue with **sex trafficking** is that prostitution is still illegal. This creates a black market. Once it is legalized you end the black market (like drugs). By just arresting people all this does is put a bandaid on the issue.

Sara

<http://istoptraffic.com>

**Submitted by Janet (18 hours ago)**

In response to both the article and the first comment, the problem for good-will workers of all kinds is that terrible problems are ever continuing; that does not trivialize the very important and valuable work done to help people who are victimized, wherever and however they have been victimized. However small the 'drop-in-the-bucket' of help this program and others like it may be, they are helping some, and they are giving others the courage to live a more respectful life, including men who would take advantage, and girls and women who would have been taken advantage of when at a low point in their lives. Thanks for reporting this important program.

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**Submitted by user35295 (22 hours ago)**

Your story does not mention the fact that for decades, maybe millenia, programs targeting demand for prostitution have failed to do anything about it. Back in the 60's or 70's, they started arresting and prosecuting johns in CA and elsewhere. The problem was no real consequences attached for the buyers and men got up in arms about being publicly shamed by having their names published. There just is no will in the law enforcement establishment to stop demand. I seriously doubt that these john schools will do or are doing any significant amount of good. Men will just go to them to get lesser penalties. Until there is public shaming and significant consequences for men who patronize sex workers demand will never decrease, and maybe it won't then. Your article was short-sighted and shallow.

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