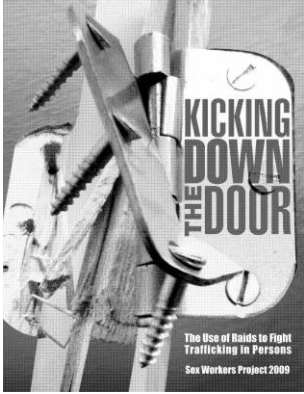




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Sex Workers Project Update – Overbrook Foundation - February 2009

In January of 2009 the Sex Workers Project (SWP) released its third research report, *Kicking Down the Door: The Use of Raids to Fight Trafficking in Persons*.



The report, based on a year-long human rights documentation project involving SWP constituents, clients, partners, and allies, concludes that, on the whole, local law enforcement vice raids and federal anti-trafficking raids – which are currently the main focus of US anti-trafficking efforts - are not an effective means to locate, identify, assist, or protect the rights of trafficked persons.

Even more disturbing, such raids can result in considerable abuses of the human rights of trafficked persons and sex workers alike, and all too often lead to arrests, convictions, and deportation rather than “rescue.”

The report recommends that the U.S. government avoid repeating the mistakes of the previous administration by focusing its anti-trafficking efforts on initiatives that address the root causes of trafficking through the promotion and protection of the rights of migrants, as well as of economic and labor rights of workers in informal economies, including sex work, where trafficking is more likely to occur. The report also recommends that conditions that facilitate the violation of the rights of trafficking victims be directly addressed – including criminalization of prostitution, absence of labor protections in informal sectors, and restrictive US immigration policies. The report and its recommendations have already received enthusiastic and positive feedback from policymakers, advocates, and service providers alike. SWP looks forward to building with our coalition partners in the domestic human rights movement towards developing more evidence-based, human rights focused, and effective approaches to trafficking in persons. See our blog post: <http://www.rhrealitycheck.org/blog/2009/01/23/the-right-time-change-fight-against-human-trafficking>

Additionally, SWP has continued to engage in policy advocacy at the federal, state, and local levels aimed at promoting the human rights of individuals who work in the sex trades by choice, circumstance, or coercion. For instance, in conjunction with our partners in the Freedom Network, we prepared a transition memo to the incoming administration which incorporated many of the recommendations of *Kicking Down the Door*, citing the results of our research and our extensive experience advocating on behalf of our clients.



FREEDOM NETWORK
 TO EMPOWER TRAFFICKED AND ENSLAVED PERSONS
 A DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL AGENDA
 FOR A HUMAN RIGHTS AND ETHICS-BASED LAW, POLICY AND
 PRACTICES TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Since 2001, Freedom Network (FN) members have provided direct services to, and advocated for, the rights of survivors of human trafficking in the United States. In 2008, the Freedom Network has issued 1000 individual letters to Congress, and has worked closely in partnership with several of the agencies it has named. Through our national coalition and the Freedom Network Training Institute, we share our expertise in current practices and policy alternatives and we work with government agencies and law enforcement to shape research and information and to coordinate a national strategy to combat trafficking. The Freedom Network is a public-private coalition of individuals, organizations, and institutions committed to ending human trafficking.

In December 2008, President Clinton signed into law the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA). We now have eight years of experience with implementation of the Act and, while there have been many successes, including changing immigration of trafficked, there have also been many problems that need to be resolved. This document is intended to provide the incoming administration with lessons from past eight years of experience and serve as a road map for how to best improve the future and status of the TVPA to protect the rights of all trafficked persons and ensure that the U.S. plays a leading role worldwide in fighting human rights at the core of all international work.

CONTENTS

The first set of recommendations cover issues that should be addressed by the Administration in developing overall policies. This is followed by department-specific recommendations and then a number of legislative priorities.

Domestic Human Rights and Justice-based Anti-Trafficking Programs, Policies and Funding (pp. 2-7)

* In future, provided credible human rights concerns that protect the rights of all trafficked persons and those in vulnerable areas to them.



SWP also supports sex workers – and individuals who are profiled as such – in organizing to vindicate their human rights. For instance, we recently provided support and technical assistance to a vibrant community coalition organizing around the profiling and false arrests of gay men for prostitution in New York City video porn shops, which the City appears to be targeting for shuttering under local nuisance abatement laws as part of ongoing gentrification efforts. The community successfully obtained a meeting with the New York City Council Speaker Christine Quinn and New York State Senator Tom Duane, both of whom have called for an investigation of the New York City Police Department’s practices as a result. Read more: <http://www.gothamgazette.com/article/20090202/202/2813>;

http://gaycitynews.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=20243192&BRD=2729&PAG=461&dept_id=568864&rfi=6