

International Day to End Violence against Sex Workers

17 December, 2008

This year marks the 6th anniversary of the International Day to End Violence against Sex Workers. Conceived by Annie Sprinkle a US sex worker rights activist and initiated by the Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP) USA, the commemorative event is held annually across the world where sex workers and their supporters take a stand for justice, dignity and safety for sex workers everywhere

Join us for morning tea at Hernandez Café junction of Oxford, Riley & Burton Streets, Darlinghurst at 11am where we will remember the lives of sex workers who lives were cut short by violence and abuse and celebrate the sex workers rights movement as we call for an end to unjust laws, policing, shaming and stigma that oppress our communities and make us targets for violence and abuse.

Why today? Why now?

Violence and abuse comes in many forms and the lack of human and legal rights is a type of abuse that impacts on the health and safety and livelihood of sex workers. In 2008 sex workers still need to fight for human & civil rights, & still need the support of the whole community to combat the discrimination and unfair stigma sex workers face. Sex workers are not covered by NSW Anti-discrimination laws. Decriminalisation still needs extensive commitment by Government to ensure its gains are not lost. Local Councils must take a stronger and more progressive stance to ensure individual sex workers & sex work workplaces are fairly & equally regulated. General misunderstanding about sex work still exists. Many individual sex workers & sex worker workplaces operate in relative fear of discrimination & closure, due to illogical approaches by Local Councils. This perpetuates community uncertainty about cohabitating with sex industry premises in their neighbourhood. Sex workers message is: **"The sex industry can & does exist peacefully and fairly alongside all other industries and home based businesses."** Now & in the future sex worker communities need your support to help spread this message.

We welcome your participation. For more information call Julie on 0425286785 or email debbydoesntdoitforfree@gmail.com

The laws against sex work are harmful to society. They perpetuate the abuse of otherwise law-abiding citizens, particularly women. They allow people like the Green River killer in Seattle, Washington to rationalise violent and murderous behaviour towards sex workers"I wanted to kill as many ... as I possibly... I picked sex workers because I thought I could kill as many of them as I wanted without getting caught...."(Superior Ct of WA .. Statement of Defendant on Plea of Guilty). Gary Leon Ridway was sentenced to 48 life terms and was fined \$10,000 for each victim on Dec. 18, 2003
SWOP USA Website

Why Red Umbrellas?

The red umbrella was used by sex workers of Venice Italy in 2002 as a symbol of beauty, and to communicate sex workers' resistance to humans' and the sky's attacks on sex workers. On the occasion of the Biennale of Art in 2002 they walked the streets together out and proud. Continuing this tradition and in honour of all sex workers who dare to resist oppression everywhere, the International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers In Europe (ICRSE) adopted the red umbrella as a symbol of sex worker resistance to discrimination. Sex workers in the US have also carried red umbrellas in pride and protest. In Australia, we carry our red umbrellas to show our governments and the world that sex workers are here to stay, and our rights, including our right to work with dignity in the sex industry, will never be compromised.

The Darlinghurst Sydney event is hosted by *Debby Doesn't Do It For Free* – a sex worker performance artists group who promote sex worker rights through promoting the voices of sex workers speaking about their own experiences through the arts and media. "We do this because the majority of representation of sex workers and sex work has been created by non-sex workers and therefore has relied upon and perpetuated largely negative stereotypes of sex work. This negative imagery is a result of and has reinforced stigma against sex workers, reflecting and upholding the status quo of unjust laws and social policy. It also creates environments where perpetrators of violent crimes against sex workers feel their actions are justified which amounts to a type of 'hate' crime such as we see inflicted upon our gay, lesbian and transgender brothers and sisters whether they be sex workers or not."