UPDATE ON RECENT EVENTS

On March 9th, 2011 the U.S. fully accepted UPR recommendation #86, and in doing so made history. For the first time ever, the U.S. federal government has officially condemned violence and discrimination against sex workers. Specifically, the U.S. released a report to the U.N. today that suggests "We agree that no one should face violence or discrimination in access to public services based on sexual orientation or their status as a person in prostitution".

In addition, the U.S. has not traditionally addressed issues related to people engaged in sex work unless they are explicitly linked to anti-trafficking efforts. The fact that recommendation 86 specifically refers to people in prostitution, and not people who have been trafficked, is a HUGE indicator that the efforts of our extraordinary team have profoundly impacted the hearts and minds of those making decisions in our government.

The language is not perfect. We would have loved to see the term prostitute expanded to sex worker, which encompasses the many forms sex work can take. However we view this as the beginning of a conversation, and not the end, and look forward to informing the conversation for years to come.

What will happen as a result of this recommendation is yet to be seen. We will need to continue to organize, apply pressure, and collaborate with key groups to ensure we move from rhetoric into action. There is no doubt, though, that this milestone achievement has opened a door that will allow us foster positive change at a whole new level.

UPCOMING ACTIONS AND MEDIA OUTREACH CELEBRATING THE WIN!!

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED!!!
In celebration of this achievement, activists around the country are staging public art actions and media conferences on March 18th (the same day that the U.S. will be presenting their report in Geneva). If you are a part of a sex worker support or advocacy organization, and would like to learn more about how your organization can get involved in this action, go to www.swopusa.org/upr. If you are an ally, please watch closely for more details on when and where the actions will take place so you can come and show your support!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This incredible achievement is thanks to the amazing team we've had who have worked countless hours creating documents, building coalitions, grappling with recommendations, making phone calls, getting letters of support, connecting with policy makers, and all around giving their ALL to help us realize this goal. There have been so many people along the way supporting, but we'd like to recognize some of the individuals that have been around for part, or all, of this work and made really great contributions to this success, including:
Bhavana, Carol, Cris, Cyndee, Dacia, Dara, Darby, Jayne, Jill, Kari, Kate, Kelli, Liz, Melissa B, Melissa D, Penny, Stephanie, Sid, Sienna, Stacey, Surgeon, and Susan

We'd also like to recognize all of the groups within the sex worker community that made significant contributions to this effort, including:
Bayswan (Bay Area Sex Worker Advocacy Network), Best Practices Policy Project (BPPP),

Desiree Alliance, Different Avenues, Helping Individual Prostitutes Survive (HIPS), Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP), Sexual Rights Initiative (SRI), St. James' Infirmary, Sex Workers Project (SWP), and Woodhull Freedom Foundation

We'd like to say thanks to our human rights partners who have been critical to our efforts: Sara Paoletti and Laura Baum from the US Human Rights Network, and Serra Sipple from CHANGE have been instrumental in helping us succeed in this effort.

We'd like to pay special tribute to the more than 150 organizations and academics who have signed our call to action, and all of the individuals who have written letters of support to help us gain traction in Washington, D.C.

Finally, we'd like to acknowledge the LGBT community (who were also included in recommendation #86) and express our excitement that they share in our celebration for human rights.

Thanks to everyone for all of your efforts to help us make this huge leap forward!