

## Beyond Exploitation and Trafficking: Canadian Critical Perspectives on Sex Work

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Volume 74, Fall 2014

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1060934ar>

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Publisher(s)

Canadian Committee on Labour History

ISSN

0700-3862 (print)

1911-4842 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this note

Brock, D. & Teixeira, R. (2014). Beyond Exploitation and Trafficking: Canadian Critical Perspectives on Sex Work. *Labour / Le Travail*, 74.

## REVIEW ESSAY / NOTE CRITIQUE

# Beyond Exploitation and Trafficking: Canadian Critical Perspectives on Sex Work

**Deborah Brock and Robert Teixeira**

Emily van der Meulen, Elya M. Durisin, and Victoria Love, eds., *Selling Sex: Experience, Advocacy, and Research on Sex Work in Canada* (British Columbia: University of British Columbia Press, 2013)

Colette Parent, Chris Bruckert, Patrice Corriveau, Maria Nengeh Mensah, and Louise Toupin, *Sex Work: Rethinking the Job, Respecting the Workers* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2013)

Kamala Kempadoo and Darja Davydova, eds., *From Bleeding Hearts to Critical Thinking: Exploring the Issue of Human Trafficking* (Toronto: Centre for Feminist Research, 2012), <http://cfr.info.yorku.ca/fbh/>

THE SUPREME COURT OF CANADA unanimously agreed, on 20 December 2013, to strike down as unconstitutional the Criminal Code of Canada's three statutes regulating adult prostitution: keeping, transporting someone to, or being an inmate of a common bawdy house (sections 210 and 211); procuring or living on the avails of prostitution (section 212); and communicating in a public place or a place open to public view for the purposes of prostitution (section 213).<sup>1</sup> The court rendered this landmark decision because all nine justices on Canada's highest court were convinced that the legislation, singly and together, created an intolerable situation for those providing sexual services by making it nearly impossible for sex workers to carry out their legal occupation safely. The legislation therefore violated Section 7 guarantees of Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms:

1. Criminal Code of Canada, Consolidated Statutes and Regulations, Department of Justice, Canada, Justice Laws Website, accessed 20 March 2014, <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/>.

Section 7. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.<sup>2</sup>

In making this decision, however, the court provided Parliament with a one year grace period in which to implement alternative legislation that would not similarly breach Charter rights and freedoms. The federal Conservative government reacted quickly and emphatically to this decision, tabling a new proposal in the House of Commons on 4 June 2014. Bill C-36, *The Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act*, has been under review and revision since that time and will almost certainly be passed into law during the fall 2014 sitting of the House of Commons. The proposed legislation does not criminalize the selling of sexual services, but it criminalizes the purchase of sexual services in any circumstances. It does criminalize communication for the purpose of offering or providing sexual services in public or open to public view where persons under 18 might reasonably be expected to be present. The proposed law also criminalizes third parties who receive a “material benefit” from prostitution (allowing likely exceptions for spouses, roommates, children, other dependents who do not work in the sex industry, and landlords who rent their premises at market value), and procuring another person for the purpose of providing sexual services. It includes sweeping new provisions for the prohibition of advertising sexual services. While selling sexual services is, on the face of it, not a criminal offence, it will be extremely difficult to carry out a legal business, particularly given that potential clients face the risk of criminal charges. Together, the proposed legislation actually surpasses previous legislation’s scope and potential impact, leaving little doubt that it could not withstand a Charter challenge. Consistent with the “get tough on crime” agenda that has been a hallmark of the Conservative government since they were first elected in 2006, Bill C-36 advances a conservative moralism under the auspices of protecting the vulnerable from exploitation.<sup>3</sup>

While the three texts under review were published prior to the Supreme Court decision and the subsequent introduction of Bill C-36, the scope and implications of the proposed legislation, as well as the rationale behind it, mean that these texts are at least as relevant and important as they were when the authors were motivated to create them.

Van der Meulen, Durisin, and Love’s *Selling Sex: Experience, Advocacy, and Research on Sex Work in Canada* brings together an impressive collection of

2. Constitution Act, 1982, *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, Government of Canada, Justice Laws Website, accessed 4 August 2014, <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/const/page-15.html>. *Canada v. Bedford* can be found at: *Canada (Attorney General) v. Bedford* 2013 SCC 72 (20 December 2013), 5/43, accessed 9 August 2014, <http://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/13389/index.do>.

3. An excellent summary and critique of Bill C-36 was produced by the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, *Reckless Endangerment: Q&A on Bill C-36: Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act* (June 2014), accessed August 11, 2014, <http://www.aidslaw.ca/publications/publicationsdocEN.php?ref=1438>.

sex workers, academics, and activists to explore the multiple dimensions of sexual labour. The three editors themselves span these categories, yet have managed to seamlessly integrate their voices in a succinct introduction to the text's content and to Canadian policy and politics for the regulation of sex work. One strength of *Selling Sex*, and certainly a mark of successful envisioning and editing, is the sense of collaborative dialogue among editors and contributors that pervades the text. The twenty chapters in this collection are fairly short and are best read as threads of the larger narrative that the book presents.

The collection defies attempts to reduce sex work to a single kind of worker or experience and instead includes a range of "Realities, Experiences, Perspectives," as Part One is titled. Contributors in this section speak from a range of experiences, ages, and social locations, writing as cis-gendered women and men, trans-people, Indigenous people, and young people. Individually and together, these chapters provide an intersectional approach that is clear about the benefits and difficulties of sex work while refusing the discourse of victimization and exploitation. Included in this section are first-person accounts from sex workers whose voices have generally been underrepresented in the academic literature. A gay male sex worker offers a personal perspective on his entry into the trade, his experiences with clients, and the effects of stigma, stereotypes, and homophobia in the context of his work. His intimate portrayal of his life as a gay male sex worker is useful for uncovering the diverse range of experiences in a population of sex workers who face a range of forms of social regulation, including stereotyped media portrayals, discourses of abuse and victimization, and recourse to insecure modes of work. Also notable is the contribution from JJ, a youth activist and community organizer for the past seventeen years, who discusses youth in the sex trade beyond the hegemonic narrative of victims in need of rescue or saving, explaining how these narratives play into the saving agenda of social work agencies, police, and family services, which routinely deny youth involved in the sex trade a space for a wide exploration of diverse experiences, perspectives, and needs. This experiential contribution stops short of exploring the legal regimes that structure the funding opportunities and give shape to the directives of social service agencies. The organization of funding in compliance with the criminalized context of sex work creates significant barriers to the kinds of services that can be offered, hamstringing those who work with young people and denying youth the means to pursue a more integrative and self-determining approach to the life conditions that they face.

Another strength of this collection lies with the contributions on critical Indigenous responses to sexual violence, marginalization, and the multiple silences on sex work, gender violence, poverty, drug use, and urban marginalization that characterize the way Aboriginal sex workers are positioned in dominant discourses. Sarah Hunt provides a critical perspective on female-identified Aboriginal sex workers, calling for a new framework for addressing

systemic violence and its links to colonial histories; one that can undo the shame and silence of diverse experiences of Aboriginal women in the trade. Drawing from her scholarship and experiences as an Aboriginal service provider, she offers perspectives toward expanding the voices and pragmatic participation of Aboriginal sex workers in issues that affect their lives, the better to address their needs. Tuulia Law's chapter on transitioning out of the trade navigates beyond polarizing narratives about sex workers' interest in leaving the trade. Instead, she covers a range of perspectives from multiple social locations, drawing from qualitative research with women who have had multiple trajectories in and out of the trade. This is important research in the often highly tendentious arena of documenting sex worker experiences.

Sex work activism is the subject of Part Two, "Organizing and Social Change," with contributions addressing local efforts in Vancouver, Montreal, Toronto, and Halifax while maintaining a national scope. Each chapter offers insights into how sex workers and their allies have built organizations to provide resources, services, and advocacy in a non-judgemental context that respects the integrity, decision-making, and leadership capacity of sex workers. From a labour perspective, the most unique and important chapter in the book is Jenn Clamen, Kara Gillies, and Trish Salah's, "Working for Change: Sex Workers in the Union Struggle," focusing on their efforts to gain recognition and support for sex workers as workers through building an alliance with the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE). Salah is a former member of the union's Pink Triangle Committee, while Clamen and Gillies were in 2003 founders of the Canadian Guild for Erotic Labour. Their contributions outline how activists worked diligently and with only very limited success to have CUPE support the decriminalization of prostitution in Canada and to adopt a labour model that recognizes the diversity of workplaces and conditions in which sex work occurs. Sex worker activists sought organized labour's support for the full decriminalization of sexual labour as a necessary step for the implementation of workers' rights and health and safety provisions enjoyed by other workers. Salah describes how the union's Pink Triangle Committee promoted a general framework of equity for sex workers, yet failed to consider the need for labour protection while also ensuring sex workers' access to collective bargaining. Moving forward within the labour movement for sex workers' labour rights means confronting the rise of part-time and precarious relationships to employment that many workers face today. Clamen, Gillies, and Salah's account clearly demonstrates that the labour movement needs to integrate a nuanced and expansive recognition of varying modes of work and of sex workers' relation to work, including part-time labour, self-employment, contract work, moving in and out of the trade, and more casual forms of work.

The work of scholar-allies is featured in Part Three, "The Politics of Regulation," which addresses some of the hot-button issues in sex work debates. What does recent history of the regulation of sex work have to do

with the regulation of women's sexuality? How have those advocating the prohibition of the sale of sexual services<sup>4</sup> constructed their arguments, supported not by evidence-based and empirically verifiable arguments, but through hyperbolic ideological claims? How have claims that human trafficking, particularly in the commercial sex sector, is a growing global phenomenon been extended to characterize virtually all sexual labour as forced, so that criminalization is the only possible response? How do efforts to "protect" sex workers through procuring (pimping) legislation actually have the effect of criminalizing their personal relationships and their ability to negotiate better working conditions? Similarly, how do youth prostitution laws actually serve to punish young people who find an income through sex work, rather than meeting the expressed intent of the legislation, which is their protection? We also learn more about how the social stigma of sex work profoundly shapes how workers are understood and treated by police, who engage in social profiling of street workers as a form of public disorder and threat to communities, requiring them to be governed in particular ways such as the use of "street sweeps" and community safety actions.

A core strength of this text is that a labour perspective is fundamental to its key themes and issues (even if it is not always foregrounded), and sex workers participate in the text as experts of their own lives and working conditions. Our most notable disappointment with this collection is that it would have been more complete had it included more discussion of pragmatic alternatives to the criminalization of sex work. What will this labour sector look like if it is forged in terms and conditions established by sex workers themselves? For example, not all sex workers wish to be employees or union members. Many will also want to open businesses in a decriminalized environment and join professional associations independent of labour union structures. Many will continue to want to work on the streets – the most visible and contentious context for selling sex. A discussion of New Zealand's successful sex worker-led decriminalization approach shows readers that viable models do exist and are ready to be implemented in a Canadian context.

As the editors know well, simply removing adult prostitution-related activities from the Criminal Code of Canada opens the door for municipal regulation through zoning and licensing restrictions that can create a quasi-legalized but tightly controlled (and potentially more exploitive) working environment. Some local level governments might ban the sale of sexual services altogether, as has occurred in the Netherlands since prostitution was decriminalized in 2000. The Dutch national government acted with the intent of eliminating formal prohibitions against sex work from the Dutch criminal code (which were not enforced in any case) in order to recognize prostitution

4. The editors of *Selling Sex* rightly (and importantly) state that we should avoid using the discourse of abolitionism adopted by those who wish to criminalize sex work as it suggests a legitimacy of purpose on par with the abolition of slavery in the 19th century.

as work and to improve sex workers labour rights where sex work took place voluntarily.<sup>5</sup> An early assessment of the Dutch policy shift found an uneven administration and control of sex work, especially in the issuing of licenses and the way that inspections were carried out. As well, those who were prohibited from working became part of an underground “unregulated sector” while those working in the regulated sector found increasing constraints being placed on their working conditions. Moreover, while the national government had assumed that local authorities would not introduce their own ban on the operation of brothels, an increasing number of municipalities began to refuse to issue new licenses, to shut down all sex work establishments, or eliminate some forms of sex work such as the infamous “windows” found in many Dutch cities.<sup>6</sup>

Van der Meulen and Valverde’s contribution usefully address issues surrounding local licensing and zoning practices that are often poorly understood and confusing to the lay person, but which can have a tremendous impact on how spaces are designated for use and the kinds of activities allowed. Drawing from a close reading of municipal bylaws from across Canada – namely, Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, and Toronto – they demonstrate how diverse local regulations impact sex-related businesses and individuals in the sex trade disproportionately compared to other non sex-related businesses. They outline how local municipalities often differ with regards to the licensing requirements for escort services, operating with wide discretionary power to limit and impose difficult barriers for those operating sex-related businesses. Although this chapter offers information on the local regulatory regimes that do not meet the threshold of criminal law yet exert a powerful force on shaping the way sex workers take up and practice the trade, it doesn’t, for example, offer insight into how sex workers may contribute to shaping local regulatory regimes in order to offset some of the deleterious effects of local level regulation.

The collection ends with an Afterword by Alan Young, an Associate Professor at Osgoode Hall Law School in Toronto and the lead lawyer for the three sex workers (plaintiffs) responsible for the constitutional challenge to Canada’s prostitution-related laws. Young sums up the prior legal cases that led to the successful Supreme Court challenge, and he explains how his legal team presented their challenge to adult prostitution-related laws as a violation of sex worker Charter rights to safety and security of person. Young offers a

5. Non-voluntary prostitution remains in the Criminal Code. It applies to persons under eighteen and undocumented migrant sex workers, who are then understood as “trafficked.”

6. For more on the Dutch approach, see Deborah Brock, *Making Work, Making Trouble: The Social Regulation of Sexual Labour* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek-en Documentatiecentrum (wodc), *Lifting the Ban on Brothels*, wodc Library, Den Haag, The Netherlands, Cahier 2004–2007, [www.wodc.nl](http://www.wodc.nl); wodc, *Prostitution in the Netherlands since the Lifting of the Brothel Ban* wodc Library, Den Haag, The Netherlands, 2007, [www.wodc.nl](http://www.wodc.nl).

general perspective on the selling of sexual services that seeks to undermine a moralistic approach to the sex trade, challenging an ideological and opportunistic narrative that is too often found in the debates over commercial sex.

*Sex Work: Rethinking the Job, Respecting the Workers* is the first book on sex work to be published by academics working in a French Canadian context, although the content is national in its scope and implications. This short book is essentially a series of thematic essays written by the editors. Following a brief introduction to the objectives of the collection, Parent and Bruckert provide a cursory synopsis of current debates about sex work, beginning with historical antecedents in the 19th century and in second wave feminism. As they explain, discussions about sex work are frequently “driven by emotion” rooted in ideological and moral beliefs and values and expressed polemically.<sup>7</sup> These unfortunately become a foundation for questionable social science research.<sup>8</sup>

Parent and Bruckert contrast empirically sound local research studies, including the work of Fran Shaver, who has been researching sex work in Canada for approximately 35 years, and their own detailed studies in Toronto, Ottawa, and Montréal, with sensationalizing claims of coercion and victimization (such as the over-representation of the pimp) found in popular and feminist discourse as well as numerous academic studies. Mainly, they take aim at questionable research employing misleading use of statistics; for example, through the failure to distinguish between correlation and causality, and in the spurious claim that early sexual victimization through sexual abuse leads to later sexual victimization through prostitution. Parent and Bruckert also take aim at the alarming proliferation of 19th century discourses about sex trafficking in the context of contemporary globalized labour markets and migration patterns, a subject that we will turn to later in this review.

Patrice Corriveau has worked as a senior policy analyst in the Department of Justice Canada. In “Regulating Sex Work: Between Victimization and Freedom to Choose,” he provides a brief history of the legal regulation of prostitution in Canada, from the introduction of the nation’s first criminal code in 1892 to key court decisions leading up to the Supreme Court’s 2013 decision to strike down criminal legislation regulation adult prostitution. Corriveau addresses the

7. Colette Parent and Chris Bruckert, “The Current Debate on Sex Work” in Colette Parent, Chris Bruckert, Patrice Corriveau, Maria Nengeh Mensah, and Louise Toupin, *Sex Work: Rethinking the Job, Respecting the Workers*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2013), 9.

8. This conclusion was shared by Justice Susan Himel in her 2011 Ontario Superior Court ruling, in which she found all three of Canada’s adult prostitution laws (procuring, being an inmate or keeping a common bawdy house, and communication for the purpose of prostitution) to be unconstitutional because they violated sex workers’ Section 7 right to security of the person, under the Canadian constitution. This decision was the precursor for the 2013 decision by the Supreme Court of Canada, which essentially agreed with Himel’s arguments. *Canada (Attorney General) v. Bedford* 2011 ONCA 209 (16 March 2011), 12/128. <http://www.canlii.org/en/on/onsc/doc/2010/2010onsc4264/2010onsc4264.html>.



impact on sex workers, who are placed at greater risk as a direct consequence of the moral, legal, and policing constraints that they must continually negotiate in order to carry out their work. His contribution also compares different regulatory approaches, including the so-called abolitionist perspective mentioned earlier, and the legalization approach in which some forms of sex work are permitted under highly constrained and generally exploitive conditions while attempts to negotiate sexual services elsewhere remain in a criminal context. Finally, he advocates for New Zealand's decriminalization model, in which the direct involvement and cooperation of sex workers themselves has been fundamental to the success of the strategy. This approach begins from the premise that sex workers are not mere dupes of patriarchal social relations but active thinking people who have agency and can make informed decisions about their lives and their work.

In their second contribution to the book, "The Work of Sex Work," Bruckert and Parent continue to challenge reductionist understandings of sex work by exploring some of its many forms, including street-based, out-call, and in-call work. They find that the work perspective is consistent with how those who provide sexual services think about what they do, and they consider what the sociology of work and labour studies can contribute to building this perspective and supporting the workers. They address why some people find sex work such a viable option, and consider the ways in which it is, and is not, like other forms of work. For example, they discuss existing data on violence in the sex trade, which suggests that street-level work can be dangerous and even fatal, and convincingly argue that this is directly linked to the stigmatization, marginalization, criminalized context, and policing strategies that shape the working environment.

Maria Nengeh Mensah's contribution reflects on a landmark sex work conference held in Montréal in 2005, which brought together sex worker activists from more than fifty organizations all over the world in order to develop a collective account of the global conditions of sex work, to network and share strategies, to build a politics of resistance to oppressive conditions, and to forge alternative visions.<sup>9</sup> As the chapter title makes clear,<sup>10</sup> Nengeh Mensah explores sex workers' capacity for collective action and community building, which occurs in stark contrast to the ideological and moral perspective of those who oppose commercial sexual services and who can only comprehend sex workers as naive or coerced victims who can never participate voluntarily.

9. A two-part video about conference proceedings, produced by Mirha-Soleil Ross, is available online. See "Live eXXXpressions: Sex Workers Stand Up in Montréal" on the website of Chez Stella, the Montréal-based Sex Worker organization responsible for hosting the conference, Parts One and Two accessed 8 August 2014, <http://chezstella.org/stella/en/en/follow>. Written conference proceedings can be found on the same website.

10. "The Idea of Community and Collective Action: Reflections on Forum XXX."

Finally, in “Clandestine Migrations by Women and the Risk of Trafficking,” Louise Toupin takes on the discursive explosion of attention to a traffic in women that is alleged to be burgeoning globally. This claim has fueled much of anti-sex work politics over the last fifteen years and has had an enormous impact on national and international policy. She addresses the genealogy of the concept of trafficking, the perspective’s proponent’s conflation of trafficking and prostitution, the conflation of the very different actions of smuggling and trafficking, and a number of related misrepresentations by those who have adopted an anti-trafficking perspective.

Anti-trafficking discourse and politics is the subject of the third book included in this review, but before turning to it, it is worth summarizing the key objectives of *Selling Sex* and *Sex Work*. Both of these texts make a strong case for moving sex work out of the realm of criminal law and into the realm of labour rights and responsibilities. In this, they go further than the Supreme Court’s *Bedford* decision, which did leave open the (unlikely) possibility of Parliament finding a new criminal law approach that does not violate sex workers’ right to security of the person. Briefly, the decriminalization position is tied to the advocacy of labour rights, occupational health and safety rights, and human and social rights.

The labour rights approach insists on an acknowledgement that sex work is indeed a job that people do for the same reasons that people take up other forms of work. In this context, debates about freedom of choice versus coercion as a reason for entering the sex trade are irrelevant for the vast majority of sex workers in Canada. They are typically no more choosing, and no more coerced, than are people who take up other direct entry occupations. Where coercion does occur, it is undoubtedly exacerbated by the clandestine and criminalized context of sex work, and it can be addressed by the concerted application of legislation regulating assault, sexual assault, extortion, unlawful confinement, and so on. Sex workers assess their skills and resources, opportunities and chances, and make the most of the circumstances that they find themselves in. They form part of the old “precariat” whose working conditions have long been flexible and unstable. Sex workers should therefore be able to carry out their work somewhere without fear of criminal sanction, be free to form or join unions, and to form professional associations that provide codes of conduct and other professional standards. They should be entitled to the same legal protections and responsibilities as other workers, including pension plans, employment insurance, workers’ compensation, and meeting income tax obligations. They should be able to access retraining programs if they wish to change jobs, and treated with respect and dignity if they remain in the sex trade.

Given the difficult and dangerous conditions that are associated with the sex trade in a criminalized environment, it is no surprise that sex workers foreground the need for occupational health and safety. In contrast to a pro-criminalization approach, which positions sex workers as immoral disposable

people (particularly women and trans street-level workers), a labour rights approach insists on the right to work in a safe environment, free from harassment, to be able to work in sanitary conditions, and to have control over one's own body through, for example, always insisting on safer sex practices with clients. It is a strategy that insists that the physical and emotional health and well-being of sex workers cannot be compromised by unsafe working conditions.

Finally, the labour approach insists on human and social rights. Sex workers have a right to dignity, personal security, liberty, and self-determination in relation to others and to state policy and practice, including the politics of law reform. However, the individual focus of human rights discourse does not go far enough. A labour approach should also advocate for collective social rights, including the right to housing, food, education, health care, and other basic human needs. Social rights are not often on the agenda in western neoliberal democracies, although they are a major objective of events targeting global economic inequality such as the World Social Forum, so we intentionally add them here.

If there is a single issue that is most responsible for the renewed attention to sex work in recent years, it is the alleged global proliferation of a "traffic" in women. According to this narrative, hundreds of thousands of women are being moved across international borders, forcibly or through duplicity, in order to work as prostitutes in conditions of modern slavery. This narrative has fuelled countless popular media accounts of women and girls sold and rescued, research studies, and organizational responses by a growing "rescue" industry. It has been incorporated into international conventions and national laws, and has entered into local level regulation of the sex trade. However, like the 19th century moral panic about an alleged traffic in women, there is little proven empirical evidence to support the mounting claims that are being made about sex trafficking.<sup>11</sup>

Professor Kamala Kempadoo has been for many years a leading scholar in the study of international sex work, and is chief editor of the ground-breaking collection, *Trafficking and Prostitution Reconsidered: New Perspectives on Migration, Sex Work, and Human Rights*.<sup>12</sup> As Kempadoo comments in her introduction to the first edition of this collection, "much of what is pursued in the name of a war on trafficking has troubling consequences for poor people around the world."<sup>13</sup> Women are of course "disproportionally represented

11. Numerous sources exist on the 19th century "white slavery" panic, exemplary among them Judith Walkowitz's *Prostitution and Victorian Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

12. Kamala Kempadoo, Jyoti Sanghera, and Bandana Pattanalk, *Trafficking and Prostitution Reconsidered: New Perspectives on Migration, Sex Work, and Human Rights* (2005; Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2012).

13. Kempadoo, *Trafficking and Prostitution Reconsidered*, viii.

among the poor.”<sup>14</sup> This collection places the gendered inequality of racialized women at the centre of its analytic inquiry, particularly the conditions of those women who are involved in sex work. Trafficking is regarded “not as the enslavement of women, but as the trade and exploitation of labor under conditions of coercion and force, analyzed from the lives, agency, and rights of women and men who are involved in a variety of activities in a transnationalized world.”<sup>15</sup>

Kempadoo brought this framework to her teaching at York University, where she has developed graduate and undergraduate courses on the subject of human trafficking. *From Bleeding Hearts to Critical Thinking* is one outcome of these courses. This impressive collection of essays was first presented at a conference of the same name that was held at York University in the spring of 2012. The conference proceedings were documented by guest speaker Carol Leigh (aka Scarlot Harlot) who has been credited with coining the concept of “sex work” and who contributes the lead article to the collection. These essays provide a nuanced and comprehensive discussion of the key issues in anti-trafficking discourse, revealing some of the fundamental flaws in the logic behind this discourse and the policies it inspires while making a persuasive case for an analysis and politics that accounts for global flows of capital and labour migration, local level conditions, the gendered and racialized character of women’s work, and so on. The contributors to this collection do not completely refuse the notion that “trafficking” exists, but rather they discount the highly inflamed rhetorical and statistical imaginings of it in anti-trafficking narratives, policies, and interventions. The contributors challenge the constitution and treatment of the trafficking “victim” that denies any agency and participation of those involved. The collection instead contextualizes trafficking within much more pervasive forms of voluntary migration as the means by which women might cross borders in order to engage in (often undocumented) sexual labour. Several contributors take on representations of sex work and sex trafficking in popular media, including discourses of slavery in *Al Jazeera*, how men and masculinities are represented in trafficking films, and the promotion of anti-trafficking campaigns through American cultural media. Other contributions address the national and international contexts for anti-trafficking policy, including the vested interest of nation-states in anti-trafficking discourse, central and eastern Europe’s uneasy relationship with the European Union, and a comparative analysis of legal approaches in South Africa and Canada. Other essays complicate anti-trafficking campaigns’ use of a human rights framework in the global context, critique what Laura María Agustín has referred to as the “rescue industry”<sup>16</sup> as a new form of imperialism, question

14. Kempadoo, *Trafficking and Prostitution Reconsidered*, ix.

15. Kempadoo, *Trafficking and Prostitution Reconsidered*, ix.

16. Laura María Agustín, *Sex at the Margins: Migration, Labour Markets and the Rescue Industry*, (London: Zed Books, 2007).

the use of statistics in claims about the incidence and prevalence of sex trafficking, and explore representations of mail-order brides (this in the form of an interpretive dance). The collection concludes with a very useful list of online resources for undertaking further critical thinking about human trafficking.

*From Bleeding Hearts to Critical Thinking* is a welcome addition to the growing body of informed scholarly research on migrant sex work, and it is available free online thanks to the Creative Commons. It is also a model for what students can accomplish in their undergraduate and graduate course work when they are guided by pedagogical excellence. Unfortunately, it will take an enormous amount of organizing and resistance, across political spheres, in order to dislodge anti-trafficking discourse, given that it has been a tremendous advantage and rationale for anti-immigration politics, border policing, the criminalization of undocumented migrants, and the globalization of governmental security frameworks. The complicity, whether intentional or not, of anti-trafficking campaigns in the rise of national security states should alone give critical thinkers pause.