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PROSTITUTION IS CRUELTY AND ABUSE TO WOMEN AND CHILDREN†‡

*Susan Kay Hunter**

Each day I rise to take up the truly good fight to stop the harm to women in prostitution. I long for complete liberation of all oppressed peoples. I passionately believe that the work I do to end prostitution is revolutionary. No one deserves to be used and abused, and that is the universal experience of prostituted women and children. It is also revolutionary work because my freedom as a woman is meaningless so long as some of us can be bought and sold. The giant sex industry grinds on, exploiting and enslaving women, while sexual liberals are well-paid by that industry to mock us with shallow concepts—concepts premised on never having heard the cries or experienced the terror of the victims of this monstrous institution.

I rise with the conviction that the cruelty done to women in prostitution is not inevitable. With that conviction, I and many others at the Council for Prostitution Alternatives (CPA) have helped to build a freedom road leading to safety, to dignity, and to others who will be allies. Being invited here to speak is another milestone built in that road, and I so deeply appreciate the commitment the *Michigan Journal of Gender & Law* is making to educate themselves and the public about the struggle. We need to take an activist role in putting an end to the

† This paper is essentially the speech that Ms. Hunter presented at the *Michigan Journal of Gender & Law* Symposium entitled *Prostitution: From Academia to Activism*, held on October 31, 1992, at the University of Michigan Law School. Most of its speechlike characteristics have been preserved so as to maintain its authenticity. In addition, the punctuation and style are the author's.

‡ I am indebted to Evelina Giobbe, founder and director of Women Hurt in Systems of Prostitution Engaged in Revolt (WHISPER), for her brilliant analysis of prostitution, and her courage and encouragement to educate about prostitution as abuse.

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gross injustice of trafficking women and children occurring this very hour. Welcome to the front lines! Take courage from what another radical feminist, Susan B. Anthony, said of the struggle to win suffrage: "Failure is impossible!"¹

I want to talk about what it means to be used in prostitution, what choices are really being made by prostituted women, and how prostitution begins within families. I will tell you now, try as I will, I cannot explain prostitution. It just does not make any sense—not the magnitude of its crushing intent to defeat and consume women and children, nor the plain and painful fact that this cruelty is committed by men we know and with whom we live, nor the way in which we ultimately lay the blame on women.

What does it mean to live—and perhaps die or disappear—in prostitution? In a sample of fifty-five victims/survivors of prostitution,² CPA documented the crimes committed by their perpetrators: pimps and johns.

- Seventy-eight percent were the victims of rape: the rapes occurred an average of forty-nine times a year (sixteen times a year by pimps and thirty-three times a year by johns).³ In the study by Mimi Silbert and Alaya Pines of street youths ten years ago, prostituted girls reported being raped an average of ten times a year.⁴ Silbert remarked that she believed prostituted women to be the most raped class of women in history.⁵ CPA's data shows that prostituted women are raped nearly once a week.⁶ When any woman is raped just once, she spends a lifetime dealing with the trauma and lasting terror. She may startle easily, awake with nightmares frequently; she may dissociate, have poor memory, and suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. The same is true for

1. KATHLEEN BARRY, *SUSAN B. ANTHONY: A BIOGRAPHY OF A SINGULAR FEMINIST* 354 (1988).
2. Victim Survivor Testimony Data collected by the Council for Prostitution Alternatives (1990–1991 and 1991–1992) [hereinafter Victim Survivor Testimony Data] (unpublished data, on file with the *Michigan Journal of Gender & Law*) (the 1990–1991 study included 55 survivors, while the 1991–1992 study included 68).
3. Victim Survivor Testimony Data, *supra* note 2.
4. Mimi H. Silbert & Alaya M. Pines, *Entrance into Prostitution*, 13 *YOUTH & Soc'y* 471 (1982).
5. Conversation with Dr. Mimi Silbert, Executive Director of Delancey Street Foundation, in Portland, Oreg. (May 18, 1986).
6. Victim Survivor Testimony Data, *supra* note 2.

prostituted women. Rape of prostitutes is perhaps the least prosecuted crime in the country. In Oregon, although first degree rape is a Class A felony,⁷ Portland's District Attorney charged the rapists in only twelve of the cases in the CPA study, and the perpetrators were never convicted.⁸

- Eighty-four percent were victims of aggravated assault: the assaults occurred an average of 103 times a year (fifty-eight times a year by pimps and forty-five times a year by johns).⁹ These women were horribly beaten, often requiring emergency room attention and hospitalization. No one at the hospital inquired if their injuries were due to violence in their lives, even though there is a requirement to report these instances.¹⁰ Nor did anyone ever tell them that they did not deserve to be beaten. In thirteen cases of aggravated assault, which is a Class A felony,¹¹ legal action provided a remedy, and there were two convictions.¹²

- Forty-nine percent were the victims of kidnapping: the kidnappings occurred an average of ten times a year (five times a year by pimps and five times a year by johns).¹³ Any single kidnapping is an occasion for extraordinary terror. Just imagine the suffering from being abducted ten times a year. Although first degree kidnapping is a Class A felony¹⁴ in Oregon and a federal offense if the victim is taken across state lines,¹⁵ never in my experience has the FBI become involved in the search for missing, and presumably living, prostituted women, though they should. Eight cases wound their way to state court and three convictions resulted.¹⁶

- Fifty-three percent were victims of sexual abuse through torture: the abuse occurred an average of fifty-four times a year (forty-nine times a year by pimps and five times a year by johns).¹⁷ By torture

7. OR. REV. STAT. § 163.375(2) (1991).

8. Victim Survivor Testimony Data, *supra* note 2.

9. Victim Survivor Testimony Data, *supra* note 2.

10. OR. REV. STAT. § 146.750 (1991).

11. OR. REV. STAT. § 163.185(2) (1991).

12. Victim Survivor Testimony Data, *supra* note 2.

13. Victim Survivor Testimony Data, *supra* note 2.

14. OR. REV. STAT. § 163.235(2) (1991).

15. 18 U.S.C.A. § 1201 (West 1992 & Supp. 1993).

16. Victim Survivor Testimony Data, *supra* note 2.

17. Victim Survivor Testimony Data, *supra* note 2.

I mean being slapped, burned, gagged, hung, and bound. They had their nipples, mouth, or labia pinched, clamped, or stapled. They were deprived of liberty or sleep and sometimes penetrated with objects or by animals. Many women were filmed enduring this torture. The film is called *speech* in this country and it is sold legally. It is pornography and it is constitutionally protected as men's entertainment. In eight reported cases of sexual abuse through torture, a Class B felony,¹⁸ one conviction occurred.¹⁹

- Twenty-seven percent were mutilated as a result of the torture inflicted upon them an average of seven times a year (three times a year by pimps and four times a year by johns).²⁰ By mutilation I mean having pieces of pubic hair shaved or having skin cut or carved. Legal action was taken in nine cases and one pimp was convicted.²¹

- And finally, by CPA's count over a fourteen month period, ten prostituted women disappeared or were killed in Portland, Oregon.²² Approximately forty prostituted women have disappeared in Portland since 1984.²³ CPA presumes them dead as the logical conclusion of systematic abuse, battery and torture. One cannot speak about prostitution without talking about death. Hold still so he can pulverize you, so he can kill you, so there is nothing left but the chalk outline of your body. The police and the detectives inadequately collect information, overlook evidence, and fail to look for her in snuff pornography. No one really misses her at all.

Murder is a fact of life for all prostituted women: on the streets as well as indoors doing live sex shows, dancing on tables and laps, stripping in bars, and waiting in hotel lobbies. Murder of prostituted women occurs in both legal and illegal brothels. All over this country, prostituted women are being murdered. The largest unsolved serial murder case in the history of the United States is the Green River murders, where forty-nine prostituted women were found dead between

18. OR. REV. STAT. § 163.427(2) (1991).

19. Victim Survivor Testimony Data, *supra* note 2.

20. Victim Survivor Testimony Data, *supra* note 2.

21. Victim Survivor Testimony Data, *supra* note 2.

22. Victim Survival Testimony Data, *supra* note 2.

23. Victim Survivor Testimony Data, *supra* note 2.

1982 and 1984, and hundreds of women are still missing.²⁴ A few weeks ago, in October 1992, an international relief agency reported that one hundred thousand young women and girls from around the world are unaccounted for.²⁵ International law enforcement agencies say that the figure is extremely conservative.²⁶ In place of justice, serial murders of prostituted women are romanticized and left at that.

In December 1991, for the first time in the history of Oregon, CPA marched in grief to protest the deaths and disappearances of prostituted women and girls. CPA marched against atrocities inflicted on these women in prostitution—women who have been banished, invisibilized and packaged as men's entertainment. Someday, under the same sense of justice that resulted in the Nuremberg trials, these vicious crimes will be prosecuted. But we cannot get there until we, as a feminist movement, acknowledge the harm of prostitution itself.

Prostitution is unwanted sex. It is sex that she says "yes" to, but it is the kind of "yes" that is uttered under circumstances devoid of choice. Most men do not know what it means to be this deprived: she is beaten, she is pimped, she is not free, she is not present in her own body. He is not paying for her to be a real person. Like the rapist, he is not concerned with her needs or wants or desires. He does not have to treat her like a human being because she is an object to be masturbated on and in. When we see the violence unmasked and we set aside the money which is used to scapegoat her, his sex is an act of rape:

I said I would not (have sex with him). He said, yes, you are, bitch. You're going to do everything I tell you. If you don't I'm going to kill you and (have sex with you) after you're dead, just like the other sluts. It doesn't matter, your body will still be warm. He tied my wrists to the steering wheel, and screwed me in the ass. Afterwards, he got a Visine bottle filled with rubbing alcohol out of the trunk. He said the Visine bottle was one of my surprises. He emptied it in my rectum. It really hurt bad because he tore me up a lot. He got dressed, got a radio, sat on the hood for what seemed like an hour. I was really pissed. I was yelling at him, and strug-

24. Tomas Guillen, *Three More Green River Victims?—Missing Women Not On Public List*, SEATTLE TIMES, May 30, 1993, at B1.

25. Marie Jose Ragah, *International Trafficking in Women on The Rise*, NAT'L NOW TIMES (National Org. of Women, Washington, D.C.), Oct. 1992, at 13.

26. Ragah, *supra* note 25, at 13.

gling to get my hands free. Eventually he untied me, put a stereo wire around my neck and tried to rape me again²⁷

This testimony is from Aileen Wuornos, who sits on death row in Florida. Her experience of prostitution is the same as every woman's. She, like many prostituted women, fought back:

Then I thought, well, this dirty bastard deserves to die because of what he was tryin' to do to me. We struggled. I reached for my gun. I shot him. I scrambled to cover the shooting because I didn't think the police would believe I killed him in self-defense²⁸

Aileen Wuornos' claim of self-defense held no merit with the jury; in fact, they deliberately neglected it, believing the lies that prostitution is, after all, sex work—a job of her own choosing.

Let us explore the meaning of "choice" in prostitution by looking at the sphere of choices available to or withheld from all women. That is an important consideration because prostituted women are our mothers, our daughters, our sisters, and ourselves. Right now for all women choices are severely limited by the poor, second class status dealt to us. After twenty-five years of the most militant feminism the "Second Wave" can muster, women still earn two-thirds of what men earn.²⁹ A woman's standard of living declines by 30% after divorce, and her ex-husband's increases by 15%.³⁰ In the years 1978 to 1985, husbands were more likely to pay car payments than child support.³¹ Eighty percent of female-headed households live below the poverty line, and one in five of their children are suffering from failure to thrive syndrome.³² The message expressed in this particular oppression of women is clear: if she chooses to live without coupling with a man, then she will most likely live poor.

27. Phyllis Chesler, *Sex, Death & The Double Standard*, ON THE ISSUES, Summer 1992, at 31.

28. Chesler, *supra* note 27, at 31.

29. See SUSAN FALUDI, BACKLASH: THE UNDECLARED WAR AGAINST AMERICAN WOMEN 335-443 (1991); CATHARINE A. MACKINNON, FEMINISM UNMODIFIED: DISCOURSES ON LIFE AND LAW 163-97 (1988).

30. FALUDI, *supra* note 29, at 21.

31. FALUDI, *supra* note 29, at 24.

32. Catharine MacKinnon, Speech at the Lewis & Clark College Gender Symposium (Apr. 1986).

Our personal safety and dignity is constantly under assault. We have no constitutional amendment which guarantees the legal equality of women to men. Our bodies' reproductive capacities are up for political debate. Every five minutes a woman is raped.³³ Eighty-five percent of women will be sexually harassed on the job.³⁴ One in three girls will be the victims of sexual molestation inside or outside the family.³⁵ In short, a mere 7.8% of women will escape sexual assault.³⁶ These are not choices—these are conditions of oppression. Yet often we practice self-deceit and collude with our oppressors by perpetuating the illusion of women's equality with men. Men's central role in maintaining our second class status is often unchallenged.

Prostituted women are judged to have made choices. But consider what kinds of choices one has when the average age at which CPA participants are abandoned to prostitution is fourteen, and the average age at which they are sold into pornography is eleven.³⁷ These are children! As one survivor put it:

I was thirteen when I was forced into prostitution and pornography, . . . I was drugged, raped, gang-raped, imprisoned, beaten, sold from one pimp to another, photographed by pimps, photographed by tricks. I was used in pornography and they used pornography on me; they knew a child's face when they looked into it. It was clear that I was not acting of my own free will. I was always covered with welts and bruises. . . . It was even clearer that I was sexually inexperienced. I literally didn't know what to do. So they showed me pornography to teach me about sex then they would ignore my tears as they positioned my body like the women in the pictures and used me.³⁸

Prostituted women and young people suffer from the prolonged and repeated trauma of serial homelessness. Ninety percent of CPA participants have no home and no money to buy food or necessities.³⁹

33. FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION, U.S. DEP'T. OF JUSTICE, UNIFORM CRIME REPORTS FOR THE UNITED STATES 1991 4 (Aug. 30, 1992).

34. MACKINNON, *supra* note 29, at 169.

35. MACKINNON, *supra* note 29, at 169.

36. MACKINNON, *supra* note 29, at 171.

37. Victim Survivor Testimony Data, *supra* note 2.

38. ANDREA DWORKIN, PORNOGRAPHY: MEN POSSESSING WOMEN xvi-xvii (1989).

39. Victim Survivor Testimony Data, *supra* note 2.

Their pimps, using the same techniques as batterers, take all of the money and make all the choices. Prostituted women are isolated by city codes which "zone" sex-selling businesses; they are educationally deprived and often deprived of resources such as welfare and food stamps. In spite of this, prostituted women, like most single mothers, precariously and courageously shoulder the major responsibility for support of their children. At CPA, 89% of prostituted women are mothers with young children.⁴⁰ What kinds of choices are there in these situations, really? Their survival, their making a way out of nothing, is as much a brilliant accomplishment as it is an intensely suffocating harvest.

Now, add the effects of racism. The unemployment rate for African-American people is 2.5 times that of European-Americans.⁴¹ Per capita income is not even two-thirds that of European-Americans.⁴² African-Americans are three times more likely than European-Americans to live below the poverty level.⁴³ Combine these racist atrocities with sexism and the historic devaluation of African-American women. Enslaved women were raped by white masters and called "whores" and "prostitutes" by white women of the plantations. Today, the rape of a white woman by a man of color is treated by our society as more important than the rape of any woman of color by a white man. Women of color are coerced into sexual liaisons by white employers; pimps and tricks continue to eroticize racist stereotypes and sexualize skin color. This continual devaluation of the African-American woman erases her humanity and places her and all women of color on display for men's use and abuse.⁴⁴ This systematic exploitation is the reason why one-quarter of women in the CPA program are women of color.⁴⁵ I can only assume that the percentage of African-American women used in the sex industry is comparable throughout the United States. Under these conditions, is prostitution really a choice?

The notion of choice is meaningless in this hopeless scenario. The

40. Victim Survivor Testimony Data, *supra* note 2.

41. DERRICK BELL, *FACES AT THE BOTTOM OF THE WELL: THE PERMANENCE OF RACISM* 3 (1992).

42. BELL, *supra* note 41, at 3.

43. COMMISSION ON MINORITY PARTICIPATION IN EDUC. AND AM. LIFE, AM. COUNCIL ON EDUC. & THE EDUC. COMMISSION OF THE STATES, *ONE THIRD OF A NATION* 4 (1988).

44. BELL HOOKS, *AIN'T I A WOMAN: BLACK WOMEN IN FEMINISM* 53 (1981).

45. Victim Survivor Testimony Data, *supra* note 2.

most profoundly universal way in which choice is stripped from the prostituted woman is through the abuse she endures as a child: 85% of survivors of prostitution report being victims of incest as children, 90% were physically abused, and 98% were emotionally abused.⁴⁶ It is an impossible situation.

Imagine trying to be a “good girl” in a corrupt relationship in which her primary identity to her father, grandfather, step-father, or brother is sexual. Incest creates the identity paradigm for her. She will replay this scenario again and again with every man she meets. No wonder she drops out of school. She sleeps days from having been kept up nights enduring her father’s many abuses or worrying about when it will happen again. No one ever interrupts her father’s behavior. She will lie to cover for him because he has threatened to kill her or her mom if she tells. Her junior high school never talks about personal safety in families or the inevitability of being brutalized by rape, battery, or incest. She thinks it must be her fault; she must have done something to deserve this because nobody else is talking about it. She tries to block or fragment her memories but the abuse continues. She takes drugs to get numb or to forget; or she runs away with the certainty in her heart that what she is running from *must* be worse than anything she might meet. She runs away into the captivity of pimps who enslave her, into conquering sexual assaults of eight to eighty men a day, 365 days a year. Prostitution is the cage from which she cannot escape:

I was unable to escape prostitution completely until I was in my early twenties, however I must tell you that the day I turned 18, the sexual abuse I was subjected to by the men who bought the right to my body did not turn into self-determined choice, nor did I view prostitution as a lucrative economic alternative, nor were any community resources made available to me so that I might be able to choose to leave.⁴⁷

If we want to talk about meaningful choices, we should do so now. Why do men choose to sexually exploit more than a million women and five hundred thousand children through the sex industry?⁴⁸

46. Victim Survivor Testimony Data, *supra* note 2.

47. Evelina Giobbe, *Statement of Evelina Giobbe, Program Director WHISPER*, WHISPER (WHISPER, Minneapolis, Minn.), VI, No. 1–2, at 5 (1992).

48. Evelina Giobbe, *Confronting Liberal Lies About Prostitution*, in *THE SEXUAL LIBERALS AND THE ATTACK ON FEMINISM* 72 (Dorchen Leidholdt & Janice G.

Why do we collectively choose to allow it? Pimps, players, and hustlers are freely choosing to traffic in women and children for one reason only—because it is profitable. By one estimate, \$40 million a day, \$14 billion a year, is spent on prostitution in the United States, and eight to \$10 million dollars a year on pornography.⁴⁹ Eastern Europe, fueled by capitalist marketplace values, is starting to traffic in women on a level rivaling that of places where trafficking in women is going strong: Southeast Asia, Peru, Germany, or Zimbabwe, to mention only a few.

Eighty-four percent of prostituted women are controlled by pimps.⁵⁰ Pimps are manufacturing sexual abuse. These profiteers are overwhelmingly white businessmen, who own hotels, bars, and travel and tourist industries.⁵¹ They own magazines; they are publishers and pornographers; they are, as one survivor said, “low-life, blood-sucking maggots.”⁵² Pimps prey on the hyper-feminine socialization of girl children and especially the vulnerability of incested children.⁵³ They recreate conditions of terror. To ensure a victim’s captivity he will: keep the focus on his needs; mete out unpredictable punishment; severely punish her for the tiniest infraction of his wishes; isolate her; withhold food, sleep and freedom; ensure that she feels like she is unstable, dependent on him, and unable to make it without him. Her captivity and terror predictably results in trauma bonding, where she trusts only her captor.⁵⁴ She is more afraid of going to the police than she is of continuing to live with him. She believes his crazy-making lies about the world outside her captivity. At the same time, sexual liberals abandon her by telling her that she is free to “choose” this “job.”⁵⁵

After a while, she starts believing there is something wrong with her because of the choice she has made. She must really be dirt. She is trying to stay alive in the best way she knows how, and saying that she wants what he wants may be the only way she can survive. Who will

Raymond eds., 1990).

49. Margaret A. Baldwin, *Pornography and the Traffic in Women: Brief on Behalf of Trudee Able-Peterson*, 1 *YALE J.L. & FEMINISM* 111, 122 (Spring 1989).
50. COUNCIL FOR PROSTITUTION ALTERNATIVES, ANNUAL REPORT (1990–1991) (on file with author).
51. Giobbe, *supra* note 48, at 74.
52. Victim Survivor Testimony Data collected by the Council for Prostitution Alternatives (Fall 1990) (unpublished data, on file with author).
53. KATHLEEN BARRY, *FEMALE SEXUAL SLAVERY* 119 (1979).
54. BARRY, *supra* note 53, at 93–94.
55. See generally PRISCILLA ALEXANDER, *SEX WORK* (1987).

reach out to her and tell her that she does not deserve abuse? Who will tell her that the sex industry is a marketplace for the commodification of her life and death? Who will tell her that they believe she did the best she could to stay alive in an impossible situation?

Not her perpetrators! The pimps count on and even bribe the public's complicity. They count on the fact that we will not interpret their actions as something we collectively want to stop. Nor will the men stop the harm which they perpetuate. This is their pleasure, their choice to buy what they want. Conservatively, it is estimated that a total of 1.5 million men use prostituted women each week.⁵⁶ Some studies suggest that the number of American men who use prostituted women is as high as 69% and 84%.⁵⁷ But who are these nameless, faceless men and what are they freely choosing to buy? Here is one survivor's story from the state of Ohio:

When I was twelve my mother began dating a man who immediately began torturing and selling me to the neighbors. I tried to tell, I tried to kill him—nothing worked. As time progressed, he began selling me to truckers at parties. One night he was selling me at a rest area when a cop approached him. I was so relieved—finally, someone would have to do something. The cop did something all right, he worked out a deal with my pimp to screw me in exchange for letting him go. The only police I saw after that were the ones who came to the parties to get laid.

. . . The organization that ran me also ran guns, drugs, and stolen goods. They catered completely to the client. A man could pay to torture a woman, to have films made, pictures taken, anything he wanted. If he had the money to buy her contract, he was more than welcome to kill her. I have seen women skinned alive, disemboweled, smothered, strangled and burned. There were men who like to hunt women in the woods and rape them, just like the 'good old days' in Vietnam. If an Asian woman was hunted . . . she had a good chance of being killed, so the man could re-live his glory days of being double veterans. All bodies were processed through funeral homes and buried in legitimate graves at specified

56. Baldwin, *supra* note 49, at 123.

57. Susan Brownmiller, *Speaking Out on Prostitution*, in *RADICAL FEMINISM* 72, 73 (Anne Koedt, et al. eds., 1973).

graveyards in the Dayton, Columbus, and Cincinnati area[s].⁵⁸

This account describes atrocities that are happening to women right now. Why do men commit genocide on prostituted women like Nazis did to Jews, gypsies, and gay people, and like European-Americans did and do to people of color? Why do we allow this to continue? Why do we not see johns as murderers and rapists among us? Why do we allow the euphemism that they are having "sex?" Rapists of non-prostituted women maintain they are having sex, but we do not apologize for them so grossly and set aside a class of women for them to abuse. We do not laugh; we do not claim that this is the victim's choice. We see that his sex is an act of rape.

I want to return to families and young people who are in danger of being groomed for the sex industry. The pain and despair of incest creates impossible situations: a child lives with and often adores someone who so cruelly abuses her. Children born into extreme poverty, children raped in families, and children who witness and are victimized by domestic violence are rendered vulnerable to use in the sex industry—these cumulative effects are only somewhat better known now than ten years ago.

There are other family dynamics which need scrutiny as well: from the fifteen hundred women who have escaped female sexual slavery through the doors of CPA, there is evidence that being born into a family practicing satanic ritual abuse escalates the risk of becoming a prostituted woman.⁵⁹ Twelve percent of women escaping prostitution are also escaping satanic cults.⁶⁰

Satanic cults are real families where young girls are tortured, programmed, and ordered to be brides and breeders of children. These children are used in rituals, sacrificed, and sold to pornographic distributors. In one cult, in one year, twelve rituals involving sex orgies, tortures, mutilations, and murders were filmed and sold to a pornographic distributor for \$250,000.⁶¹ If these children live, they may never escape because they have been programmed to return, programmed never to tell anyone, programmed that if they do tell they

58. Jennifer Frick, *Dear Antioch Community*, ANTIOCH COMMUNITY REC., Apr. 10, 1992, at 3 (letter to the editor).

59. Victim Survivor Testimony Data, *supra* note 2.

60. Victim Survivor Testimony Data, *supra* note 2.

61. Victim Survivor Testimony Data collected by the Council for Prostitution Alternatives (Aug. 4, 1992) (unpublished data, on file with author).

will die or they will suffer institutionalization in mental systems because no one will believe that they have been horribly hurt.

Growing up in an abusive family is in one way more harmful than the experience of surviving a Nazi concentration camp. Within the camps, survivors identified the common enemy, established a camaraderie among themselves, and knew that what was happening to them was horrible and unjust. They hoped to live, but millions died quickly. Innocent, tender children are dependent on their parents. They have placed their trust and love in them. The pain of violated trust goes on forever. It creates hatred, mistrust, and rage, not directed at the offending parent, but aimed inside, at themselves.⁶² Children learn valuable survival strategies including how to distance themselves from traumatic memories—even those memories which consist solely of vivid sensations and images which were encoded in the body's memories.⁶³ They learn to detach; they go numb and stay numb. Amnesia is survival. They learn not to integrate the tragic events, but they are frequently restimulated by unnamed smells, noises, déjà vu's.

Prostituted women do not just wake up one morning and descend on the streets and bars and hotels. They have learned to tolerate abuse from being abused. Because they had to pretend with their fathers, they have learned to pretend to love what is done to them in prostitution. That is how pornographers portray women—as desirous of what is done to them. That is what the customer wants—he will pay more for it, as if the greater the pain, the greater her sexual gratification.⁶⁴

We are still faced with the question—why do we scorn her so? Why do we not “see” her powerlessness? Why do we abandon her to the pages of *Playboy* or the celluloid of MTV or to the streets or to her pimp? Why do we tolerate her arrest for being a raped and battered woman and pretend we are arresting her for the crime of prostitution? Why do we distance ourselves from her? Why do we believe that prostitution would never happen to us? Why do we think there is something wrong with her? I want you to understand that there is nothing wrong with her. She is brilliant; she is perfect. The only thing wrong is that she has been hurt and hurt and hurt, and everyone of us not used in prostitution denies her hurt. I hope you consider helping her get

62. GENEEN ROTH, *WHEN FOOD IS LOVE* 128 (1991) (citing ALICE MILLER, *FOR YOUR OWN GOOD* (1983)).

63. JUDITH L. HERMAN, *TRAUMA AND RECOVERY* 39, 43, 46 (1992).

64. ANDREA DWORKIN, *LETTERS FROM A WAR ZONE: WRITINGS 1976-1989* 238 (1988).

away. Be proud when she does. Honor those few of us in the resistance movement who are undoing the systematic trafficking of women and children, and join us as allies until every woman is free. ✿