



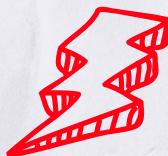
Checklist

OF ABOLITIONIST IDEAS

Here's a detailed checklist of key ideas, arguments and terms commonly used by abolitionist feminists (known colloquially as 'SWERFs') in their discourse against sex work. This list will help you identify whether someone is adopting an abolitionist stance or not.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| How to use this Checklist | 3 |
| General ideology | 4 |
| Position on sex workers | 5 |
| Relationship to the client and pimping | 6 |
| Criticism of other approaches | 7 |
| Links with other oppressions | 8 |
| Claimed political objectives | 9 |
| Other terminological clues | 10 |



How to use this Checklist



While abolitionists' **arguments present themselves as protective**, they actually harm sex workers by **denying their autonomy** and **promoting harmful laws** that increase the risks of **criminalization** and **stigmatization**.

By recognizing these narratives, we **can challenge these moralistic policies** and **promote evidence-based, rights-based approaches** that **improve health, safety and dignity for sex workers**.

→ If you find **several of these elements** in the discourse, it's likely that the person is adopting a **feminist abolitionist stance**, even if they deny it.

→ If the discourse discusses **workers' rights, autonomy, unionization or decriminalization**, it's likely more of a **pro-sex work approach**.

General ideology

- Speaks of sex work (SW) as a form of intrinsic **violence** or **exploitation**.
- Views SW as a manifestation of **structural inequality between men and women**.
- Presents SW as a form of **institutionalized** or **paid rape**.
- Associates SW with **modern slavery** and **human trafficking**, even in cases of individual consent. **No distinction is made between SW and human trafficking**.
- Speaks of the "**commodification of the female body**", "**objectification of the female body**", the "**commodification of intimacy**" or "**selling one's body**".
- Asserts that **consent is compromised** by **socio-economic factors**, and therefore invalid.
- Presents the female body as **sacred**, and rendered **unworthy** by the activity.
- Makes **no distinction** between **employers** and **pimps**.

Position on sex workers

Uses terms such as "**women in prostitution**" rather than "sex workers" (rejecting the term "work").

Always uses the term "**prostitute**," which emphasizes **victimhood** and/or **coercion**. Also, the use of "**prostituted person**" suggests that the person is **passive** in their own situation.

Describes sex workers as **victims** rather than people making their own choices.

Avoids or criticizes expressions that value the **autonomy** of sex workers.

Talks of "**exit strategies**" as a **priority objective** of public policy.

"All those who have left prostitution **say they would never do it again.**"

Almost never talks about **male sex workers**, and **little about trans* sex workers**.

Relationship to the client and pimping

Talks about clients as "**johns**" or "**sex buyers**" to suggest a **violent or criminal** element in their role.

Considers that "**without demand, there would be no supply**," with the aim of **repressing demand** (clients).

Equates **any third party linked to SW** (e.g. venue manager, employer, etc.) to **pimping**.

Promotes the penalization of clients, but not of the sex workers themselves (the so-called "Nordic" or "Swedish" model), **deliberately ignoring studies** showing the **disastrous effects** of this model **on sex workers** (impoverishment, increased violence, increase of harmful practices).

Criticism of other approaches

Rejects the demands of the "pro-sex work" movement as "denying the reality of violence."



Accuses the regulatory or legalizing approach of normalizing or even encouraging exploitation.



Speaks of the "trivialization of sexual violence" and the "glamorization of prostitution" that would be induced by the recognition of sex work as work.



??!??!!??!

Links with other oppressions

Reduces the SW sector to a **traumatic and vulnerable dimension** (migrant, precarious, etc.) in order to **speak for them** and **deny their ability to act**.

Speaks of **sex work** as a **universal symptom of patriarchy**.

Considers that **all people who engage in sex work** have been **victims of trauma** at some point in their life (rape, violence, abuse, etc.).



Claimed political objectives

- Advocates **penalizing clients** (Swedish model).
- Calls for the **closure of SW premises** (brothels, massage parlors, window brothels, etc.).
- Offers **psychosocial and financial support for sex workers** to help them **exit prostitution**, on the condition that the person in question wishes to "**get out of prostitution**" in order to qualify for this support.
- Offers **anti-pornography** and **anti-prostitution prevention sessions** (i.e. to students).

Other terminological clues



Use of terms such as "**prostitution**" or "**prostitutional system**" rather than "sex work".

Reference to authors/figures such as **Melissa Farley**, **Raymond Janice**, **Reem Aslalem**, **Julie Bindel**, **Catharine MacKinnon**, **Andrea Dworkin** and **NGOs** such as **Coalition Against Trafficking in Women**.

Use of expressions such as "**no little girl dreams of becoming a prostitute**," "**no one would do that by choice**," "**I wouldn't wish it on anyone**" or "**it's not normal to have so much sex in one day**".



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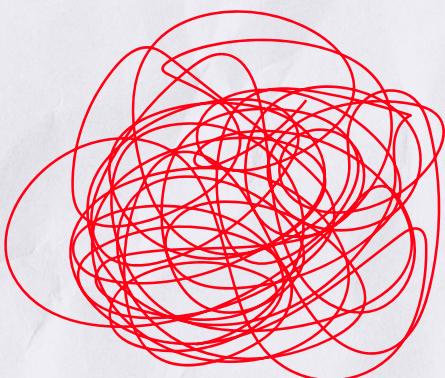
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