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**MORE THAN 300 HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS AND ANTI-TRAFFICKING ADVOCATES FROM 40 NATIONS URGE ASSOCIATED PRESS TO AVOID TERMINOLOGY THAT LEGITIMIZES PROSTITUTION AS A FORM OF WORK**

*Gloria Steinem, philanthropists Peter and Jennifer Buffett, the Women's Media Center and survivors of the sex trade among those who oppose the terms "sex work" and "sex worker"*

**New York, November 5, 2014** – More than 300 human rights organizations, frontline service providers and advocates such as Sanctuary for Families and the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, and survivors of the sex trade, are urging the Associated Press (AP) to refrain from using terms like “sex work” and “sex worker” because they legitimize prostitution as a form of “work” and conceal the violent and exploitive nature of the commercial sex trade.

In an open [letter to the editor](#) of the AP Stylebook, more than 300 people, including feminist author Gloria Steinem, philanthropists Peter and Jennifer Buffett, the Women's Media Center, and human rights activists from 40 nations including Australia, Brazil, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Norway, The Philippines, South Africa, Sweden, the United States and Venezuela, asked the AP to adopt alternative vocabulary that reflects the life realities of individuals bought and sold in prostitution.

Studies and testimony of survivors demonstrate that the sex industry is predicated on dehumanization, degradation, and gender violence that cause life-long physical and psychological harm. Between 65 and 96 percent of people in prostitution have been sexually assaulted as children; 60 to 75 percent have been raped by pimps and sex purchasers; and between 70 and 95 percent have been physically assaulted in prostitution.

Vednita Carter, the Founder of the survivor-led organization Breaking Free, added “The term ‘sex work’ was coined by supporters of the sex industry to normalize prostitution and mask the injuries it inflicts on those exploited in it. Prostitution is not ‘sex’ and it is not ‘work.’ It is a harmful practice steeped in gender and economic inequalities that leaves a devastating impact on those of us who were or are ‘in the life.’”

The letter explains that “[t]he chasm between the meaning of the word ‘work’ and the experiences of the average prostituted or trafficked person is too vast to be ignored. The term ‘sex worker’ wrongly suggests that the person in prostitution is the primary actor in the multi-billion dollar sex trade.”

“The term ‘sex worker’ renders invisible and unaccountable the traffickers, pimps, brothel and strip club owners, and the buyers of sex who prey on vulnerable individuals with histories of poverty, homelessness and sexual abuse,” says Autumn Burris, Founder/Director of Survivors for Solutions. “We must look at prostitution as a human rights violation.”

The letter also recommends against the use of the word “prostitute” and suggests alternative language including “person in prostitution,” “prostituted person” or “commercially sexually exploited person.” Instead of “sex work,” the advocates propose “sex industry,” “sex trade,” or “prostitution.” The

letter also states that “teen prostitute,” “teen prostitution” and “child sex worker” have no place in responsible journalism and must be replaced by “sex trafficked child.”

The letter was written in response to an invitation from the AP to submit comments for its Stylebook 2015 edition and to an online campaign calling on the AP to adopt the term “sex worker.”

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