

# Migrant Sex Work

## A Roundtable

BY DEBORAH BROCK, KARA GILLIES, CHANTELE OLIVER, AND MOOK

*L'auteure explore ici comment le protectionisme national et sexuel s'entrecroise et rejoint le racisme et l'ethnocentrisme pour définir l'émigrant "bon" ou "mauvais" et l'étranger "légal" ou "illégal," sur fond de restrictions ajoutées à l'immigration..*

In 1997, Toronto newspapers began to report on a series of raids on strip clubs and apartments, where women who had migrated from outside of Canada were allegedly working as prostitutes. For those of us who had been working on sex trade issues as political allies, this report alerted us to what women working within the trade already knew; the character of sex work in this city was rapidly changing as women began to find their way to Canada, through whatever means were available, for the economic opportunities that sex work in Canada provided. Tensions were mounting between migrant and Canadian-born sex workers; the latter assumed (often incorrectly) that migrant workers both undercut their prices and divided the pie of available income into thinner slices.

Building links among sex workers was made difficult, however, because so many of the migrant sex workers were undocumented or had entered Canada for a different purpose (for example, as students), and were compelled to work in an even more clandestine fashion than Canadian-born or landed-immigrant sex workers. Finally, "sex work" encompasses a range of occupations, including dancer, phone sex worker, escort, and massage parlour worker, as well as prostitution without guises. While these occupations invariably involves a provision of sexual services for eco-

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nomie remuneration, women who work in them are generally adamant about distinguishing what they do from prostitution because of the stigma and criminal sanctions surrounding prostitution. Many will not associate with organizations whose mandate it is to support prostitutes.

Kara, Mook, Chantelle, and I agreed to meet to discuss the growth of migrant sex work in Toronto. All of us were committed to an analysis of sex work which understood it as a form of labour through which women could exercise self-determination, rather than simply as an expression of women's sexual objectification and victimization. We believed it particularly appropriate to extend this kind of analysis to migrant sex work, given that it is occurring in the context of capitalist globalization and a significant increase of migrant labour generally. As activists, we knew that this kind of dialogue was an important step in the process of developing political strategies about how best to

secure labour and immigration rights for migrant sex workers. However, we recognize that these kinds of rights can only be secured when accompanied by the decriminalization of prostitution related activities (communication for the purpose of prostitution; procuring; being an inmate of, or keeping, a common bawdy-house) in Canada. As long as prostitution-related activities remain criminalized and highly stigmatized, sex workers will remain vulnerable to abuse and deportation, with no recourse to labour law protection or other basic rights.

This article is part of a longer dialogue that the four of us engaged in around Chantelle's kitchen table in October of 1999. We hope that it contributes to a better understanding of the situation facing migrant sex workers in Canada, as well as demonstrating the hidden role of migrant sex workers in productions of nation.

—Deborah Brock, July 2000.

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Kara: I certainly have noticed over the past three to five years that there has been a huge influx of women coming into Canada, particularly to Toronto, to work in various parts of the sex trade.

Destinations for migrant sex workers that were popular in the past, such as European countries, Australia, New Zealand, many of these countries have already taken action on not just the issue of migrant sex workers, but migrant workers in general, including so-called illegal migrant workers. They've tightened up their borders. They brought in a lot of very restrictive and indeed regressive immigration policies and so

# Analysis

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workers are now having to travel what is often greater distances, in order to find work. So Canada has become a very popular destination.

Mook: I can speak to the situation of Thai migrant workers. Until 10-20 years ago, Thai citizens could go to European countries to work without too much difficulty. Now European countries have visa regulations which tend toward closing the borders. So I think that's one of the push factors which have led Thai citizens to Canada. Globalization and the economic crises in Asian countries and in Eastern European countries have also contributed.

Kara: I don't think it's any coincidence that the majority of women who come to Canada to work are indeed coming from South East Asian countries and Eastern European countries because these are sites of economic and political upheaval. Transnational corporations are moving into countries in these regions to make use of cheap labour. Poverty is growing, particularly for women. While men also are travelling in order to find work, women are under increasing pressure to support themselves and their families and, of course, the sorts of markets that are available to women, locally and overseas, are often very limited. We're talking about domestic work, we're talking about sex work, these are areas where women's work is in demand and they'll hopefully be compensated. So we're seeing a lot of women travelling now, hoping to sometimes make a fortune, but other times just to manage to support themselves and get by.

Mook: We see a number of women from Russia going to Thailand, so

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the flow of labour is not only one way. However, the numbers of people from the so-called third world countries going to industrialized countries are greater than the numbers of people from industrialized countries going to the third world.

Kara: Part of it is a reflection of the very real concentration of wealth in the West or in the North, but at the same time, I think many of these women have been exposed to overly romanticized views of what it's like to work and live in Canada in the midst of this wealth.

Chantelle: I think that the infiltration of North American popular culture into the rest of the world is a big part of it too. A lot of the women whom I met while working as a dancer said that they chose to come here, not to leave a horrible situation, but believing that it would be better here. North American TV makes where they appear to be undesirable in comparison.

Debi: It is important for us to

conceptualize migrant sex workers as economic migrants, who are part of the flow of labour which accompanies the flow of capital. Women's movement across borders has largely occurred as the chattel of men, and Canada's immigration policy has certainly served to sustain that model. However, the "new" global economy has seen a rise in the number of paid women workers sustaining their families through factory work, domestic labour, and sex work, whether at home or abroad. These workers are largely women of colour, and racist and sexist ideologies are certainly a factor in ensuring that they are a source of cheap labour. For some of them, sex work will appear to be the best option, particularly when they consider that they could be losing their eyesight working as an assembler in a microelectronics factory, or sewing clothes in a sweat shop, for a whole lot less money. We need to conceptualize these women as having some agency, even within constrained options.

Kara: Some migrant sex workers are coming to Canada with the hopes of becoming a landed immigrant eventually. Others are simply travelling for the purpose of making money over a pre-established period of time, and plan on either returning to their country of origin or moving on to another destination. These women are often really taken aback to find that they aren't making more money, they aren't working fewer hours, and the quality of their lives is equal to or less than what it was in their home countries where they were also working in the sex trade.

I think it's interesting because often when we hear the term migrant

sex worker, or even migrant worker, there is an assumption that we're talking about women who are traveling from say, the south to the north or the east to the west, coming from very oppressive conditions and usually through organized channels, whether those channels are "criminal" in nature or not. Yet certainly, I think those of us in the business know a multitude of women who are migrant workers but who have come to Canada on their own, with family, with friends. I know quite a few women who have come to Canada for an arranged marriage, or come to Canada on student visas and had the situation not work out. Some find themselves stuck in an abusive marriage in a foreign country with either no status or status that is dependent on them staying in the abusive relationship. To get out of the marriage, they have to go underground, and one of the few options is the sex trade. It has amazed me over the years, the number of women whom I have worked with in massage parlours and escort agencies who at first are a little sketchy about what their background is. They don't want to talk, but after they've worked with you for a while and you come to trust each other as people and as colleagues, they will say, "I said I was from Turkey but I'm really Iranian," or "I came here to get married," or "I came here to go to school," or "I came here because my family sent me," and they're stuck. They tell me "This is a way of making money so I can return home" or "I didn't like the situation I was in and this is a better option for me at this time."

Mook: As we know, migrant sex workers are not a homogenous group. They vary by country of origin. Even a single country of origin will produce a diverse group of women. For example, they are not only the uneducated. I wish that we could have them join in this kind of discussion. I hope that time comes soon, but there are too many risks and barriers for them right now.

Kara: The type of sex work that is

performed and the venue in which it is performed varies as well. Women coming in to the country specifically to dance face different challenges than women who come in specifically to work in prostitution. It appears to me that women coming to work in massage parlours know that they aren't coming to provide mas-

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sages only, and that prostitution is involved. They may not be told that specifically because there is cover-up jargon that agents, managers and girls themselves have had to develop in order to avoid detection by law enforcement and immigration officials.

But it's certainly been my observation that women who come to work in the strip clubs are subjected more regularly to some degree of deceit. So, I guess the questions become: Was it deliberate deceit? Were they explicitly lied to in order to lure them overseas, put them into debt, and, to some degree, force them to work in a capacity that they really haven't chosen? Or, is it once again, a matter of the key words, language, specific industry jargon that some women simply aren't accustomed to on a local level?

Chantelle: I spoke to one woman who had watched a movie, I think it was *Striptease*, and thought that was what she would be doing, perform-

ing glamorous shows on stages, wearing great costumes. What they gave her was little Spandex bathing suits, not sequins. Many of them are surprised by the dirtiness of the clubs. They thought of Canada as a first-world, clean country. A lot of women, especially Eastern Bloc women, are living at the clubs in rooms over them. The rooms are equally tiny and dingy. It's demoralizing.

Mook: Some of the Thai women mentioned that to me too, they didn't know they would be living and working in the same place in a one-bedroom apartment. They live in the room and the next day they see customers there. They were told that prostitution is legal in Canada. Or that they can work as a masseuse because the owner has a licence. But then the police arrive.

I think that the issues of migrant sex workers overlap with the issues of undocumented migrant workers in general. They also overlap with the issues of local sex workers. However, being a migrant sex worker is more complicated than either one of these positions. There is a high chance that migrant sex workers will get busted because the police target the businesses that employ them. They have no labour law protection, they face deportation, and they face criminal charges related to prostitution.

Kara: There is often the assumption, and this is true for local sex workers as well, that if you're working independently and have more autonomy over your workplace, you are coming from a position of privilege and everything's A-OK. If you are working for a third party you are automatically subject to abuse and exploitation. I think when we look at migrant sex workers we can say there are large numbers who come over independently, large numbers who come through organized channels, and yet it's not whether they're independent or working for a third party which is going to ultimately dictate their satisfaction with their working conditions. It is the particulars of their work environment, of the work

they're having to do, of their understanding of what the work involves and what the pay is going to be. I think it's also important to understand that while there are independent women coming to Canada who find themselves in abusive or really unsupportive working situations, there are women who come through organized crime networks who say, "You know what? Like anything there are ups and downs, but this has worked for me and I'm going to continue to travel, I'm going to continue to go to different countries and make the money that I can." Many will say that their greatest fear is being found and deported or finding themselves facing criminal and immigration charges.

Chantelle: Many of the women have a good situation, although perhaps not ideal. People hear "migrant sex worker" and think, we have to save them and send them all home, or take them out of that life. But yes, the biggest threat to them may be getting found out, perhaps facing criminal charges or deportation.

Debi: Over the last several years, there have been numerous raids on clubs and apartments in Toronto where migrant sex workers are employed. Police and the media have represented these places as dens of female sexual slavery and organized crime. The discourse of female sexual slavery is being appropriated and mobilized in conjunction with a growing post cold war scare—the fear of international organized crime. Relatedly, we see discourses of gender protection and national protection intersecting and connecting with racism and ethnocentrism to support definitions of the "good" and "bad" immigrant, and accompanying restrictions on immigration. Proposed changes to Canada's current *Citizenship Act* would increase job skill requirements, lengthen the waiting time for citizenship, tighten language requirements, and deny people citizenship in the name of "national interest" if it is suspected that they may commit a crime.<sup>1</sup>

When we saw the distinctions between "good" and "bad" immigrants intensifying in conjunction with the deepening economic problems which were incurred by putting neo-liberal economic policies into practice in this country, we could see support for more restrictive immigration policies being garnered through a

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campaign devoted to purportedly exposing the criminal immigrant. This campaign was so effectively mobilized in the mainstream Toronto media that to simply be a Black or Latino male was to be placed under suspicion. More recently, we see distinctions between legal and illegal immigrants (the former represented as those who wait politely in line for their turn to enter Canada, and the latter as those who jump the queue, a sign that they are up to no good) being deployed in the same way. It is one more example of how moral categories and judgements are organized in support of sustaining a particular model of the Canadian nation—white, western, and wealthy—against intruders who are perceived to be a threat to this model.

By clamping down on prostitution involving migrant women, the police and the Canadian legal system are presented as actually working in the best interests of the women involved, by protecting them from traf-

fickers. In late nineteenth and early twentieth century anti-trafficking discourse, traffickers were generally portrayed as individual immigrant/"foreign" men. Now they are portrayed as international/"foreign" criminal syndicates. Not much has changed. So tougher immigration policies are equated with protecting women and protecting the Canadian nation, simultaneously, from the (usually masculine) foreigner.

Kara: The United Nations is working on developing new provisions concerning the suppression and elimination of trafficking in women and children, which are being introduced as supplementary to their provisions for the suppression of transnational organized crime. The two are being very closely linked. This will supercede the United Nations 1949 Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others.<sup>2</sup>

It is difficult to develop an agreed upon definition of organized crime. Could one argue that if an activity is criminalized, the way prostitution is largely criminalized, then any attempt by people to organize a business around prostitution could be labelled organized crime? Of course, many women work for or with individuals or groups that we might all agree constitute organized crime. However, many of them say that they get better support and have better networks within these syndicates than they gain from social services or their larger communities. I know that I've worked for some organized crime and had no problems at all. I recognize, though, that I have had autonomy in my work and haven't been dependent upon them for anything more than my pay cheque. I have my proper documentation, I've been a citizen. The situation can be different for migrant sex workers. But it is my observation that while some really bad stuff can be committed within organized crime syndicates, they also have their own set of rules and set of ethics and a lot of

people are able to manage quite successfully within that milieu.

We talk about organized crime as though it is one unique entity, and yet there are different organizations; some of them are very loosely associated, some of them are very highly organized. I think that has an impact on individual women's experiences working for organized crime. I know two women who are now working independently in massage parlours in Toronto who came through what they realized, after the fact, must have been an organized crime network, from Malaysia into Thailand into Canada. And yet, it was so disjointed, the hierarchy was so loosely put together that they never really felt under the control of any one organization. They did have some negative experiences. For example, the contract they had signed upon leaving Malaysia set out certain conditions of work and the expectation was they would work in a massage parlour and see 350 clients in Canada before earning income that would be theirs to keep. When they arrived in Canada they were told that they had to see 450 clients. But they saw that as being the decision of the individual massage parlour manager and weren't sure how far up in the hierarchy this kind of duplicity went. Some anti-prostitution organizations might take this as evidence that these women were trafficked, in that they were not being given accurate and sufficient information to make informed choices. However, to assume this is to confuse labour abuses with trafficking.

Debi: It is the organized crime networks which are being presented as the modern day traffickers in women. Yet the labelling of these women as trafficked, as female sexual slaves, erases many women's active participation in the daily survival of their families and themselves. It renders their labour invisible. I think that the reality of these women's experiences belies the binary representation of either complete coercion or individual freedom of choice.

The practices and experiences of migrant sex work are much more complex than either of these positions would imply. I think that we need to completely jettison the concept of "trafficking" because it creates a significant misrepresentation of migrant sex work, and impedes our ability to do work which can potentially improve conditions for migrant sex workers.

Chantelle: According to the courts, if you are not a victim, then you are a criminal. If you say "yes, I'm a victim of a trafficker" you may be offered help. If you don't declare a victim status then you risk being deported as a criminal.

Mook: From my experience working as an interpreter for women in the courts, the judge and the legal system assume that, if you are willing to come here, you are part of the crime. Even in the case of involuntary prostitutes, the legal system works against them. They're not true victims because they are not "good victims."

Debi: To be a good victim, you have to have been drugged and kept under lock and key.

Kara: I think that there is a racialized and racist component as well. Women coming from Asian countries are often characterised as being very passive, very innocent, sweet village girls who don't know any better. Women coming from Eastern European countries are often characterized as these tough "gonna-see-it-through" broads. So you have the racial and cultural stereotypes coming into play when it comes to responses to migrant sex workers, even in the legal system.

Mook: Asian women are in effect asked, "are you a dragon lady or are you a victim?" That's my experience.

Debi: I want to return for a minute to the ways in which a "traffic in women" discourse was first deployed by social reformers during the late nineteenth century in Canada, the United States and Britain. What they mobilized for and won was an expansion of criminal code legislation, par-

ticularly the procuring and bawdy house provisions, allegedly for the protection of women and girls. But when we actually look at how this legislation has shaped actual practices, we find it is not really about the protection of women at all, but has provided more legal mechanisms for the sexual policing and control of women and girls. So it is of great concern that some feminist organizations are taking up the discourse of trafficking in women, without learning from the lessons of the past.<sup>3</sup>

Kara: I think that's particularly true of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), which is organized by feminists like Janice Raymond, Kathleen Barry, and Sheila Jeffreys, who hold up sex workers as symbols of women's general sexual oppression. For them, all prostitution is inherently coercive. They formed the organization in the United States in 1991, with the ultimate goal of abolishing prostitution altogether. Their approach has been very influential on the way in which the United Nations has taken up trafficking issues.

Debi: With the development of sex worker run organizations, where sex workers began to speak for themselves, it became more difficult for feminists who had a particular kind of victimization perspective to impose that uniformly and easily, because many of the women who had been labelled as victims were challenging that. I am concerned that some of the feminists who have become concerned about migrant sex work have found a new population of women to label as victims and to otherize in a way that they no longer can with non-migrant sex trade workers. Their position utilizes racist and neo-colonialist stereotypes of "Third World" women of colour as passive women who need to be rescued by independent northern/western feminists.<sup>4</sup> Some of these women may be victimized in various kinds of ways as you've pointed out. However, we have to look at this as a labour issue, and be aware of how criminal law

and immigration law create the conditions for the exploitation of women who need to earn a living.

Kara: The Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW) has been, in principle at least, somewhat better than CATW. GAATW was formed in 1994 by feminists who wanted to consider sex workers' perspectives and to work as allies. In actual practice, I have seen some inability to let go of the traffic in women/sexual slavery construct. They have recently decided to keep on using the construct of "trafficking" even though they have become more critical of it as they developed a more sophisticated understanding of the movement of women sex workers across borders. They believe that, since "trafficking" has gained attention on the international agenda, they should keep using it strategically as a means of bringing sex workers to the table. They believe that, once there, sex workers and their allies can then work on shifting the agenda.

Debi: GAATW has faced criticism that, although unlike CATW it makes a distinction between forced and voluntary prostitution, by focussing only on forced prostitution they actually undermine the efforts of the international prostitutes' rights movement for the legitimization of their work, rather than working as the allies they believe themselves to be.<sup>5</sup>

Kara: In October of 1997, an informal ad hoc group called the Toronto Network Against Trafficking in Women (TNATW) was formed in response to a mass raid of massage parlours and apartments in Toronto the previous month. TNATW's stated purpose was to provide support and advocacy for the arrested women. The group was formed because the Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women-Canada (GAATW) had sent several representatives to Toronto to mobilize support among women's groups, the local Thai community, and NGOs..

Debi: The raid on these businesses was the culmination of an investigation code-named "Project Orphan"

by Metro Toronto Police, the Ontario Provincial Police, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. So all three levels of government coordinated their efforts to make this happen. There were 23 women and two men arrested, mainly on prostitution-related charges. The women came mainly from Thailand and Malaysia, and had entered Canada on tourist visas. Project Orphan was the first of an ongoing series of raids and arrests. [The most recent raids that I am aware of occurred in the summer of 2000, and were the culmination of a year long investigation called "Project Almonzo," which targeted prostitution in Toronto strip clubs. Fifty-five dancers were charged with being inmates of a common bawdy house, and six of them were alleged to be in the country illegally, having migrated from Hungary.] So we can see how the targeting of migrant sex workers is being used as a rationale to clamp down on prostitution generally.<sup>6</sup>

Kara: When the Toronto network was first established, I wondered where the women had come from. In the last ten years of working in the sex trade in Toronto, I had not seen or heard from them, although sex workers have been seeking solidarity from feminists for years. It was as though there was a new group of underprivileged, abused women who could be swooped up and rescued. I found that to be a problem.

I am concerned about migrant sex workers and I understand that they're facing all sorts of issues, some specific to them. I was willing to work with TNATW. However, I was the token whore on board. I provided information, analysis, and legwork, but found my work dismissed when we disagreed. I understand that the members may come out of a particular feminist perspective or form their opinions of pure ignorance, but I wasn't prepared to spend my time working in that environment.

Another group of women got together in 1998 and formed the Toronto Migrant Sex Trade Work-

ers' Advocacy Group. They seemed to have more background knowledge of the social context for the growth of migrant sex work, and be more supportive of sex workers and migrant workers generally. However, they didn't have the momentum to keep things going.

Debi: Any group of people that comes together to try to develop an analysis of migrant sex work which accounts for the complexities of what is actually happening, and which attempts to develop a strategy which can potentially be useful for migrant sex workers, faces a daunting range of tasks. You need people with a non-judgmental attitude toward sex work. You need people who are familiar with immigration policy, criminal law, and labour law. You need people who are familiar with the different situations which women in various parts of the sex trade will be confronted with. You need to be aware of how the political and economic situation in each woman's country of origin will influence the options available to her. You have to decide whether you want to direct your efforts to general policy shifts, or whether you want to extend your work to direct support for the arrested women, or women who potentially face charges.

Kara: Yes. Many people are not willing to give support to migrant sex workers just on the basis of what the women's needs are. Any support is couched in a lot of moralizing and protection of their own ethics. If we want to be really helpful, we need to consider how migrant sex workers are assessed and treated by Canadian immigration and by law enforcement agencies. We need to consider how this assessment and treatment is going to have an impact on local sex workers, on migrants in other forms of work, and on people trying to immigrate to Canada under all classifications. Concerns about the exploitation of migrant sex workers can be used very easily to help develop or give support for regressive and restrictive immigration laws. One

of the things I find very disturbing is that very few people are putting their attention to meeting the needs of migrant sex workers. They're more concerned about building larger analyses about how the situation of migrant sex workers is going to fit into their social-political agenda. That's true I think of a lot of feminist organizations, of international organizations like the United Nations, and it's true of the Canadian government as well.

Mook: I've only worked with Thai women. What has amazed me is that when I talk to people about my work, I find that there are three questions that are really popular for them to ask. The first thing is "were they willing to come here?" The second one is "how did they get here?" They want to know if the women used a false passport, and what kind of transportation they used. The third question is "had they done this type of work before in Thailand?" When I listen to these questions, I don't know why they ask them, because there's nothing related to the immediate needs or long-term needs of the women. The women want a lawyer, they want to go for a VD test or whatever, but nobody wants to know that.

Chantelle: Safe, anonymous, legal advice would be top of the list for most women, whether they're here because they want to be and they want to figure out how to stay, or want to figure out how to leave because they don't have their passport anymore because it's been taken away from them. Most of the women I've talked to, especially from Eastern Bloc countries, say they have questions but they're so afraid. They don't want to get deported, or go home without a certain amount of money.

Kara: They want legal advice covering a variety of arenas. Women want to know the legal status of whatever form of sex work they're practising in Canada. They want to know what their actual status is as a migrant worker under immigration law and, if they want to alter that status, what routes can they take.

Women who have signed contracts may want to know if there is any redress for contract violation. They also need a means of accessing that information. There are some very concrete barriers such as language barriers, and physical barriers such as not knowing their way around the city. There are some psychological barriers involved too, such as, not knowing who you can trust. Is it safe to go? Can I really tell the truth? Can I ask questions honestly without putting myself and perhaps my colleagues in jeopardy? Not only in jeopardy from immigration and law enforcement around criminal activity, but in jeopardy from the management, from the agent?

Access to medical care is also an issue. A lot of women are not covered under public health insurance, and do not know that there are free community clinics that they can go to. And, even when they find out about a community health clinic, there might not be proper language interpretation or it might be culturally inappropriate in terms of the questions that are asked, the way they're examined, and so forth.

Chantelle: Dancing is legal work in Toronto, as long as you have a licence, but we are accorded no protection whatsoever. All members of the Exotic Dancers Alliance have at different times made complaints about working conditions in the clubs, but have never had any meaningful response. We complain about conditions like no toilet paper, and the toilets are all flooded and there's only two toilets for 125 women. That is the reality that a lot of dancers face that makes the work unpleasant. It isn't connected to the romantic image of victims—we're victims of no toilet paper. It is very demoralizing to have to deal with that and have no one to complain to. A group of women formed the Exotic Dancers' Alliance several years ago so that we would have an organizational base to express our shared interests, and hopefully have a greater impact than we would simply speaking as indi-

viduals. [The first chapter of the Exotic Dancers Alliance, was formed in San Francisco in 1992.]

Kara: And then there's always the fear that, if you do come forward with a complaint, it's going to be used as an excuse to enforce other laws; inspectors and police will show up to see if there is a liquor licence, and to make sure that all of the girls are licenced and documented.

I think that the laws which prohibit working safely as a prostitute and the local licencing bylaws around dancing work to create a whole underground arena in which sex workers are forced to conduct their business. When you're working in this criminal or quasi-criminal atmosphere, it often invites real criminals into the milieu. And because of these laws, sex workers don't have any protection under labour legislation. Until prostitution is considered to be a form of work, and exotic dancing is considered to be legitimate work, we're not going to get any support from labour activists and we're not going to be able to change the labour laws or to seek redress for damages against us. While there is a vacuum of support for sex workers, the government can step in with laws against procuring, laws against common bawdy houses, licencing provisions in the strip clubs, thinking that they're going to offer us protection when really all we need is to be considered actual workers and have the rights that other workers have.

I think that immigration law is something that needs to be examined as well. Why is it that women, particularly women originating from certain countries, have such a hard time getting in to Canada? It is a great concern that the proposed changes to immigration and refugee law make specific references to the trafficking of women and children for sexual purposes as part of the platform for why we need to tighten our borders. It seems to me a very deliberate ruse to garner support from otherwise liberal thinking people for an extremely racially biased and re-

gressive immigration policy.<sup>7</sup>

Deborah Brock teaches sociology at York University, and has been active in campaigns for prostitutes' rights. Her book, *Making Work, Making Trouble: Prostitution as a Social Problem*, was published by the University of Toronto Press in 1998.

Kara Gillies is a prostitute and sex workers' rights advocate.

Chantelle Oliver is a cultural artist and sex worker activist who experiments with emerging digital video technologies and popular culture to create accessible, fun and exciting feminist theory. She has worked as a grant writer and fund raiser for the Exotic Dancers' Alliance.

Mook Sutdhibhasilp is a researcher for the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women, and has worked as an advocate for Thai migrant sex workers.

<sup>1</sup>Campaign to Defend Immigrants and Refugees; Stop C-63 *Information Sheet* (Toronto, 1999).

<sup>2</sup>Also see: UNESCO; United Nations Press Release.

<sup>3</sup>Also see Walkowitz; Valverde.

<sup>4</sup>Also see Doezema; Murray.

<sup>5</sup>Again, see Doezema; Murray.

<sup>6</sup>For more information on Project Orphan, see The Toronto Network Against Trafficking in Women (TNTW) "Background" Undated information sheet. For more information on Project Almonzo, see Mitchell.

<sup>7</sup>For a more detailed account of Canadian immigration policy and its impact on women, see Arat-Koc.

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### EMMA KIMOR

#### In Our Land There is No Dusk and Hardly Any Dawn

In our land  
Day drops suddenly into  
Night's heavy lap  
And summer into  
Frosty puddles ungarished by  
Golden autumn garlands.

In our land  
Young boys drop suddenly into  
Bloody puddles  
And young girls into widow's tears.  
This is their first summer flower  
Sprung from a wreath over  
Two-meter-deep of snow.

In our land  
Peace drops suddenly  
Only into our dreams  
Then dawn and spring  
And smile and children  
Burst out blossoming  
Into serene summer day.

*Emma Kimor is a writer living in Israel.*