



Sex Workers and Allies To Hold Press Conference in Orlando, FL — Monday, April 22, 2019

We, SWOP (Sex Worker Outreach Project) Tampa, SWOP Orlando, SWOP Behind Bars, Sex Worker Solidarity Network, Decriminalize Sex Work, Florida NOW, and more, have gathered together today to ask our lawmakers to *listen to sex workers and stop these arrests.*

All eyes are on Florida because of Robert Kraft's high-profile hand job, but the raids that targeted 10 massage parlors in South Florida are part of a growing national trend. We are standing here today to raise awareness about the terrible consequences of siccing the police on vulnerable people. We are here today to offer solutions to this country's trafficking problem.

We must stop the arrests.

Handcuffs do not help. The police are not protecting people in the sex trade; they are hunting them. All of the women that Florida police claimed that they "rescued" are facing multiple felony charges. Each and every one of them was handcuffed, their money confiscated, their license and legal residency threatened; over half of them are still in police custody. If any of these women were in a bad situation before, they are even worse off now.

We are asking lawmakers, the media, and the citizens of Florida to listen to sex workers.

Sex workers from all over the state are organizing against a proposed Prostitution Registry. We know that this law will not help victims of sex trafficking, it will not punish violent offenders, it will only make sex work harder and more dangerous for everyone by pushing it further underground. Lawmakers should listen to us. No one is more motivated to stop violence and exploitation within the sex industry than sex workers.

Sex workers, survivors, and allies are organizing all over the country. We are all asking for decriminalization.

Decriminalizing sex work will stop these arrests. Police departments will be able to focus on violent criminals, and it will give sex workers and trafficking victims the ability to advocate for themselves without fear of arrest.

If you want to help victims, stop arresting people in the sex trade and instead start listening to them.