

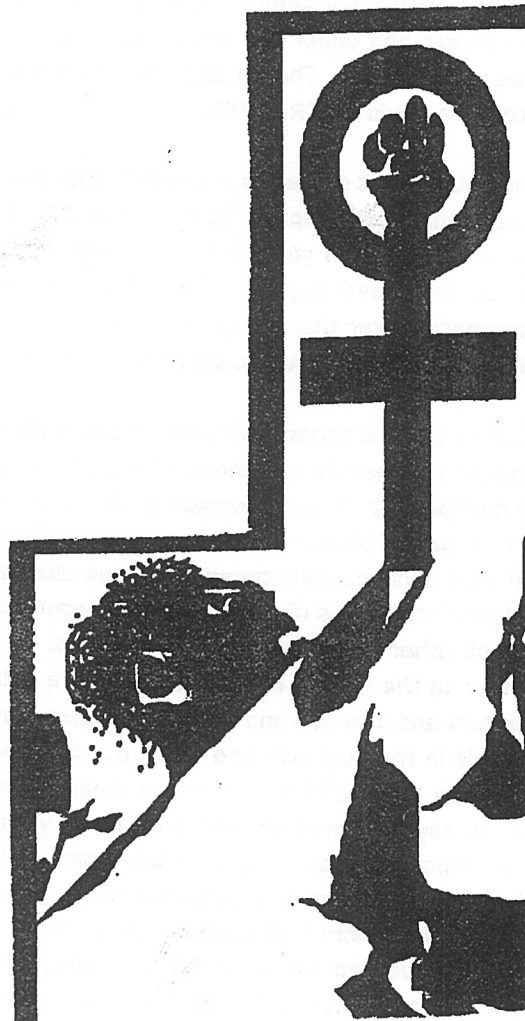
# TRAPPED

## CHAIN-PAMPHLETS

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BOA



# TRAPPED

There's laws that criss-cross burning-like through our lives, that keep us under threat and under fire and under spit if we do as we do, live as we best dare. There's the risk, more alive than resistance, that we could be TRAPPED.

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In prisons and institutions that sink souls in cement. That overflow with the reminder that "public space" is only on postcards that'll be sent somewhere else: If you work the street, sleep the street, live the street, they'll cage you. The reminder that we feed white supremacy better than hungry stomachs in this country. That institutions don't lick wounds, they swallow people.

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In low mumbles and quick whispers because in court as in life we are still unworthy witnesses of others, of ourselves, of our lives and their complexities, of our boundaries. Becuz we're more than victims or happy hookers; our experiences of sex work are rooted in their context. Sometimes of difficult alternatives, of abuse, of lack. Other times of more power to negotiate, to enjoy, to hold each other up. They are ours to name.

We cannot witness to the myriad forces at play cuz a lotta talkshows and reporters and charities and yeah, sometimes feminists, still think people in the business and other marginalized and/or poor people are too stupid to talk about anything but their own lives. If you say your personal life is off limits you're accused of being an impostor or an exception ("too smart to be real") and the "real experience" is what they decide it is, they'd almost rather snack on a sensational story in disgust and voyeurism.

Age of consent laws, coerced "social reinsertion" programs (like Streetlight and Johnschoools) and Dworkin Theorists tell us

## sex worker solidarity collective:

to:

- redistribute basic resources. ie. food, daily supplies, information
- organize, educate, and, if they should choose to have us, agitate alongside the sex workers of saskatoon
- provide opposition to conservative community groups
- provide the support networks necessary so that, should they choose, the workers can organize and/or unionize according to their needs - working prostitutes should be empowered to control their own working conditions

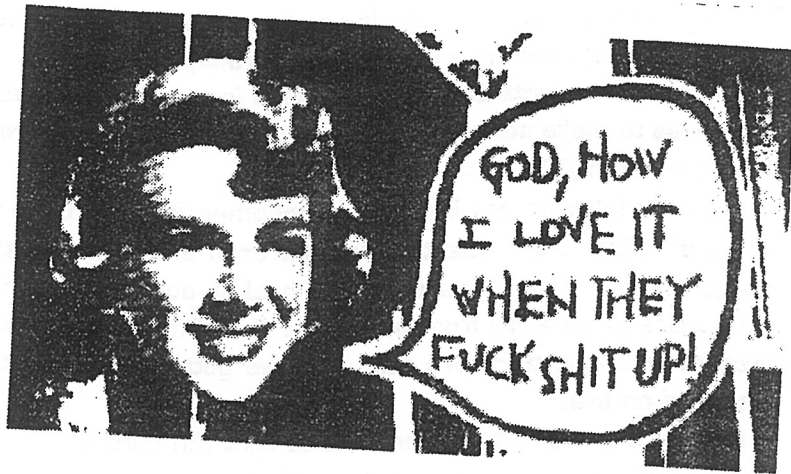
\* the actions of this collective stem from the recognition that prostitution, in its current form, is often unsafe and exploitative. sex workers, as any other worker, have a right to safe working conditions, equitable wages, and the freedom to unionize - none of which are feasible under current legislation. we oppose any law that criminalizes sex work and support complete decriminalization of the industry. in the meantime, through the redistribution of resources and information, the daily challenges faced by these workers will be lessened. thus granting them increased physical and emotional resources to dedicate to other pursuits - family, education, arts, leisure, etc.

we do not perceive the eradication of prostitution as our goal. instead we are working toward creating a community in which sex work will become a legitimate and respected choice, in which women (and men) are free to express themselves sexually in any manner that suits them without fear of retribution. today many women, in particular, find themselves forced into the sex industry by conditions of abject poverty. their working conditions are not only worsened by the oppression of capitalism, racism, and sexism, but by repressive legislation that criminalizes them and forces the industry underground, rendering it invisible. by forcing prostitution away from the public sphere, politicians create abhorrent working conditions and legislate unnecessary relationships between the sex industry, organized crime and narcotics trafficking. therefore, we will continue to confront not just the systems of exploitation, but the capitalists who control them.

we vehemently oppose current knee-jerk reactionary legislation predicated upon punitive measures against johns - ie. fines and 'educational' programming. such initiatives do absolutely nothing to address the actual causes of poverty and exploitation. moreover, the concept of deterring johns is inherently flawed in that individuals who are coerced into the sex trade by severe poverty require the income provided to them by the johns: no johns = no money = no food. this legislation is also founded upon paternalistic, sexist perceptions of women - that they require the benevolent judgement of the state to make healthy, intelligent decisions on their behalf, and that women ought not express themselves in a self-determinate sexual nature. we strongly object to such blatant condescending patriarchal bullshit.

we will provide:

- food: bagels, spreads, fruit (fresh and dried) and veggies, vegetarian soup, fair trade coffee and/or hot chocolate
- birth control, including condoms
- legal information
- health information
- local support and crisis agency information
- food not bombs pamphlets
- prostitutes' organizations and unionizing information
- daily supplies: reusable menstrual supplies, first aid supplies, infant and children's clothing, winter clothing



whether we have or haven't been raped: As if violating our own stories were no worse than violating our bodies. None of them are around to help when hos or ex-hos wanna press charges.

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In 10-hour shifts with no food, in fire trap tourist rooms, in clubs and agencies with racist and sexist and fucking gross quotas. Because the bars are being bought up by chain corporations (deja vu...) and boys with guns and the law is grey. So you're busy watching your back lest someone didn't get paid off enough and it's easy to forget you don't have a minimum salary in case it's a bad night, forget the girl who miscarried in the change room and had to pay a "late fee" before they'd let her go home. How strippers and escorts can never decide for ourselves what our rates and limits are. When you're drunk, it's easier to forget that the guy at the unionized workers association laughed Diane off the phone and that, like a million domestic workers, ya got no protection should ya break a leg and that the only group in town working with male strippers refuses to condemn the (they admit) really bad working conditions cuz they're on good terms with management. And most of all, you wanna forget people who say you make enuf money, so shut the fuck up.

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In flight and back alleys and beneath fists sometimes cuz cops keep us running and running away from each other and spaces we know. Laws won't allow us to take the time to negotiate clearly, to work in safe places, to hire protection.

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In limbo and in hiding because once you have a sex work-related criminal record, it is almost impossible to immigrate to new countries or gain citizenship where you are (and sex work remains one of not that many under-the-table options.)

After squeezing the blood and guts outta poor countries, white-ruled rich countries spike their borders with racism and xenophobia against the entry of World Majority women of colour, particularly prostitutes, making the only viable entry through a "trafficker." Even for people who knowingly migrate to work in the business, without papers, abuse and sexual exploitation become impossible to report without the risk of deportation and more abuse at the hands of authorities.

Without ever identifying anti-immigration and anti-sex-work laws that permit horrific violations to continue, much here is

made about trafficking in women and children (often playing on the stereotype of the passive and depraved Asian women) and used, in turn, to fuel even more xenophobic crackdowns, particularly on single women of colour wishing to immigrate to Canada.

In agony and annoyance cuz if we need help, sometimes there's a price to pay. Charity makes food and shelter and detox and the chance for help to report abuse a favour not a right. Some shelters for youth or adults don't accept sex workers and very few accept transgender sex workers (or non-sex workers, for that matter). If they need help, it's usually in you-on-your-knees-getting-a-pat-on-the-head pity/control and not solidarity. I've seen six different girls (who were still working by choice) "repents and regret" the "dirty money" they "escaped" becuz it was the only way to get a hand or approval or anyone to listen. Even in the case where getting out is what need be, diving into shame and mostly christian moralizing should never be a prerequisite.

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In isolation, cuz we're separated like zoo animals. Scared to tell, scared to say. Cuz even though they bust us with the same laws we play street whores against escorts against \$10 strippers against \$6 strippers against doms. Hustlers vs. transwhores vs. genetic women. We play "clean" kids against "junkies," 'stead of holding up for better access to detox that are culturally appropriate and respectful and keeping prices for services up for everyone. Cuz when you got no basement salary money cuts a ruthless compassion. Cuz families and friends disown us.

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In danger, cuz you hear hate crackle on the sidewalk like salt under the feet of passers-by. And there's the indifference you take for granted like ice on the ground till it breaks your back and you wonder, and you wonder, who will pick me up? Cuz the media always ask if we pay taxes which is of much more concern to the Canadian viewing audience than the fact that 5% of all murders in Montreal between '82 and '92 were of prostitutes and half as many were resolved than other murders.

Because laws and attitudes that support them,  
the ones that slice up land and seek to rob and destroy First Nations peoples

the ones that keep poor people and/or people of colour in jail  
the ones that terrorize the bodies of transpeople  
the ones that write our job description in the Criminal Code  
choose to make sex workers' lives without value, endangered  
and often SHORT.

I think a lotta us are like flies, sometimes flying through a mess of spider webs. Evertime we get tired and wanna rest, we gotta watch that the strands that hold us don't stick, don't rip a piece of us away from ourselves. Cuz, like a whole lotta prostitutes know, traps are set... now we gotta figure how to set them on fire.

Rib ta rib ta rib to block the wind to light the match  
Rib ta rib ta rib we gotta set 'em ablaze.  
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Trapped.

