

# Summary of Major Findings Regarding Prostitution and Trafficking in Nevada

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Melissa Farley 2007

This document outlines some of the major findings from a two-year study of Nevada prostitution and trafficking.

Melissa Farley, Prostitution & Trafficking in Nevada: Making the Connections. (2007)

1. Legal prostitution's reputation far exceeds its reality. Legal prostitution is only 10% of all prostitution in the state. Most prostitution in Nevada, including all prostitution in Las Vegas, is illegal. Prostitution is legal only in some of Nevada's rural counties which are located away from the state's two major population centers, Reno and Las Vegas. 2. Legal prostitution does not decrease the rapes of women in Nevada. Quite the opposite. Nevada's women are raped at rates that are twice that of New York and a fourth higher than the U.S. average. Women are three times as likely to be raped in Las Vegas as compared to New York City. Men in the state tend to normalize sexual violence. College-aged men in Nevada are much more likely than college men in other states to use women in prostitution, to go to strip clubs and massage parlors. Nevada college students tend to justify sexual exploitation and considered it acceptable that their future sons would use women in prostitution. They found it acceptable that their future daughters might become prostitutes. 3. Prostitution and sex trafficking are linked in Nevada as elsewhere: sex trafficking happens when and where there is a demand for prostitution and a context of impunity for its customers. In Nevada, women are trafficked primarily into the state's illegal prostitution venues: strip club prostitution, escort prostitution, and massage parlors that function as illegal brothels. There also appear to be instances where women have been trafficked into legal brothels. 4. Despite claims to the contrary, legal prostitution does not protect women from the violence, verbal abuse, physical injury, and diseases such as HIV that occur in illegal prostitution. Many women in the legal brothels are under intense emotional stress; many of them have symptoms of chronic institutionalization and trauma. All prostitution, even that which appears voluntary, causes harm. 5. Legal prostitution creates a 'culture of prostitution' in the state that is fostered or tolerated by politicians, developers, and the entertainment industry. A sex industry the size of that in Nevada exists because of political and judicial corruption and a willingness to tolerate organized crime including domestically organized motorcycle gangs and internationally organized Armenian, Russian, Israeli, Mexican, Korean, and Chinese criminals. Revenue from prostitution generated by international criminal networks has been connected with weapons trafficking. 6. Las Vegas is the epicenter of North American prostitution and trafficking. The sex industry in Las Vegas alone generates between one and six billion dollars per year, according to seven informed sources. Women are trafficked for prostitution from many parts of the world into Las Vegas. 7. There is a dangerous lack of services in Nevada for adult women seeking to escape the sex industry, services such as emergency shelters, and social services, medical and vocational assistance. Since the prostitution of 13-17 year old children is "rampant" according to one police officer, more services for children are also needed. 8. The links between legal and illegal prostitution in Nevada, and the profound harms caused by prostitution to all women are much like those in other countries where legal prostitution exists. The parallels between Nevada, Australia (legal prostitution), the Netherlands (legal prostitution), and Cambodia (prostitution is illegal but socially and politically tolerated as in Las Vegas) are striking. 9. There is a law that works. The 1999 Swedish law on prostitution has almost entirely eliminated trafficking of women into Sweden. Domestic prostitution has not increased as it has elsewhere in Europe since 2000. Recognizing the harms of prostitution to those in it, Sweden focused on the source of the problem: men who buy women in prostitution. The victim - the woman or man or child in prostitution - is not arrested. Instead, Sweden levies felony-level charges only at buyers, pimps, and traffickers. Victims are offered services. Other countries in Europe are now adopting the Swedish law on prostitution and trafficking. The Nevada legislature is encouraged to consider this law.