

THE **SEX WORKERS' OUTREACH PROJECT (SWOP) OF NYC** is dedicated to improving the lives of current and former sex workers/those with experience in the sex trade in the New York metro area.

SHUTTING DOWN BACKPAGE.COM IS HARMFUL TOWARDS SEX WORKERS AND WILL *CREATE GREATER CHALLENGES* IN ATTEMPTS TO IDENTIFY TRAFFICKED PERSONS.

- **Sex work does NOT EQUAL Trafficking:** The conflation of these issues perpetuates policies and practices that do not reflect the needs of those engaged in sex work: the willing, those doing it out of economic necessity, or those trafficked.
- **Increased policing of prostitution forces everyone in the sex trade further underground (including those trying to leave):** When sex workers have to operate in more secrecy, the results are clear: an increase in violence, STI/HIV transmission, and a loss of access to basic human rights.
- **Further marginalizing the already marginalized:** Further marginalization and isolation of this population will only increase stigma and discrimination, hinder access to basic services, and promote a **loss of autonomy** over the conditions in which people engage in the industry. This not only worsens the conditions for current sex workers, but also makes it *more challenging* to leave the sex trade.
- **The electronic trails captured by Backpage.com mean safety:** The more traceable connection that two people have means safer working environments and an increased likelihood of identifying trafficked persons. Having a point of connection gives the opportunity for sex workers to screen potential clients – one of the most important steps in reducing violence against sex workers.
- **Pushing sex work underground makes it harder to identify trafficking situations:** There are countless advertising sites, and closing the most public ones will only increase traffic to sites that are less willing to work with law enforcement. Without Backpage.com it is conceivable that the 50 cases of sex trafficking identified through the website may not have been discovered at all.

There is so much we can do to prevent trafficking and support people who do want to move out of the sex industry, and these tactics only pull valuable resources from those strategies.

The voices commonly missing from the media coverage on the Village Voice and Craigslist are those of sex workers. It has become too easy to forget that there are individuals involved in sex work who deserve human and labor rights.