

I am here today as a woman that was involved in the sex trade for almost twenty years so I can say I know firsthand the violence and harm associated with prostitution and trafficking. I also know how easy it is to get into it and hard it is to get out...I started in what someone might call the higher end escort services and ended up working the streets, addicted to heroin and involved with pimps...our thinking about this issue has been heavily influenced by the perspectives of those that “buy” women and the prostitution and pornography industry.. not from women like myself. But we are starting to have a voice and we are beginning to make changes.. to make meaning of what I went through in my own life I started a program here in Boston to create a “way out” for women, because don’t forget the 15 year old that eventually turns 18 did not suddenly make a new vocational choice, no matter what age a woman is... abuse simply continues and there is often no way out for women. For the past five years since I started this program I have spent countless hours talking to young women and I see clearly now how the “game has changed” Prostitution has now been transformed from what was a relatively local form of abuse to a hugely profitable international industry. The ways dates/men can now access the internet with prostitution related images and texts on various sites have created a whole new experience and has shifted the balance of power toward the perpetrators. Customers can hide behind their personal computers buying women with the click of a button. A young woman that couldn’t be here today wanted to also tell her story and how easy it was for her as it is for so many women to be so easily lured into a life by so called “friends” or pimps. This young woman like many women I meet spent most of her growing up time in state care (DCF) with no connections to anyone so when she met up with a boyfriend/pimp that offered her a home and a false of caring she went off...to post her ads up and photographs on various sites and ended up living in hotels for several

years all across the country. All you need now is a lab top and a cell phone. To escape the abuse of this pimp she left to move with a date or john that that she met posting her ad. He ended up raping her. Someone gave her my number and we found her a safe shelter. She is now 26 and in community college. These life stories reflect certain recurring themes in the life experiences of women caught up in prostitution...poverty...no family support...out of school..limited options. So to Craigslist...backpage...and all the other sites....you have a responsibility to understand what prostitution is...how the internet and the posting of ads has increased the exposure of women and children while increasing the privacy of the men who exploit and abuse them. The task of ending prostitution and the understanding how various advertising media benefit and contributes to the exploitation of women and girls seems more difficult than that of ending other forms of violence seeing the vested interests involved. This industry preys on women and girls made vulnerable by poverty and the lack of viable options and the lure of money...it only leaves women brutally hurt and more impoverished. Screening ads cannot work..they need to be taken down. Misinformation about prostitution is widespread....those who promote it usually benefit from it. Violence was the norm for me in that life...as it is for so many women and girls. Sadly the violence is not new...what is new is the volume and changes in the sex trade...the on line advertising media should not continue to benefit and or contribute to the exploitation of human beings in any way.

Cherie Jimenez

Coordinator of kims project