

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday, September 11, 2003

Transgendered sex workers deserve dignity and rights

WASHINGTON, DC — The Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP) would like express its condolences to the families and friends of two transgendered women, Bella Evangelista and Emonie Spaulding, who were murdered in separate incidents in Washington DC during the past week. Furthermore, the NSWP sends out our hope for the recovery of Ms Punana Walker who was critically injured on August 20, 2003.

Ms Khartini Slamah, Chair of the NSWP and a transgendered women herself, commented: "The NSWP, the global organization that advocates for the health and human rights of sex workers, is distressed to hear that some media coverage of these attacks has failed to treat these women as fully deserving of dignity and rights because they were both transgendered and sex workers. The fact that Bella Evangelista's memorial site was maliciously destroyed on the same evening that Ms Spaulding was found murdered shows us that we must do everything we can do promote dignified and positive images of the victims in the media and the community. No one should live in fear because she is transgender or engages in sexual activity for a living."

Ms Slamah added that she trusts that the police will follow up the case expeditiously and arrest those responsible for all of these appalling acts. The NSWP supports the actions of local organizations working to change public policy in order to improve the lives of transpeople in Washington, DC. Ms Slamah, who has worked for many years in prostitution, concluded by saying, "The NSWP also encourages changes in policy that protect all people, whether they be male, female or transgendered, who engage in prostitution for whatever reason. Sex workers should not be subjected to violence because of the work they do. Sex workers are not criminals but people with rights just like everyone else."

From:

- Ms Khartini Slamah, Chair of the NSWP Board
- Mr Paulo Longo, Coordinator of the Network of Sex Work Projects
- Jo Doezema, Andrew Hunter, Melissa Ditmore, Penelope Saunders and other Members of the Board of Directors

And, the following Sex Work Projects and their representatives:

- Hillary Kinneil, UK Network of Sex Work Projects
- Jenn Clamen, International Union of Sex Workers (IUSW), Canada
- Johanna Sirkia, President of SALLI — United Sex Professionals of Finland
- La Coalition pour les droits des travailleuses/eurs du sexe — Coalition for the Rights of Sex Workers, Montreal
- Dragonroot Centre for Gender Advocacy, Montreal
- Pam Ladds
- Tamsin Baker, Multicultural Project, Sex Industry Network, Australia
- Raigen D'Angelo, Sex Workers Alliance of Vancouver, BC, Canada