

**Statement on Dignity of Sex Workers**  
**Submitted to the Beijing +10 Meeting by Prostitutes of New York (PONY)**

Prostitutes of New York is an organization of many kinds of workers in New York City's sex industry. PONY is a member of the international Network of Sex Work Projects, which advocates for the rights of sex workers around the world. We are concerned about two keywords that have arisen in anti-sex work anti-trafficking advocacy: "demand" and "dignity." This statement addresses use of the term "Dignity."

**DIGNITY**

Dignity is a current buzzword among some anti-trafficking activists. As sex worker rights activists, we fully subscribe to the belief in the dignity of all human beings. Prostitution is not the purchase of a person, but of a person's services, as in other service occupations. However, the term "dignity" has never been explicitly defined by advocates who intend for commercial sex to be seen as incompatible with personal dignity. In fact, they advocate against sex workers' rights by citing sexual commerce as the sale of the person him/herself.

This view of dignity as exclusive of sexual commerce is a condescending reduction of a person to his or her sex, a reduction that feminists have combated for hundreds of years. Such condescension has no place in any discussion of justice or rights. A sex worker's dignity is not determined by feminist perception of sex work. Furthermore, sex workers feel that efforts to deny them of their livelihood are efforts to deny them of the dignity of earning a living.

Women's Network for Unity, a Cambodian organization of 5000 sex workers with dignity, uses the slogan "Don't talk to me about sewing machines, talk to me about workers' rights!" meaning that they do not want to be turned away from sex work—they want their rights and dignity as sex workers protected and respected.