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DONALD TRUMP AND THE SEX INDUSTRY

Robert Brannon

National Organization for Men Against Sexism

SEXUALITY IS A CENTRAL, life-enhancing, and important part of our lives, but its commercial exploitation for profits has had many negative consequences, for individuals, and for our society.

The National Organization for Men Against Sexism¹ sponsors a National Task Group which monitors and critiques the commercial sex industry: a wide-ranging, constantly evolving array of businesses or activities which profit financially from satisfying, and often exploiting, our sexual interests and needs. In a patriarchal culture, a number of these activities are very clearly harmful to women and girls, in direct and indirect ways. Men and boys are also impacted in many ways, some of these also quite harmful.

Since the recent U.S. presidential election, there is great interest in what actions the new Trump administration will take on the important issues that concern us. President-elect Trump has had extensive public involvement with several aspects of the commercial sex industry, as well as inappropriate personal conduct toward many women. A brief look at Mr. Trump's personal history offers a chance to review several current sex industry issues.

Beauty Contests

Beauty contests featuring attractive young women have long been an accepted part of the American social landscape, and are arguably at the less-harmful end of the sex industry spectrum (although a number of criticisms have been made; e.g. Orenstein, 2011). The first attention-grabbing public action of the modern feminist movement was a trenchant critique of the Miss America pageant in 1969, which pointed to "women in bathing suits, paraded, objectified, and judged like cattle, for close conformity to traditional white male standards..." (Brownmiller, 1999).

As sole owner of the lesser-known Miss Universe contest, Donald Trump exercised his privilege and power by hugging, kissing, and groping the breasts of many contestants, and barging into their dressing rooms when they were undressed. He humiliated one winner by announcing to the press that she was "too fat." He also commented lewdly on the women's bodies to male assistants, and is said to have propositioned some of the young contestants for sex (Shalby, 2016).

Strip Clubs

Strip clubs in which women appear topless or entirely naked are several steps further along the spectrum of harmfulness. They often serve as gateways into prostitution: first-stop portals for needy young women who are eventually recruited

¹ NOMAS is a 36-year-old national feminist men's network guided by the collective leadership of a National Council with activities in a broad range of substantive areas (www.Nomas.org).

into being used in pornography and/or prostitution (Barton, 2017; Farley, 2007; Jordan, 2004; Burana, 2001).

A gambling casino need not have an on-premises strip club; most do not. However, Donald Trump has led the way. In 2013 his Trump Taj Mahal casino became the first-ever casino in Atlantic City, New Jersey, to have an in-house strip club. It featured young women stripped almost naked in G-strings and “pasties,” with lap-dancing. His casino in Las Vegas also hosts two topless reviews and a semi-nude “go-go club.”

Pornography

Pornography is a broad, somewhat imprecise term, covering a wide range of images and varying content (Brannon & Poran, 1996; Brannon & Frank, 1990). It typically involves both nudity and sexual activity; it may be loving, equalitarian, and consensual, or, sadistic, cruel, bloody, abusive rape pornography, laden with ugly stereotypes. Laboratory research has shown that some types of pornography—when viewed by some kinds of men—significantly increase their aggressive sexual coerciveness and likelihood of sexual assault or rape (Malamuth, 1986; Malamuth & Check, 1983, 1981, 1980; Malamuth & Donnerstein, 1984; Brannon, 1991; 1998; Brannon et al., 1996; Bridges, 2010). Many other complex and negative social consequences have been documented (Stoner & Hughes, 2010).

Most good-quality American hotels (Hilton, Sheraton, Westin, Marriott, Omni, Crown Plaza, Candlewood, St. Regis, and Drury Holiday Inn) no longer offer on-demand pornographic films in guests’ rooms. All Trump Hotels in the U.S. however (except for two in the deep South) offer XXX pornography to their guests (Gould, 2016). At Trump Hotels, well-to-do executives and families in their \$250/night luxury rooms can relax over fine French champagne while watching “Teen-Age Sluts,” “Deep Throat,” or “Hot, Horny Latin Bimbos.”

Donald Trump, himself, has appeared on the cover of *Playboy* magazine, and has proudly performed as an “actor” in three different *Playboy*-produced “soft-core” pornography videos in 1999, 2001, and 2004 (Moye, 2016). He was always fully clothed, but in other scenes in these films, many women were naked. In the most recent film, young women are shown naked in sexual positions, dancing naked, rubbing honey on their breasts, taking a bath, and suggestively touching themselves and each other while naked (Moye, 2016).

A full frontal—totally nude—photograph of first Lady-elect Melania Trump recently appeared on the cover of *The New York Post*. It then disappeared during the election (lawsuits were threatened), but is now often shown on Russian television, and will no doubt soon be mass-produced worldwide. There were many other totally nude photos of Mrs. Trump in the *Post*, now being frequently Googled on the Internet. Some of the images clearly qualify as “pornography.” In one, she is shown naked, bound and imprisoned in heavy steel handcuffs; in another S&M-type scenario, another nude female is menacing her with a bullwhip. Trump, however, explained: “In Europe, pictures like this are very fashionable — and common” (Benen, 2016).

Donald Trump, himself, is clearly attracted to the glamorous “porn star” image. Sex-film performer “Jessica Drake” reported that she met Trump at one of his golf courses and he quickly asked for her phone number. She gave it, and he soon called and invited her to his place. She took two friends and went over. He hugged and kissed all three of them, and they hung out with him for the day. Later (surprise,

surprise), he allegedly called and strongly “urged” her to have sex with him (Wright, 2016).

Prostitution

Prostitution is among the most lucrative, and most harmful, arms of the sex industry, usually exploiting the most vulnerable of young women, often permanently destroying their lives (Raymond, 2013; Farley, 2007, 2003; Stark & Whisnant, 2004; Barry, 1995, 1979; Hughes & Roche, 1999; Jeffrey, 1997).² The life expectancy of young women being used in prostitution is short, and their future prospects, grim (Farley, 2003; Rosen, 1982; Silbert & Pines, 1981).³

The Trump family fortune in America began with Donald Trump’s grandfather, Fredrich Trump, a highly successful pimp-businessman. A “pimp” is one “who controls prostitutes and arranges clients for them, taking a percentage of their earnings” (Posner & Silbaugh, 1996). This is how Fredrich Trump built his fortune.

According to *The Trumps: Three Generations of Builders and a President* (Blair, 2001), soon after arriving from Germany, Fredrich Trump made his way to Seattle, where he opened a brothel in the center of a “red-light” district with an adjacent bar and restaurant. In 1894, he opened the first Trump Hotel in nearby Monte Cristo, Washington, again featuring a fancy brothel and a bar. In 1898 as the gold rush began, he relocated to Bennett, British Columbia, and opened the Arctic Hotel, which featured a large gambling area and another elaborate brothel. (Each room used for prostitution had a bed and a scale for weighing the gold dust often used as payment.) A local newspaper stated that the Arctic Hotel had “the best restaurant in town,” but “respectable ladies” had best not ever sleep upstairs, as they would hear sounds made by “the depraved of their own sex.” In 1900, Trump moved on to the frontier town of White Horse B.C., opening yet another brothel, bar, restaurant, and gambling facility (Blair, 2001).

There is no record remaining today of how many young women were used in prostitution by Donald Trump’s grandfather in these Northwest settings, but it was likely in the hundreds. From these exploitative businesses, pimp-and-hotel owner Fredrich Trump amassed a “stupendous” fortune for his time (equivalent to \$582,000 today). He thus solidly established the family in America and lay the financial foundation for the Trump empire of today (Blair, 2001).

Donald Trump in 2017, of course, cannot be fairly linked to the unsavory life of his grandfather or blamed for the source of his inherited fortune. However, he has continued his family’s involvement in the sex industry with strip clubs and his appearances in pornography. He also has made comments about attempting to pay for sex with women.

One might imagine that a billionaire-playboy would have no need—or might even be ashamed—to pay women for sex. However, sex-film performer “Jessica Drake” reported that in the “urging” mentioned above, Trump offered her the astonishing sum of ten thousand dollars to have sex with him. She thought it over... and refused (Wright, 2016). In another instance, Trump claims he offered a woman a load of expensive new furniture in exchange for sex (Fahrenthold, 2016). We have

² NOMAS has a clearly abolitionist position on prostitution, detailed at www.Nomas.org, “NOMAS Positions on Prostitution” by Moshe Rosdzial and the NOMAS National Council.

³ NOMAS has developed an extensive bibliography of research with more than 70 citations on all aspects of prostitution. This is available at www.Nomas.org/prostitution.

no evidence that Trump ever purchased sex, but we know he has propositioned women with the offers of money or things of value.

Trump's Personal Behavior

Trump's direct personal statements and behavior over many years have been far more revealing than any of the facts above. As a frequent guest on the sex-themed Howard Stern show, Trump often rated women on a scale of 1-to-10. He explained that, if a woman is "flat-chested, it is very hard to be a 10!" He has also been willing to put his wife, Melania, in compromising positions. On one occasion, Trump had Melania speak on the telephone on the air to Howard Stern, who immediately asked if she was naked (Rosenthal, 2016).

Consistent with this adolescent braggadocio, Trump boasted to Senator Rubio, during a televised presidential debate about the purported size of his penis.

In October, a video tape was released of Donald Trump boasting of using his money and celebrity to sexually ensnare women (Fahrenthold, 2016). Describing a (married) woman in California, the serial-adulterer says on the videotape to his host:

“...I did try and fuck her... I moved on her, very heavily..., in fact, I took her out furniture shopping! I moved on her like a bitch... I failed, I'll admit it. Then all-of-a-sudden I see her, she's now got the big phony tits and everything...

I just start kissing them... I don't even wait! And when you're a star, they let you do it! You can do anything! Grab them by the pussy! You can do anything! (To his Hollywood host:) “Look at you! You are a pussy!” (Fahrenthold, 2016).

Children and the Internet

Against this ugly backdrop it is interesting to read that Trump has recently signed the Children's Internet Safety Presidential Pledge (CISPP), circulated by the advocacy organization Enough is Enough, promising to “uphold the rule of law by aggressively enforcing existing federal laws to prevent the sexual exploitation of children online” (DeSantis, 2016; Enough Is Enough, 2016). (The pledge was offered to Hillary Clinton's campaign. She said she agreed with its goals, but refused to sign.)

“Protecting our children” is always an important, but safe rhetorical position. “Protecting women” however has always been far more controversial — radical sounding. For many years, the U.S. Department of Justice has had a policy of prosecuting only the use of children in prostitution or pornography, but not of adult women.⁴

Those points aside, the CISPP is a positive response to a very real and growing problem. Fifty-three percent of boys, aged 12 to 15, and 28 percent of girls, now report using explicit pornography, mostly via the Internet (DeSantis, 2016). The average age of first exposure to Internet pornography is 12. Research by Dr. James

⁴ The U.S. Justice Department today states openly that it will only act when children are involved; it will do nothing to protect women, due to a “lack of resources.” Barry (1995, p.225) has pointed to U.S. policy-makers' virtual refusal to treat prostitution of adult women as sexual exploitation.

Weaver (1995) has shown that, especially in boys, such early exposure is clearly linked to attitudes supportive of sexual coercion and rape.

It is also fair to note that the Republican Platform this year included a line that feminists can wholly agree with, and we have been saying ourselves: “Pornography, with its harmful effects, especially on children, has become a public health crisis that is destroying the life of millions” (Republican National Committee, 2016). Negative sex-education effects on teens is a clear harm. In addition, there are laboratory-proven links between watching pornography and male sexual aggression (Malamuth & Donnerstein, 1984; Malamuth & Check, 1982, 1983; Brannon, 1991). The growing clinical problem of “pornography addiction” is another harm linked to the Internet, affecting users of all ages.⁵

However, the mainstream media was quick to label this Republican Platform statement on pornography “harsh,” and “far-right-wing.” Historically, the Democratic Party, with its adherence to the American Civil Liberties Union’s (ACLU) radical interpretation of “freedom of speech,” would never acknowledge any harms caused by the proliferation of Internet pornography, except of course, if involving children.

Although Donald Trump signed the CISPP “pledge,” the pornographers were not concerned. “I’m not too worried, that the ultimate misogynist, Donald Trump would enforce the obscenity laws... as I’m quite sure he has no idea what they are,” said one pornographer to U.S. News. Another confided: “This is a typical Republican stunt, and those promises are quickly forgotten after the election” (Hautman, 2016).

The Trump Administration

What lies ahead in a Trump administration? Negative outcomes are of course expected on many fronts. Ironically, the feminist effort to confront the worst abuses of the sex industry might, conceivably, be an exception. In truth and candor, there was little hope or expectation of much progress on this front under a Democratic administration. It is a seldom-mentioned fact that Democrats have for years been more closely allied with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and “free-speech” pornographers than with feminists. Billionaire George Soros has financed a global campaign to promote the decriminalization of the sex industry, including pimping, brothel-owning, and buying sex (Brophy, 2015). Soros was one of Hillary Clinton’s top donors, and his pro-prostitution positions were seen influencing her statements, as revealed by Wikileaks (Transcript 20151009).

Ambassador John Miller, head of the U.S. State Department’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking described to the *New York Times* how the U.S. Justice Department works to make it harder to prosecute pimps. When he was in office, he observed an alliance of “the department’s lawyers, most of them male, the “Erotic-Service Providers Union,” and the ACLU.” He wrote that there is a network of male government lawyers, in sympathy with the sex industry, which remains in charge of policy on sex trafficking, no matter which party holds the White House, or what the current President is saying (Miller, July 11, 2008).

⁵ This has become a growing clinical field, with a large literature, including: Men Who Are Not in Control of Their Sexual Behavior (Marcus, 2010), Compulsive Online Sexual Behavior,” “Sexual Addiction and Online Pornography,” and *Untangling the Web: Sex, Porn, and Fantasy Obsession in the Internet Age* (Weiss & Schneider, 2006).

On this one dimension, the Republican Party has in the past been ever so slightly better. The only U.S. President who did much of anything to combat sex trafficking was...George W. Bush. In December 2002, Bush signed National Presidential Directive 22, which describes prostitution as “inherently harmful” and takes a stand against considering prostitution a form of “work” (Bush, 2002). In 2007, the Department of Justice set up a Human Trafficking Prosecution Unit within the civil rights division to increase the number of federal prosecutions, immediately focusing on sex trafficking cases. The Bush administration also established the first federal hotline for human trafficking; to date, the majority of tips and requests for help processed by the hotline pertain to sex trafficking.

Conclusion

The facts above do not mean that serial woman-abuser Donald Trump will do anything positive or be effective on sex industry related issues. However, he is highly unpredictable and opportunistic. His Vice President-elect Mike Pence is a social conservative and known for fiercely opposing sexual exploitation. Evangelical Christians comprise a major part of Trump’s base and oppose all aspects of the sex industry. So, if feminists confronting the sex industry⁶ can put good new ideas on the table for combating the obvious (and growing) social harms of the sex industry, we may get a more open-minded hearing now with new and different people listening. But, we must not be overly optimistic.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Robert Brannon is a social psychologist (Harvard, 1965) now at Brooklyn College C.U.N.Y., who has focused upon male and female gender studies, violence against women, and social effects linked to the commercial sex industry. He serves as Chair, National Task Group on Sex-Trafficking, Pornography, and Prostitution, for the National Organization for Men Against Sexism (NOMAS, www.Nomas.org).

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⁶ e.g. Melissa Farley, Catharine MacKinnon, Donna Hughes, Gloria Steinem, Dorchen Leidholdt, Diana Russell, Taina Bien-Aime, Phyllis Chesler, Sonia Ossario, Meg Baldwin, Sheila Jeffreys, Jessica Neuwirth, Jane Manning, Janice Raymond, Vednita Carter, Ken Franzblau, Susan Dempsy, Chung Sun, Susan Hunter, Jill Goodman, Christine Stark, Kathleen Barry, Norma Ramos, Peter Qualliotine, Gail Dines, Samantha Berg, Patricia Barrera, Ann Simonton, Ariel Levy, Twiss Butler, Rose Garrity, Phyllis Frank, Carolyn Maloney, Jean Fong, Cathy Douglass, Shirley Ranz, Wendy Stock, Jane Caputi, Evelina Giobbe, Lois Reckitt, Linnea Smith, Lisa Thompson, Charlotte Watson, Ann Bridges, Suzanne Koeplinger, Rebecca Whisnant, Bob Jensen, Robert Brannon, & many others.

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