

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

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PENINSULA PULCHRITUDE - Part 29



COULD THIS COWGIRL'S SOUL HAVE BEEN SOLD FOR \$25?

By Wanda Sue Parrott

*contracts serve as bait
hopeful starlets sign up for
models' jobs and films
till their big breaks come
managers book shooting gigs
selling sex as porn
primal bondings form
morph into dependencies
prostitutes evolve*

Photo and triple-haiku from Wanda Sue Parrott

MODELING almost led me into the sex-trade, as revealed by this modestly revealing motorcycle magazine cover from six decades ago.

If I hadn't quit—actually, *fled*--Hollywood, might I now be conducting survival workshops instead of writing columns about both homeless and sheltered sex-victims?

How close did I come to proverbially “selling my soul” for \$25?

All I know is that motorcycle models have changed, but basic crimes involved in sex trafficking, as prostitution is now called, remain.

Basically, California's Penal Code 647 B is the same for both buying and selling sex: *illegal*.

What's changed is the openness with which former victims are now helping others through education and workshops that probe and expose the inside intricacies of the sex industry.

This topic is extremely timely because of the current sex-trafficking-of-children scandal involving billionaire financier Jeffrey Epstein, alleged former-if-not-current friend of the Washington-DC-based politician nicknamed POTUS, against whom several alleged victims have spoken.

Former Victim Speaks

Locally, Deborah Pembroke, former victim of sex trafficking, represented the Monterey County Rape Crisis Center at the June 12 Central Coast Foster Youth & Homeless Education Summit at Monterey Peninsula College.

Deborah said, “In California, if a young person under 18 is identified as being in the sex industry, they will be identified as being in a ‘*kept situation*’.”

According to Deborah, “When we work on this issue, many people think this is something that is happening elsewhere. I hope that you can understand that this is something that is happening in our own community.”

She cited the case of a young teen kept in a basement with her father in Watsonville.

The real work that's now happening in the community, Deborah said, “is the paradigm shift” in which “listening to survivors is part. . .” along with “changing our language about accurately naming this crime.”

Deborah said her experience in sex work started when she was in elementary school. Then, when she was 17, she was taken in Ohio.”

She explained how victims like herself are forced to perform sex work at truck stops and in sleazy roadside motels. She got away from her trafficker and then attended Cabrillo College.

“I continued a life in hiding from my trafficker for a long time,” she said. “I was able to start healing when I understood that I was a child, a teen, prostitute. I'm a survivor!”

Two prominent signs by which student-victims of trafficking can be recognized are exhaustion from sleep deprivation and over-achieving by trying to excel in school.

A way many children become victims is through family members playing games with them, providing snacks, toys or games as rewards, and threatening to harm or even kill the child or his/her parents if he/she tells.

Another mode of hooking a young person is through irresistible lures like modeling and movie contracts that promise the moon and stars, not the bed on which to lie beneath them!

If you suspect a young person to be the victim of sex trafficking or abuse, Deborah said, “Contact Child Welfare and ask who is the social worker and local policeman who takes the domestic violence calls.”

Call 888-373-7888.

She added, “We also have many new and nice parts in our community in which we should be looking. . .”

Training On Tap

Several events are coming up that address understanding and surviving sex trafficking, with attention to male and female victims, both homeless and sheltered.

- “Beyond the Basics: Effectively Serving Survivors,” presented by Monterey County Rape Crisis Center, Thurs., August 8, 2019, 9:30 a.m. – 4:30 pm. Marina Public Library, 190 Seaside Circle, Marina. This has limited seating, so register now!

Survivors from Rising International’s Safe & Sound program will provide in-depth understanding of sexual violence and human trafficking, as well as practical crisis-intervention knowledge about rape culture and bystander intervention; sex and labor trafficking; handling disclosures; reporting, support and referrals.

Register at 831-373-3955. Fee is \$20. Lunch is on your own.

- “40-Hour Human Trafficking Training” is part of the YWCA Monterey County’s Community Training program in which individuals are provided with an in-depth perspective into human trafficking. Contact Emanuel Santillano for details about training for your community. esantillano@ywcamc.org .
- “Advocacy Training—Commercially Sexually Exploited Boys” sponsored by the YWCA of Monterey County and hosted by Nola Brantley Speaks, Tues., July 30, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. at Monterey County Office of Education, 901 Blanco Circle, West Campus 8, Salinas. Free. Lunch is on your own. Reservations at www.ywcamc.org .

Back in my youthful search for glamour, I started as a back-to-school model for Bullock’s Department Store, graduated to showroom modeling for Miss Elliette of California’s cocktail dresses, and also landed the photo shoot in Griffith Park with me astride the bike I never actually rode.

I was totally unaware that contracts served as bait for which hopeful starlets signed up to do modeling jobs and films. Then, while waiting for their big breaks, managers booked sexual photo shoots and sold pornography as primal bonds of dependency formed between manager-pimps and model-prostitutes.

The issue was a crock edition entitled “The Cowgirl Who Gave Up Her Horse for A Motorcycle.”

A 7-year movie contract was also offered at that time.

The deal was phonier than the bust pads that bolstered my bosom, so I took the \$25 I earned for the job, returned the contract unsigned, and opted to try becoming a writer.

Our nation’s beautiful FLOTUS was once a model far more exotic than I could ever be. If she’d been in a similar situation, how do you think she handled it?

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