

Fighting the US Youth Sex Trade

Campaigns against the prostitution of young people in the United States have surged and ebbed multiple times over the last fifty years. *Fighting the US Youth Sex Trade: Gender, Race, and Politics* examines how politically and ideologically diverse activists joined together to change perceptions and public policies on youth involvement in the sex trade over time, reframing “juvenile prostitution” of the 1970s as “commercial sexual exploitation of children” in the 1990s, and then as “domestic minor sex trafficking” in the 2000s. Based on organizational archives and interviews with activists, Baker shows that these campaigns were fundamentally shaped by the politics of gender, race, and class, and by global anti-trafficking campaigns. The author argues that the very frames that have made these movements so successful in achieving new laws and programs for youth have limited their ability to achieve systematic reforms that could decrease youth vulnerability to involvement in the sex trade.

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Fighting the US Youth Sex Trade

Gender, Race, and Politics

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Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page</i> vi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	vii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	ix
Introduction	I
1 “My God! If Only I Could Get Out of Here”: Roots of Contemporary Activism Against the US Youth Sex Trade	14
2 “Teeny Hookers” and the “Chicken Hawk Trade”: Organizing against Juvenile Prostitution in the 1970s	38
3 Survivor Activism and Global Connections: The US Campaign against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in the 1990s	63
4 “Our Daughters” in Danger: Leveraging the Anti-Trafficking Framework in the Early 2000s	92
5 To Rescue or Empower: Building a Collaborative Adversarial Movement	120
6 “Locked in Like a Dog in a Kennel”: Expanding Tactics, Challenging Systems	161
7 “Quick Fixes and Good Versus Evil Responses”: Criticisms of the Movement	200
Conclusion: Ending the US Youth Sex Trade?	220
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	240
<i>Index</i>	248

Figures

1.1 Ernest A. Bell, <i>Fighting the Traffic in Young Girls or War on the White Slave Trade</i> , 1910	page 21
2.1 Cover of Robin Lloyd's best-selling book <i>For Money or Love</i> , 1976	41
2.2 Cover of <i>The Minnesota Connection</i> by Al Palmquist with John Stone, 1978	51
4.1 FBI Innocence Lost National Initiative promotional image, www.fbi.gov	106
4.2 Mayor Shirley Franklin, Dear John ad campaign, Atlanta, Georgia, 2006	116
5.1 Image used to promote GEMS youth leadership program in 2012	125
5.2 Young Women's Empowerment Project, Street Youth Rise Up! campaign image. Artwork by Christy C. Road	127
5.3 Shared Hope International sponsored an "end demand" protest in Las Vegas in June 2009	132
5.4 Truckers Against Trafficking Everyday Hero poster	133
5.5a, b Promotional images for the films <i>Very Young Girls</i> (2007) and <i>Playground</i> (2009)	140
5.6 Arrests of juveniles for prostitution and commercialized vice, 1980–2014. ©Nest Foundation	142
5.7 Image of trafficker in <i>The Candy Shop</i> (2010)	147
6.1 Use of "Child Prostitution" and "Child Sex Trafficking" in US Newspapers, 2000–2016	171

Acknowledgments

In the fall of 2005, I attended a Feminist Majority Foundation young feminist conference at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia. During a session on child prostitution, I met Stephanie Davis, who was working with a group of local women on the issue of girls in the sex trade in Atlanta. Inspired by what I learned, I later wrote an article on the burgeoning movement against the prostitution of girls for *Ms.* magazine. I interviewed activists around the country, including Rachel Lloyd at Girls Educational and Mentoring Services in New York City, Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin, who was at the time leading the charge against child prostitution in Atlanta, and Texas attorney Karen Harpold, who was working on appealing the prostitution conviction of a thirteen-year-old girl to the Texas Supreme Court. Published in the summer of 2010, the article, titled “Jailing Girls for Men’s Crimes,” was the first time that *Ms.* magazine had dedicated a feature piece to the issue of girls involved in prostitution. I received a tremendous response to the article. As activism against the involvement of youth in the sex trade increased in the following years, I became curious about the history of this issue and decided to write this book, which first germinated in classroom discussions with my wonderful students at Smith College.

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I dedicate this book to my students, who give me hope for the future.

Abbreviations

CAPTA	Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act
CATW	Coalition Against Trafficking in Women
CSEC	Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children
COYOTE	Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics
ECPAT	End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism (1990–1997); then later, End Child Prostitution and Trafficking
GEMS	Girls Educational and Mentoring Services
HIPS	Helping Individual Prostitutes Survive
HRPG	Human Rights Project for Girls (Rights4Girls)
IJM	International Justice Mission
MLMC	My Life My Choice
MNWRC	Minnesota Native Women’s Resource Center
NCMEC	National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
OJJDP	Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
PRIDE	From Prostitution to Independence, Dignity and Equality
SAGE	Standing Against Global Exploitation
SHI	Shared Hope International
SOS	Sisters Offering Support
TVPA	Trafficking Victims Protection Act
WAVPM	Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media
WHISPER	Women Hurt in Systems of Prostitution Engaged in Revolt
WAP	Women Against Pornography
YAPI	Youth Advocates Program International
YWEP	Young Women’s Empowerment Project