



EMBRACE DIGNITY

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PETITION

To: -

Ms. Baleka Mbete, MP
The Speaker
National Assembly
Republic of South Africa

Ms. Thandi Modise
The Chairperson
National Council of Provinces
Republic of South Africa

HELP US END THE OPPRESSION OF PROSTITUTION AND SEX TRAFFICKING

Embrace Dignity has organized this Dignity Walk to Parliament, supported by **Western Cape Network on Violence Against Women and the Wellness Foundation**, to bring to your attention an oppression that has not been addressed by the Democratic South Africa.

South Africa is infamous for high levels of sexual violence and other forms of abuse perpetrated against women and girls. We acknowledge that men, boys, and other gender identities are exposed to and fall victim to these abuses. Notwithstanding progressive legislation, policies and International Agreements on race, gender equality and violence against women, the conditions of women and girls remain bleak. Evidently the 'Good Story' of South Africa does not include the position of women. Women's Right to Dignity is violated by poor implementation of legislation and policies, poor resourcing of services as it relates to sexual violence, abuse and economic empowerment. Women continue to bear the effects of triple oppression.

Our concern is the ongoing patriarchal nature of our society and the oppression of women and the LGBTi community. In particular, our concern is the lack of understanding of the harms of the prostitution and its links to sex trafficking. Without addressing prostitution and all forms of commercial sexual exploitation, our effort to end gender oppression and sexual violence will continue to be undermined.

Embrace Dignity NPO number 088-880-NPO
Board Members

L McGregor, NC Madlala-Routledge, N Vanqa-Mgijima, N Dube, M Muzaneza, J Routledge

Our experience of working with women in prostitution is that: -

- Poverty, exploitation, distress, gender discrimination and violence are drivers of prostitution,
- Prostitution is inherently harmful - physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually,
- A study on prostitution and trafficking conducted in nine countries, including South Africa found that 71% of respondents had been physically assaulted; 63% had been raped; 75% had been homeless at some point in their lives and 68% met the criteria for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD),
- The majority of women entered through the lack of choice rather than any choice of their own,
- Many have been sexually abused and have experienced childhood neglect,
- 89% of the respondents wanted to escape prostitution but did not have the means to do so.

Our request is that Parliament set up a multi-party committee of both houses to investigate: -

- The situation of women (and men) in prostitution.
- Factors that determine the demand for prostitution
- Factors that provide and support the demand, and
- Factors that perpetuate and facilitate the trafficking in women and girls

We also request that the committee investigates the legal options identified by the South African Law Reform Commission (SALRC) and make recommendations for a law that will: -

- Reduce and ultimately eliminate the oppression of prostitution,
- Address the demand for prostitution,
- Implement and resource programmes to support the exit and full social, and economic integration of the victims of prostitution and sex trafficking.

We believe that Parliament and South Africa, with the experience of having overcome apartheid and a Constitution recognizing gender equality and dignity as human rights, can play a leading role in overcoming the oppression of prostitution and sex trafficking. Until now these forms of oppression of over half the population of the world have been overlooked.

The oppression of women in prostitution is the oppression of all women.

Yours in the struggle

Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge
Executive Director