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A story, written by a woman, got my attention a few days ago: Meredith May of this very newspaper has written a four- parter tracing one woman's journey from Korean schoolgirl to San Francisco sex slave, complete with the specifics that you could have probably figured out but are still instructive to read. The existence of sex slave rings in both Asia and Eastern Europe is not news, but as always in tales of human misery, the devil is in the details.

The woman -- You Mi Kim is her name -- got into trouble by unwise credit card purchasing, got deeper into debt by resorting to loan sharks, and then was given an easy way to pay off her debt by working as a "model" or a "waitress" in the United States. I have no idea whether You Mi Kim really believed that story, but she really had no choice -- the debt was real, and the ways to pay it off limited.

Once she got here, on a fake visa, she was out of options. If she went to any kind of authority, the best she could hope for was an airplane ticket home, where the debt would still be waiting. And the sex rings would stay in business, because the demands of the marketplace in matters of vice -- drugs, gambling, prostitution -- are absolute and unchanging.

So here's what I got to thinking, the men who patronize massage parlors are citizens like the rest of us, and presumably they are not actually in favor of human bondage. They may be seeking a fantasy, but they are not subnormal; they can probably figure out that the Korean women in the tiny rooms are not waitresses making a little walking-around money between jobs.

The Chronicle story estimates that there are 150 licensed massage parlors in San Francisco, of which approximately 90 offer exclusively Asian women and are probable links in the sex slave chain. A quick run through the Internet suggests that there are a lot of other places where a guy seeking a sex worker can find one. Indeed, there are organizations of independent sex workers that concentrate on issues like health, working conditions and police

harassment.

So if the customers decided to be mindful in their purchasing habits, if they avoided the obvious sex slave hellholes, if they decided to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem -- well, decreased demand would inevitably mean decreased supply. If people buying eggplants can be socially conscious, I don't see why people buying sex can't use the same kind of discrimination.

Johns for Justice -- it's a new idea in progressive politics.

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### **Men Wearing Blindfolds - Johns for Whaaat?**

Melissa Farley

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Jon Carroll (San Francisco Chronicle, October 11, 2006) suggested that johns can avoid sex slave hellholes the same way they can purchase ecofriendly eggplants. Maybe he should stay with justice for eggplants. There isn't a politically correct way to buy women for sex. Johns for justice - his notion of how men can contentedly buy sex acts from poor women but not *trafficked* poor women - is a reactionary idea, a contradiction in terms. Jon suggests johns can be "mindful of their purchasing habits." Huh? Has he wondered why there are so many women from New Orleans 'volunteering to prostitute' in Las Vegas and San Francisco? How about the racism, poverty and sexism they were subject to before, during and after Katrina? Even if they're not trafficked from another country, these women are not making a free choice to prostitute. They don't have a full and equal range of options to choose from - that's what would offer them real justice.

Jon's idea sounds more like a twisted rendition of justice for johns than johns for justice. He upholds men's absolute right to buy women, despite the Bay Area's developing social consciousness about the sexual exploitation and abuse that exists in all prostitution - prostitution of seemingly consenting adults as well as prostitution of children, of men and the transgendered as

well as women, of domestically as well as internationally trafficked women. Many men feel better about buying women if the illusion that women are servicing them freely is undisturbed. The fantasy of the high class happy escort is just that.

To keep themselves stimulated, johns love to buy "something different:" the new girl, the inexperienced girl, the girl domestically trafficked from New Orleans to San Francisco, the newly arrived "exotic" immigrant from Korea who just loves to prostitute - of course she has a passport, do you want to see it, Jon? Johns especially buy women who know how to act dumber than johns. Johns have always fantasized that women in prostitution like having 'sex' with them. Based on many years of research with women in prostitution, I understand that the women actually hate it and yes, they just need the money. Prostitution is about acting, not about her feelings.

Do you want justice for women, not only trafficked women, not only women in prostitution, maybe including justice for all other women subjected to sexual violence? Try enforcing laws against sexual abuse of children (typically by family members not masked strangers), against batterers and rapists. Make sure women are offered quality childcare for their children, that they have equal opportunity for education and for jobs that pay a salary approaching what they can earn in prostitution (that is, if they're allowed to keep the money). Real equality for women is the justice issue here, not some crazy fantasy about how johns can keep buying women while congratulating themselves for being progressive dudes. It's not just the liberal guys who buy prostitutes, men who buy women come in all political orientations. How about starting a group of men for justice for women, the kind who DON'T EVER buy them?

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