

Here is the letter I sent to the Cigar.

Mary Anne Layden

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To the Editor:

I wish to lend my support to those who are raising concerns about the play “The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas”. As a psychotherapist who has been treating sexual violence victims and perpetrators for more than 20 years I can attest to the general ignorance of the public surrounding the issue of prostitution. This play deepens that ignorance. Research indicates and my therapeutic experience supports a number of findings. Most females who enter prostitution do so as children at an average age of 12. Most of them have two factors in common: they have been raped as children and they are homeless. These are the precursor conditions that would cause a female to decide to engage in physically and psychologically intimate acts with strangers. But those acts have a psychological cost and damage. In order for most females to tolerate this physical and visual invasion of their bodies they have to disengage themselves which is why research indicates that most prostitutes have to be either drunk, high, dissociated or numb in order to do what they do. No amount of singing, dancing, doctors exams, bleaching of sheets, condom wearing, and contributions to community causes can erase the internal psychological violence that is the very nature and core of prostitution itself.

Prostitution spreads the permission-giving belief to men that women’s bodies are to be consumed for male entertainment. This belief increases male sexual entitlement and callousness. Research indicates and my therapy experiences supports that men who go to prostitutes are more likely to engage in non consensual sex, use pornography, and spread sexually transmitted diseases. I

think these men also understand at a deep level that prostitution hurts women. When I ask men who go to prostitutes if they would like their mother, wife, sister or daughter to be a prostitute, 100% of them say no. They want someone else's mother, wife, sister or daughter to do that. By going to prostitutes they are willing to hurt others but not willing to have the ones they love hurt. It is almost as if they have not learned the most basic rule of ethical living which is to treat others as you would like to be treated. They have put their own sexual self indulgence over the needs of others. This increase in narcissism has a psychological effect on these men in numerous ways.

In America, the arts have expected special protections and freedoms to say and do things as “artistic expression”. This extra measure of freedom needs to be balanced with an extra measure of responsibility. The arts send powerful messages in powerful and emotionally charged ways. The picture is worth a thousand words. Let us make sure that these words send messages that are true and helpful to the people who have granted them this special latitude. The Best Little Whorehouse is neither true nor helpful. We expected and deserved better.

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