

HONOURABLE MENTION
2008 CWSA ANNUAL BOOK AWARD

***Sex Workers in the Maritimes Talk Back*. Leslie Jeffrey and Gayle MacDonald. Vancouver, British Columbia: UBC Press, 2007; xii + 273 pages; ISBN 978-0-7748-1332-7; \$29.95 (paper).**

With recent media attention focused on the murders of missing women in British Columbia and the resignation by politician Eliot Spitzer after he was linked to a high-end escort service, sex work and sex workers have been under much public scrutiny lately. While sex worker organizations, in Canada and internationally, have long mobilized to change public perception and policy, mainstream media sources often portray sex workers as victims lacking the agency to make informed decisions on their own behalf. New perspectives and innovative research are therefore particularly important to challenge these stereotypes and misconceptions. Leslie Jeffrey and Gayle MacDonald's new text, *Sex Workers in the Maritimes Talk Back*, does exactly that.

Jeffrey, from the University of New Brunswick, and MacDonald, from St. Thomas University, open the text by explaining: "The object of this book is to feature sex workers in a marginalized region talking back to the powers that shape their lives and the world around them" (1). Sixty-six sex workers from three Maritime cities (Saint John, Moncton, and Halifax) were interviewed about their working conditions, likes and dislikes of the job, and thoughts about the world around them. An additional fifty interviews were conducted with police officers, journalists, politicians, community advocates and justice officials.

The chapters of the text delve into key topics raised by the primarily street-based sex workers as being most important to them. Beginning with money as what is seen as the most beneficial aspect of the work, the chapters move on to discuss issues related to dehumanization and violence, police and conflicts with the law, the stigmatization of the lives and work of sex workers, health and well being, and the importance of policy change and the decriminalization of sex work. The chapters paint a vivid picture of sex work and attempt to demystify the realities of the job for the women interviewed.

No longer simply objects of study upon which academic careers are built, the sex workers in this text speak about and analyze their own lives as agents of resistance and change. The voices in *Sex Workers in the Maritimes Talk Back* directly counter much contemporary theorizing of the sex industry. Jeffrey and MacDonald have presented us with a timely and noteworthy text that challenges popularly held beliefs about sex work and sex workers in Canada. It is an important read for police services and lawyers, community advocates and feminists, students and researchers, as well as for those concerned with the development of sustainable social change and public policy.

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