



When Men Buy Sex: Who Really Pays? Canadian Stories of Exploitation, Survival, and Advocacy

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The paradigm-shifting social science study When Men Buy Sex: Who Really Pays? handles the difficult topic of commercialized sexual exploitation with sensitivity.

Written and compiled by Kathy King and Andrea Heinz, the informative social science text *When Men Buy Sex: Who Really Pays?* draws upon personal experiences to address sexual exploitation in Canada.

Working to “fight against the commoditization of human sexuality, both in Canada and throughout the world,” this book makes efforts to effect a paradigm shift. It removes blame from those who feel forced to sell sex, works to educate both sexually exploited people and their clients, addresses physical and mental abuse in the sexual exploitation realm, and pushes for society-wide changes, ending with a list of resources that keeps an international audience in mind.

The book is systematic in its approach, first addressing commercialized sexual exploitation from legal, political, economic, social, and psychological perspectives before transitioning toward stories from inside the industry. Its legal and political elements are specific to Canada on the whole; still, they include some insights into how other countries can make appropriate changes. The book’s treatment of the economic, social, and psychological elements of sexual exploitation is more global, forwarding the perspective that capitalist systems in which some people have few options push vulnerable people toward pursuing “easy” money.

The book’s claims are supported with personal anecdotes from Heinz, King, and surveyed survivors and a customer. These begin to overtake the book’s more formal work in its second half, which foregrounds people’s stories, poems, and thoughts from within the commercial sex industry. Undiluted instances of suffering, exploitation, trauma, and death are included among these contributions:

I was called bitch, slut, whore, and “piece of meat.” Stripped naked and raped—“broken in”—by three goons who, along with my husband Ben, held me captive in a windowless room handcuffed to a radiator.

Indeed, the harsh realities that such pieces speak to overwhelm the book in places, undermining its more informative elements. More persuasive in the book’s second half is the incorporation of researcher data to balance out the personal details. Examples of people working to effect change also suggest that progress is possible, as with former johns discussing the impact that soliciting sex had on both them and on sexually exploited people.

Drawing on raw personal stories and credible research, the social science study *When Men Buy Sex: Who Really Pays?* handles the difficult topic of sexual exploitation with sensitivity, suggesting methods for shifting away from the exploitation of vulnerable people for monetary gain.

JOHN M. MURRAY (January 29, 2024)

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