

INSIDE THE ISSUES

Sex Workers in LA Being Forced to Work During Pandemic

BY CHARLOTTE SCOTT | EL SEGUNDO
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Sex work in Los Angeles has continued despite the stay-at-home order.

trafficking leave a life of abuse and violence.

What You Need To Know


- Pimps are forcing sex workers to work during the COVID-19 pandemic, says Executive Director of the nonprofit Journey Out
- Some sex workers are driven to work because they're impoverished and need money
- Journey Out is providing thermometers, masks, hand sanitizer, and information about COVID-19 testing sites to victims of human trafficking

"Why would someone be out there when they know that there's something that could kill them?" Dr. Powell asked. "They are out there for two factors: Poverty [or] because their pimps are making them work. And if they don't work, there's consequences as a result of that."

Unfortunately, Dr. Powell said some sex workers were impoverished even before the pandemic.

"So if they're driven out there because of poverty, prior to this virus situation, imagine how it's thrown them into a more impoverished situation because of that," Dr. Powell said. "And then, when you add on someone who is forced into prostitution, being made to go out there even though they know of the dangers and that to me is extremely concerning."

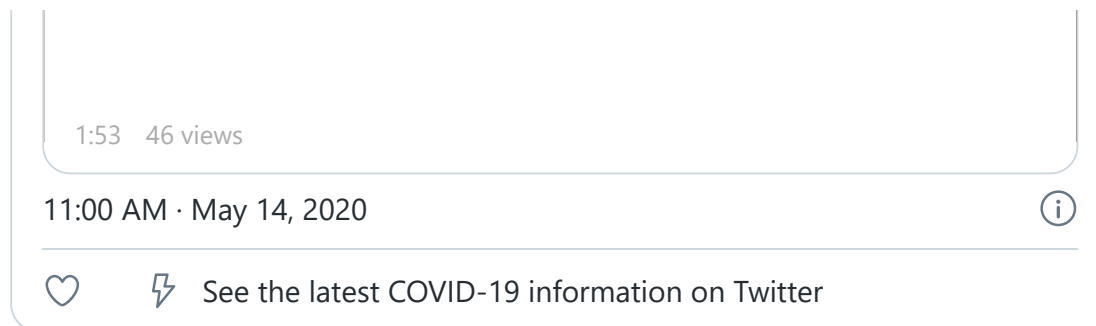


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"The people that I've talked to out on the street are out there [for 2 reasons]: poverty [or] because their pimps are making them work."

Dr. Stephany Powell of [@JourneyOutLA](#) said it's "extremely concerning" that sex workers are being forced to work during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Journey Out is providing information about coronavirus to those on the street.

“If we don’t go out there and protect those clients that we are working with, who else will? We still had to go out there, we still needed to go out there, and do outreach, to make sure that they knew about this virus and when to go to the hospital,” she said.

Journey Out distributes disposable thermometers, masks, and hand sanitizer to sex workers.

“What we saw was even more of a need for us to be out there because this becomes a very invisible population,” she said.

Anyone in L.A. can get tested for the novel coronavirus, even if he or she doesn’t have symptoms. Journey Out has provided workers with information about where and how to get a test.

“We give that information out on the street regardless of whether you’re victim to sex trafficking or you’re out there because of other circumstances,” she said.

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Journey Out is working with law enforcement to protect these workers during the pandemic.

In collaboration with other human trafficking organizations, Journey Out has been a voice on calls with local government officials in Sacramento and law enforcement officials “so that the voice of human trafficking victims is not diminished.”

Dr. Powell said victims of sex trafficking are facing similar struggles that victims of domestic violence are dealing with during the stay-at-home order.

“When you think about a victim of human trafficking, they also fall in the realm of domestic violence because they are in a situation in which they are living with their abuser as well, even worse right, because they’re forced to get out there and work,” she said. “We need to also talk about the human trafficking victim that is dealing with the same type of issues as the domestic violence victim as it pertains to abusive violence within a home setting that they cannot escape.”

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