

OPEN LETTER TO MACKENZIE SCOTT FROM SEX TRADE SURVIVORS

June 2026

Dear Ms. Scott:

We, the undersigned, are survivors of the system of prostitution, also known as the sex trade. For years, we have miraculously survived the buying and selling of our bodies and our selves in myriad commercial sex venues and marketplaces, including street prostitution, strip clubs, escort services, brothels, hotels, private homes, “massage parlors,” online prostitution such as Backpage.com, OnlyFans and other pornographic sites.

We are leaders in our communities and countries, offering trauma-informed services to the endless supply of vulnerable individuals – overwhelmingly women and girls, in particular of color – whom sex buyers – overwhelmingly men – purchase and violate daily. We educate the public and advocate for our governments to recognize that prostitution is inherently violent and dehumanizing. We urge our governments to offer us exit options instead of arrests, police harassment, and incarceration. We also urge them to hold our perpetrators to account for the harm they inflicted, among whom we count the men who rented us for sexual acts.

We are writing to express our grave concern about your grant to the controversial Dutch foundation [Mama Cash](#), reportedly in the tens of millions of dollars, and other groups that aggressively promote the legalization and decriminalization of the sex trade, whose actors include sex buyers, pimps, brothel owners and other third-party exploiters.

We value your significant philanthropic commitment to protecting the human rights, health, and education of women and girls globally. The needs are great and urgent, and your global investments to alleviate suffering are deeply appreciated.

However, we implore you to ask hard questions of the organizations and foundations you fund to ensure that you are not directly and indirectly investing in the expansion of the sex trade, jeopardizing our lives and condemning to it generations of the most vulnerable among us.

Notwithstanding some of their good work supporting women, girls and LGBTQ+ populations, these groups view the sex trade as an employer like any other and exclude us from their portfolios on sexual violence and discrimination. They have rebranded the unspeakable abuse we endured at the hands of sex buyers and exploiters, calling it “sex work,” a term and ideology we reject.

What happens in prostitution is neither sex nor work but one of the most egregious forms of male violence, sexual and psychological violence, unwanted bodily invasion, and often torture.

These groups also claim that decriminalization of the sex trade protects the rights and safety of those in prostitution. To the contrary, such laws codify the commodification of women and the sexual entitlement of men for the state’s profit, upholding centuries of colonization, militarism, and patriarchal systems opposed to equality.

The majority of us are Black, Brown, Asian, Pacific Islanders, Indigenous, Native, Roma, and from so-called Scheduled Castes. We are living proof of the dark legacy of institutionalized and state-sanctioned prostitution. Many of us were displaced, trafficked and prostituted due to wars,

conflicts and climate disasters, all factors that increased our vulnerabilities to exploiters. We want these abuses to end for our daughters and their children.

Those who promote prostitution as “work” claim that no links exist between the sex trade and sex trafficking, when in fact they are inextricable from each other. Most of us were trafficked for prostitution as children, a legal status that didn’t disappear when we turned 18 years old, nor did consequential trauma and indelible harm to our bodies, psyche, and lives.

We all landed in the commercial sex industry because someone or life circumstances brought us there through adverse childhood experiences, incest, sexual abuse, homelessness, conflicts and wars, climate change disasters, dysfunctional families, failed or complicit government institutions, racism, sexism, and other acute inequalities. Many of us never left home and many of us were sent abroad across continents for the sexual pleasure of men and enriching countries’ gross national product and the multi-billion-dollar global sex trade.

We urge you to take a closer look at those grantees and ask why they believe the sex trade must be reserved for the disenfranchised whose life choices were limited or non-existent.

The case of the convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein offers us a glimpse of the immeasurable suffering and even death that ensue when men, whether powerful or pedestrian, pay for sexual acts with money or gifts. That these sexual predators who destroy lives can operate in plain sight with impunity is an indictment of our cultural acceptance of prostitution and misogyny. We appeal to you not to adhere to this class of thought.

We ask you instead to join us in fostering empathy for our lived experiences in the sex trade, rather than interpreting our abuse as “choice” or “self-empowerment.” In prostitution, we were never the ones who had the money, the power, or the option to choose. For us, the slogan is “my body, his choice.”

We invite you to stand with us in calling for laws that decriminalize all prostituted individuals and mandate the provision of comprehensive services, while holding to account those who perpetrated crimes against us - sex buyers and all third-party exploiters, online and off.

We want a seat at the decision-making tables, from institutions to the United Nations, to parliaments. We want to create pathways for survivors to rebuild their lives with dignity and without violence.

We ask you to invest in our vision for a future without prostitution and not in those who uphold the systems that exploited us.

Read the letter in [Español](#), [Français](#), [Português](#), and [Italiano](#).

SIGNATORIES

Alika Kinan Foundation
United States

Alternative Solutions
United States

Asociación de Mujeres Argentinas por los Derechos Humanos AMADH
Argentina

Bagong Kamalayan Survivors Collective
Philippines

Bekah Speaks Out
United States

Bulacan Empowered Women's Collective
Philippines

BUKLOD
Philippines

California Survivor Coalition
United States

Coalition Against Trafficking in Women
United States

Colabo
Japan

Daughters of The Corner
United States

Everstrong
United States

FUNDACIÓN CASA DE LULU
Colombia and Mexico

FUNDACIÓN EMPODERAME
Colombia

I AM Jessica Kay
United States

Indonesian Woman Coalition
Indonesia

Keeping Every Girl Free
United States

KOMPASS - Komunitas Perempuan Penyintas Surabaya
Indonesia

The Korean Network of Women with Lived Experience of Prostitution, Moongchi
South Korea

Krystal Clear Foundation Inc
United States

Kwanele Survivor Movement
South Africa

Lawig Bubai
Philippines

LBH APIK Semarang
Indonesia

MINE (Muscle Inspires Nee Empowerment)
United States

The Missing Peace
United States

My Name My Voice
United States

National Solidarity Against Sexual Exploitation of Women
South Korea

The Network Team
United States

PACT (Protect All Children from Trafficking)
United States

Restore NYC
United States

Sanctuary for Families
United States

Treasured Lives
United States

Samaritana Transformation Ministries Inc
Philippines

Sex Trade Survivor Caucus
United States

SPACE Latinoamérica
Latin America and the Caribbean region

SPACE International

Stacy's Joy Consulting LLC & Stacy's Joy Incorporated
United States

Survivor Exit Foundation
South Africa

Survivor Exit Foundation
Zimbabwe

Talita
Sweden

Weavers of Hope Aps
Italy

West Pinellas NOW
United States