

**Survivor demands in response to KCPAO's offensive presentation about sex trafficking and Seattle Public Safety committee's complicity**

Seattle City Council

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On Tuesday, January 27th, the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office gave a presentation about sex trafficking at a meeting of the Public Safety committee of the Seattle City Council that featured unredacted, identifiable images of brutalized, bloodied, and tortured women, accompanied by graphic depictions of their rapes and assaults, including a list of foreign objects inserted into their bodies, and other dehumanizing language and comments about women who engage in the sex trade.

While the Public Safety committee chair councilmember Bob Kettle has apologized for allowing a public display of dehumanizing images of victims and survivors, we believe that it was part of a larger pattern of instrumentalization and exploitation of survivors, sex workers, and people in the sex trade by the KCPAO and Public Safety committee members in their effort to promote their preferred policy position of expanding the power and reach of the law enforcement.

While the KCPAO and Public Safety committee members selectively quote voices and stories of survivors that are convenient for their goal, those voices are far from consensus or even majority necessarily. Instead of honoring diverse perspectives of survivors, sex workers, and people in the sex trade, those of us who disagree with further criminalization are routinely dismissed as ignorant or privileged, explained away as speaking from trauma, or simply ignored and silenced.

It was evident throughout the conversations about prostitution loitering and SOAP ordinances back in 2024, when people with personal histories in the sex trade who opposed the proposed ordinance struggled to be heard at all, while an organization supporting the ordinance was repeatedly given time to present to the council, then subsequently received \$1 million in a no bid direct contract from the City Council. That organization is now mired in allegations of serious human rights violations against women they are supposed to be helping.

Even during the Public Safety committee meeting in which the KCPAO gave the offensive presentation, prosecutors and Councilmembers made numerous comments denigrating and dismissing survivors, sex workers, and people in the sex trade who oppose further criminalization. For example, Councilmember Kettle questioned the psychological state of those who disagree with his policies, including survivors, sex workers, and people in the sex trade, repeatedly dismissed us as members of the "chattering class" who are ignorant about the reality of violence against women, and accused us of yelling at and targeting Councilmembers like himself.

Councilmember Rivera mischaracterized and dismissed survivors, sex workers, and people in the sex trade who disagree with her as members of the privileged few, and argued that policies the Council is discussing have nothing to do with us, even though we are speaking out against policies that directly

harm us. She further chastised survivors, sex workers, and people in the sex trade who disagree with her for not listening to Councilmembers like herself, rather than the other way around.

When Councilmember Lin asked prosecutors about survivors who disagree with their approach, a prosecutor suggested that we are traumatized as children and are speaking from our trauma because that is all we have and know, instead of acknowledging that we are capable of forming our own opinions about what policies would help or harm our community based on our personal experiences and those of our peers, and that we have valuable insights that should be respected, whether or not they ultimately agree or disagree with us on any given policy. It was also telling that my public comment alerting the committee about the exploitative use of survivor stories and imagery “in complete disregard for survivor safety, privacy, or dignity” prior to the KCPAO presentation was entirely ignored as if nothing happened. This pattern goes beyond ordinary disagreements over policy preferences.

When the KCPAO and Public Safety committee members selectively promote survivor voices and stories that are advantageous for their policy positions while dismissing, mocking, and infantilizing voices and stories of other survivors, sex workers, and people in the sex trade, they are not listening to survivors: they are exploiting survivors, as they did when they publicly shared vulnerable survivors’ images and defended doing so by arguing that they are part of some obscure court filing, making them public records.

Therefore we demand:

1. An acknowledgment of the pattern of selective and exploitative uses of survivor stories, voices, and images in policy advocacy by the KCPAO and Public Safety committee.
2. An examination of City and County policies, guidelines, and trainings (or lack thereof) on ethical, trauma-informed, and non-exploitative uses of survivor voices and stories.
3. A systemic and empirical analysis conducted by the Seattle Office of Civil Rights on existing and potential policy approaches to reducing violence and exploitation in the sex trade as well as a review of best practices for incorporating diverse voices of survivors, sex workers, and people in the sex trade while minimizing re-traumatization.
4. The establishment of strategies to honor and include diverse perspectives of survivors, sex workers, and people in the sex trade in future policy conversations and to resource peer-led community-based organizations that provide outreach, support, and services without requiring that they collaborate or cooperate with the law enforcement.
5. A Public Safety committee meeting dedicated to a presentation about human rights-based, non-carceral, pro-sex worker approach to empower survivors, sex workers, and people in the sex trade and combat violence, abuse, and exploitation within the sex trade.

We present this list of demands to the Seattle City Council, King County Council, Seattle City Attorney’s Office, King County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office, Seattle Mayor’s Office on Domestic and Sexual Violence, Seattle Office of Civil Rights, and King County Office of Equity and Racial and Social Justice, and invite each entity to conduct inquiry as deemed appropriate and to work with us to remedy damages done to survivors, sex workers, and people in the sex trade, and to prevent future harms.