



Letter of support for Honorable Minister Dlamini

The Sex Worker Education and Advocacy Taskforce (SWEAT) and Sisonke National Sex Worker Movement of South Africa would like to call attention to the Minister's Open Letter that appeared in the Daily Maverick on the 19 January 2016 "Open Letter to ALL male leadership figures in business, politics and civil society".

We as sex workers and sex worker rights activists know full well the impact of living in a patriarchal society where historic inequality and systemic oppression plagues every aspect of our lives. We applaud the Minister's courage for wanting to "walk the walk" by taking the risk and speaking out against the oppression of women, especially for acknowledging the role that the ANC has played in perpetuating this oppression.

We at SWEAT and Sisonke echo the Minister's call to "dismantle patriarchy in all its forms". To begin to do this we would appeal to the Minister to consider the Apartheid era law that criminalises sex work, the 1957 Sexual Offences Act. We contend that it will be impossible to create a world where women can "feel safe wherever they are" without addressing this outdated legislation which is not in keeping with our Bill of Rights or Constitution. We agree that there is an intersectional experience of oppression in our country. However, no one experiences this more than sex workers in South Africa who are consistently excluded from all platforms, including those that claim to advocate for the rights of women. Sex workers are at the frontline in the war on women's bodies, and are the ones who bear the brunt of sexism, racism, classism, homophobia and xenophobia. As a result of the criminalization of sex work, not only is there no recourse for human rights violations that a perpetrated, but a context is created where violence can be perpetrated against sex workers with impunity.

We call for law reform. We call for laws that dismantle patriarchy. We call for laws that give women agency over their own bodies and own lives. We call for the decriminalisation of sex work! These calls are not new. Calls for the decriminalisation of sex work has been growing globally, informed and supported by mounting evidence-based research. We ask the Honourable Minister and leader of the ANC Women's League to hear these calls and not let them reverberate endlessly through the halls of power.

Yours in Solidarity

The Sex Worker Education and Advocacy Taskforce and Sisonke National Sex Worker Movement of South Africa