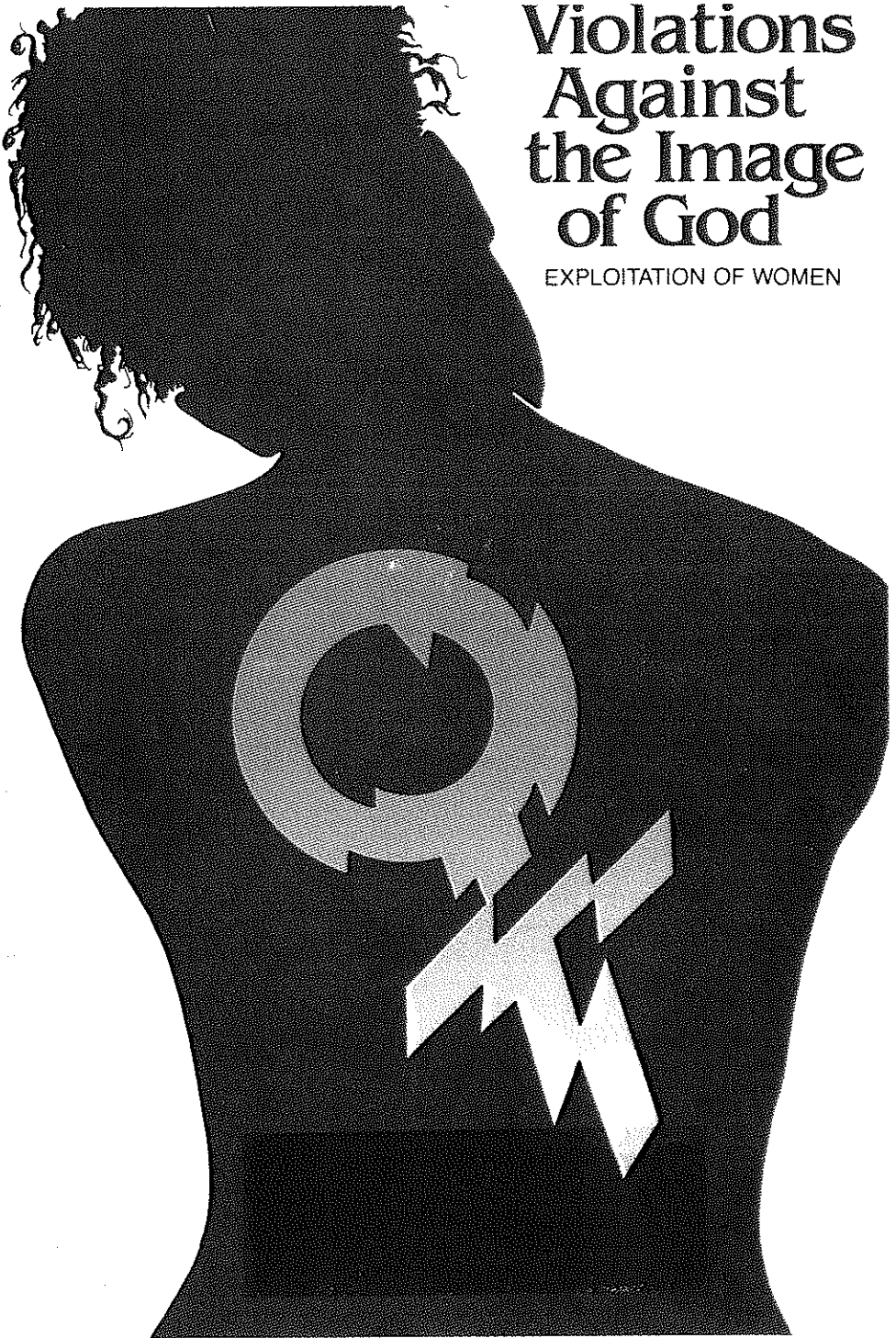


Violations Against the Image of God

EXPLOITATION OF WOMEN



RESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

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December 1986

Dear Friends:

The 195th General Assembly (1983) directed the Council on Women and the Church and the Committee on Women's Concerns to study female sexual slavery and prostitution promoted by tourism. In carrying out the study, the Council and the Committee expanded it to include an exploration of the exploitation of women. The following report and recommendations were approved by the 198th General Assembly (1986).

This significant report deserves serious study in the congregations, governing bodies, agencies, and institutions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Comments on questions developed during such study projects should be forwarded until December 31, 1987, to the Council on Women and the Church, Room 1151, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115, or to the Committee on Women's Concerns, 341 Ponce de Leon Avenue, NE, Atlanta, GA 30365. After January 1, 1988, comments should be sent to the Justice for Womens Committee, Women's unit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James E. Andrews".

James E. Andrews

**VIOLATIONS AGAINST THE IMAGE
OF GOD**

**Report of the Focus Group on
Sexual Exploitation of Women
of
Committee on Women's Concerns
Council on Women and the Church
of the
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
to the
198th General Assembly (1986)**

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Report of the Focus Group on Sexual Exploitation of Women

Background. The 195th General Assembly, meeting in 1983, made the following referral to the Council on Women and the Church for implementation:

Whereas during the International Women's Decade there has been rising concern and activism on the part of women throughout the world against the practice of female sexual slavery (involuntary and inescapable exploitation and sexual abuse), and prostitution promoted by tourism, pornography, and rape; and Whereas sexual and economic exploitation of women is inextricably interwoven and interrelated in the lives of women who are battered wives, political prisoners, refugees, etc.; and

Whereas sexual violence and exploitation are frequently disguised as "entertainment" (tourist prostitution and video games like "Custer's Revenge"); Therefore, the Council on Women and the Church requests that the 195th General Assembly (1983) initiate an exploration of this problem to:

1. Recognize the reality and importance of these problems;
2. Request the appropriate communication vehicles of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to publicize information on the exploitation of women and the economic injustice involved in the issues raised above;
3. Affirm the Council on Women and the Church in its plan to study these issues, including the international dimensions. [Mandate from General Assembly] (*Minutes*, UPCUSA, 1983, Part I, p. 475.)

Subsequently, the Council on Women and the Church (former UPCUSA) and the Committee on Women's Concerns (former PCUS) jointly appointed a focus group to initiate the study on the sexual exploitation of women. Consideration was given to the fact that funding for any extensive study would be severely limited. The group therefore agreed to restrict the study to prostitution and tourism and the economic factors that nurture and sustain the exploitation of women.

The focus group communicated with several organizations which work to change cultural attitudes within the countries where they are located. Available literature and responses from these organizations reveal that there is a nucleus of well-informed, inter-connected, dynamic individuals working at different levels to inform and urge change. These groups are attempting also to improve economic realities for women in countries particularly affected. Their efforts are directed toward education, training programs, and alternative jobs. This report reflects much of the data gathered by these organizations and brings into focus the critical need for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to address this issue.

In the process of studying this issue, the focus group presented a paper on its preliminary findings (entitled "Women: A Cry for Justice") to the Conference on Alternative Tourism held at San Francisco Theological Seminary, November 1984; sent a representative to the Female Sexual Slavery and Economic Exploitation Consultation organized by the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service, held in San Francisco in October 1984; and presented an educational event on the sexual exploitation of women to members of COWC-COWAC at the July 1985 meeting.

The focus group found that although prostitution linked to tourism is widespread and international, women in Thailand, Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Malaysia seem particularly affected. The poverty of the local people and the affluence of the visitors—whether individual tourist, recreational groups, businessmen, international conglomerates, or the military—create a cycle of need and greed. As many women and children in the Third World are forced to eke out a living, they become the victims of those who have the means to pay for sexual gratification. And abuse is perpetual.

Just as sex tourism and sexual exploitation in general are more prevalent in certain countries, it appears that some cultures condone and incorporate particular attitudes and values that foster sexual exploitation as an acceptable mode of existence. The authors of this study struggled with this dilemma and discussed how and whether it should be addressed within this study. It was concluded that the effort to change other cultures and traditions is best done by groups within those countries. To impose one set of values upon others is presumptuous and arrogant. The goal of the study has been to provide information to help educate and raise the consciousness of Presbyterians so that they will support groups and projects in affected countries and urge change in U.S. individuals and institutions in the United States, including the military, that in any way have personnel, holdings, or other dealings abroad.

Economic Factors

In “Dutiful Daughters on Society’s Lower Rungs” (Far Eastern Economic Review, January 5, 1984), writer Sukanya Hantrakul points out that:

Despite the legal and social taboos entailed, dutiful daughters in prostitution continue to honor their parents by sending home part of their earnings to meet debts, build new houses or buy TV sets. Indeed, while the “wages of sin” continue to be so high, their remittance home will overshadow those of their sisters in legitimate occupations. What chance is there for daughters to discharge their duties in such a tangible form if they stay in the village instead of migrating?

It is evident that a daughter’s prostitution can become a means of family economic development. Not only the family but also, in many ways, the nation is supported by prostitution of young women. Because of economic pressures, prostitution becomes socially validated as an economic necessity, with little regard for the women who are exploited in the process.

Sexual exploitation is a byproduct of the economic and political imbalance between the First and Third World countries. The industrialized nations bring big business, the tourist trade, and the search for cheap labor; while all too often the foremost commodity provided by developing nations is their work force—mostly unskilled and economically needy women. This creates serious consequences for women. For instance, in parts of Southeast Asia many rural women

have been forced to migrate to urban, industrialized centers, seeking wages that will sustain their families back in the countryside. The loss of land, the shift from producing food for local consumption to producing food for foreign use, the rise of modern export industries (e.g., the electronics industry), and other factors have led to the massive dislocation of rural families, particularly rural women.

Female migrants, together with lower class urban women, are channeled into labor-intensive jobs in multinational companies and service industries. Although many of these enterprises are operated by international, high-tech corporations, they treat the majority of their labor force—female operators—as a labor reserve, to be employed at low wages for a span of three to six years, and then replaced by fresh, single women from the countryside.¹

Confronted with inadequate wages and job insecurity, factory workers are also subjected to health and safety hazards. For example, in the electronic industry, workers often develop severe eye problems after three or four years of peering through a microscope or working with tiny computer chips. Once their vision begins to blur and they are no longer able to meet production quotas, they are discarded. Many women still young in years, displaced from factories and assembly plants, often have no other alternative than to seek work in hotels and brothels. But even while they worked in factories, some were forced to supplement their subsistence wages through prostitution. Thus, sexual exploitation of women has become virtually institutionalized in modern factories and service industries—an exploitation which is largely financed and supported by an expanding foreign clientele.

The availability of low-cost airfares and tour packages has made overseas travel more readily accessible to consumers in industrialized nations. This has not gone unnoticed by public officials and business persons in developing countries. In an effort to find solutions to their economic problems, governments in these countries often capitalize on this demand for more travel and more leisure opportunities desired by persons of wealthier nations. Tourism, then, is accorded a special place in the strategy for economic development. As a result, local capital is diverted from various forms of community development to the tourist industry.

Undoubtedly, tourism can generate much-needed income for developing nations; yet it also inherently represents a surrender of self-determination. In order to sustain their tourist trade, nations become economically dependent upon the influx of foreign capital, the military, or multinational corporations. During the Korean and Vietnam wars, the U.S. military presence set the foundation for the contemporary sex tourism industry. Wartime prostitution was thereafter transformed into peacetime sex tourism by powerful financial forces. For instance, the World Bank group, which includes the International Development Association and the International Finance Corporation, "has actively encouraged tourism in developing countries by providing aid in the form of loan and equity investments for hotel construction and other tourism-related privately owned enterprises."²

One argument supporting tourism is that it contributes to the economic growth of a developing country through foreign exchange earnings and the creation of employment opportunities. However, the basic issue to address is the degree to which the increased wealth is distributed throughout the local economy, as opposed to the more common reality that it remains with the local elite and with multinational cartels of airlines, hotels, and agencies. One study found that for every dollar spent in the Commonwealth Caribbean, 77 cents was returned to the industrialized countries as payments for imports, for profits to foreign-owned hotels, and interest on loans and other payments.

For many people of the Third World, economic survival is a day-to-day struggle. The pervasive poverty in developing nations creates desperate circumstances for people who have few options in how they support themselves and their families. Many economic factors mesh together or feed upon each other to set in motion systems of abuse and injustice. Some of these factors are the lack of work in poor villages and rural areas which forces migration to urban centers, the availability of more affordable travel for people of industrialized nations, and the readiness of poor countries to embrace tourism and prostitution as income-producing avenues. In the name of economic survival and growth, human dignity is violated, racism is encouraged, and an ever-increasing disparity continues to separate the haves from the have-nots.

Tourism

Go into the lobby of any of a number of Philippine hotels, and you will see clusters of Japanese tourists. The Japanese comprise the largest number of visitors to the friendly islands of the Philippines, and special concessions are granted to ensure that the numbers do not decrease.

If you leave the lobby of the hotel at dusk and walk around the back to the service entrance of the hotel, you will see an extraordinary sight. Rows of taxis, cars and mini-buses pull in out of sight of the road, and a long procession of beautiful young Philippine girls will slip past the guards and into a private entrance of the hotel. If you follow them you will find that they sign a book, hand over their I.D. cards and then enter a private elevator to the upper floors. The room each girl will go to is on one of the special floors designated for Japanese prostitution only. The girl knows in advance which room is hers, and if the occupant of that room is out shopping or otherwise engaged, she will just sit in the corridor and wait. (From *Third World Stopover*, by Ron O'Grady.)

A missionary from Thailand reported on a conversation she had with a young American in that country, who had seen first-hand how girls are used as prostitutes. The American grew up in Japan and spoke Japanese fluently. He was working as an interpreter for a Japanese businessman. One night the businessman wanted a prostitute, and a young girl was sent to him. The American described how difficult it was for him to serve as an interpreter during the transaction because the girl was obviously terrified and his heart went out to her. She was only 12 years old. The problem is not all uncommon. (From "Women: A Cry for Justice," a paper written by members of the focus group on sexual exploitation—COWAC-COWC.)

During the nights in which you, sir, will be my guest, I have special and tropical surprises for you. It is for example, 11 p.m. and you would like to relax? You take the telephone and say I want a girl. Within five minutes, I'll come with six beautiful girls (little SLAVES). You may choose one, the other little slaves I'll take back. With this little slave you can do practically everything in the field

of sex the whole night and you will not be disappointed with the girl. She gives real Thai warmth. (Advertisement in a hotel manager's pamphlet promoting sex tourism in Thailand. Reprinted from *International Feminism: Networking Against Female Sexual Slavery*.)

Tourism is a privilege of the affluent of the world. Ideally, tourism promotes a mutual sharing of cultures, exposure to new concepts, and a deeper appreciation of the human family. However, tourism becomes problematic when it exploits the very people whom it supposedly benefits. When there is exploitation, the other side of the exotic dream holiday becomes a nightmare.

Sex tourism is one of the glaring injustices of the tourist trade—as women, young girls, and even children become victims of exploitation, become prostitutes in their own land. This is particularly true in Thailand, South Korea, India, and the Philippines. Sex tourism is also big business in Mexico, Latin America, Africa, and the Caribbean. Many times young girls are taken from their homes and sold to brothels. Sometimes they are kidnapped outright, and their families never see or hear from them again. Other times, they are given promises of factory work in the city and their parents are led to believe that their daughters will be able to send money back to help support the family. But once away from home, the girls are forced into prostitution. And then there are situations where parents, who are desperately poor, may knowingly sell their daughters into prostitution. Usually they have many other children to feed and care for, and feel there is no other alternative for survival. In Thailand, for instance, families make an average monthly salary of only \$40, while a procurer will pay a family \$150 to “buy” a girl. These procurers are men from nearby villages and towns who are paid to recruit young girls into prostitution.

Sex tourism is a form of female sexual slavery which subjugates women as a “service commodity.” Women work in a variety of so-called entertainment spots, including massage parlours, tea houses, night clubs, discos, restaurants, and of course, hotels. In the Philippines an estimated 300,000 women work in bath houses, bars, and brothels. Thailand, “the land of smiles,” is now infamous as “the brothel of Asia,” with a population of some 700,000 prostitutes, 20 percent of whom are under fourteen years of age.¹

As packaged vacation plans, sex tours are often made available to Japanese and Western businessmen as work incentives. The tours are primarily built around providing men with unlimited sexual gratification. Sometimes the “tourist” has the opportunity to purchase a woman and take her home under the guise of marriage. Sex tours advertise “sexual slaves” for the tourist. This happens most frequently in Manila, Bangkok, and Sri Lanka because Asian women are perceived as more submissive and content to cater to men's needs.

Supposedly, the men who take these tours justify their behavior by arguing that since they spend large sums of money, they are providing

economic aid to the countries—and to the women. But in actuality, the developing countries receive only a small share of overall earnings from tourism, as compared to the large profits of the airlines, hotels, and affiliated tourist agencies. The women used for prostitution are exploited not only by the tourist, but also by the “system” that entraps them. For instance, in the Philippines, the average prostitute receives \$60, of which she keeps only \$4.25-\$5.75. The rest is parceled out to the club owner, the tour guide, the tour operator, and the hotel, not counting political payoffs or deductions and fines levied on the women for tardiness and other infractions.⁴

Unfortunately, tourism often results in the contamination of a culture and the plundering of a national heritage. It is a sad irony when the very uniqueness and unspoiled nature of a country’s landscape and culture, which attract the tourists in the first place, are disrupted and debased with the presence of many tourists who are disrespectful of that environment. Human exploitation comes through prostitution tourism as a result of the economic imbalance between comparatively wealthy tourists, businessmen, or military personnel and the desperately poor rural girls and young women who turn to prostitution out of economic necessity.

The presence of foreigners in Third World countries increases prostitution, mainly through the rest-and-recreation (R and R) strips connected with U.S. bases and through prime tourist attractions. Although much has been written about sex tourism in Southeast Asia and the Caribbean, the problems of prostitution tourism are felt globally. In July 1985, women from around the world dealt with this issue as a part of the agenda at the United Nations’ Nairobi Conference, which marked the end of the U.N. Decade for Women. No longer is prostitution-tourism simply viewed as just another expression of sexuality. Any serious analysis will reveal far-reaching social consequences which outweigh any legitimate concerns about personal morality. It is not just the prostitutes and their clients who are impacted by this phenomenon; they become part of an entire system which is propped up and perpetuated by imperialistic, sexist, and racist attitudes. Tragically, this cycle of use and abuse carries over into succeeding generations.

Tourism in and of itself is not inherently bad. In fact, it can be a rewarding experience when there is a basic respect for the host country, its people and culture. Christians are called to be responsible tourists, taking seriously the issue of social and economic justice and the problems facing those who are harmed by tourism. When traveling in other countries, Christians are urged to join other people of conscience in following the “Code of Ethics for Tourists,” developed in 1975 by the Christian Conference of Asia.

A Code of Ethics for Tourists

(1) Travel in a spirit of humility and with a genuine desire to learn more about the people of your host country.

(2) Be sensitively aware of the feelings of other people, thus preventing what might be offensive behavior on your part. This applies very much to photography.

(3) Cultivate the habit of listening and observing, rather than merely hearing and seeing.

(4) Realize that often the people in the country you visit have time concepts and thought patterns different from your own; this does not make them inferior, only different.

(5) Instead of looking for that "beach paradise," discover the enrichment of seeing a different way of life, through other eyes.

(6) Acquaint yourself with local customs—people will be happy to help you.

(7) Instead of the Western practice of "knowing all the answers," cultivate the habit of asking questions.

(8) Remember that you are only one of the thousands of tourists visiting this country and do not expect special privileges.

(9) If you really want your experience to be "a home away from home," it is foolish to waste money on traveling.

(10) When you are shopping, remember that "bargain" you obtained was only possible because of the low wages paid to the maker.

(11) Do not make promises to people in your host country unless you are certain you can carry them through.

(12) Spend time reflecting on your daily experiences in an attempt to deepen your understanding. It has been said that "what enriches you may rob and violate others."

Multinational Corporations

During the past twenty years many corporations have closed or limited their operations in the United States, choosing to move overseas to escape stringent health and pollution regulations and high employee wages. While ownership and technology remain in the U.S., the raw materials, labor, and manufactured goods move from country to country as corporations seek the most profitable market with the least investment of funds.

Third World countries, attempting to narrow the technological gap and move from a primarily rural economy into an industrial economy, vie with each other to offer the best deal to these multinational corporations. Packages may include free electricity, land, buildings, security, tax abatements, and the promise of cheap and plentiful labor. The governments of these countries believe that multinational corporations will provide income for some of their people and pave the way

for a much needed entree into the technological era. But the reality of the situation does not bear out this belief.

Puerto Rico is a case in point. A commonwealth state of the United States, it attempted to boost its economy by offering U.S. companies many of the perks listed above. Ads placed in U.S. newspapers promised 50 percent more production in Puerto Rico, stating that average wages were half that of the United States. As the island became an industrial haven for U.S. companies, people moved from outlying villages into metropolitan San Juan and other large cities. Puerto Rico began importing food instead of growing it, and local manufacturing declined as export items took over the industrial market. When the tax abatement term of twenty years lapsed in 1976, multinational corporations moved to other islands, particularly the Dominican Republic and Haiti. The Puerto Rican government found itself in debt to U.S. banks, importing almost all food and manufactured goods, and with a 30 percent unemployment rate of its citizens. To this day there is no relief in sight. If the experience in Puerto Rico is indicative of a trend, in ten years Haiti and the Dominican Republic will experience the same fate when multinational corporations pull up stakes and move to other Caribbean islands that offer tax abatements and cheap labor.

The practice of governments subsidizing multinational corporations is called "free trade zones." This term generally means that a country will provide customs-free import of raw materials, components and equipment, tax holidays of up to twenty years, and subsidize operating costs. In addition, the government will often prohibit local firms from operating within the zone unless they invest jointly with a foreign country. Many of the 100-plus free trade zones provide barracks-style housing for employees behind barbed wire fencing, with special security or police forces. Workers are prohibited from organizing trade unions and from striking.

Over one million people work within free trade zones and millions more work in multinational plants and locally owned subcontracting factories. Up to 90 percent of the labor force are women. Traditionally women have not constituted the work force in Third World countries. But when governments changed from rural economies to industrial centers, women found themselves without cottage industries and without necessary income. At the urging of their families many women journeyed to the cities to seek employment. Once in the cities, women found jobs in the factories, but these jobs offered little income, no health benefits, or workplace pollution and safety regulations, no security and no sick leave or other benefits.

In Taiwan, South Korea, Brazil, Mexico, Thailand, Malaysia, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Guatemala, and other developing countries, women work for subsistence wages while also realizing that they are vulnerable to being replaced. They dare not get sick, even for one day, because someone else will immediately replace them in line.

Women are cited as being the "ideal" employee because they are seen as docile, submissive, and uncomplaining. All day long women

will perform boring repetitive tasks, such as looking into microscopes for up to nine hours a day as they work with the tiny wires of a silicon chip. They suffer from eyestrain, rheumatism, arthritis, asthma, severe back problems, and other conditions caused by lax safety and health regulations. Worries about keeping a job in spite of failing health and the ever present problem of sexual harassment, cause stress and anxiety which become exacerbated when low wages do not meet the high cost of living in a city and the added responsibility of sending money home.

Factory women are torn by the dilemma of having their families economically dependent upon them, and yet having their society reject them. In traditional societies, factory women are frequently perceived as "loose" and unsuitable as marriage partners. If they should lose their jobs they may find it difficult to re-assimilate into their villages.

Factory women have many stories—each country presents culture-related problems. Yet no one will hear their stories because factory women are not allowed to join or start trade unions nor do they have representation on corporate boards. Their voices are effectively muted on two fronts: (1) by impersonal multinational corporations eager for production and profit but with little concern for the individual worker, and (2) by local governments wanting a place in the industrial world and willing to sacrifice a portion of its population to achieve it. This silent complicity of multinational corporations and governments stifles any attempt to change conditions for women in the workplace.

Militarization

You take a group of men and put them in a place where there are no round-eyed women. They are in an all-male environment. Let's face it. Nature is nature. There are women available. Those women are of another culture, another color, another society. You don't want a prostitute. You've got an M-16. What do you need to pay a lady for? You go down to the village and you take what you want. I saw guys who I believe had never had any kind of sex with a woman before in that kind of scene. They'd come back a double veteran. [Double veteran became a common slang phrase among American soldiers in Vietnam: having sex with a woman and then killing her made one a "double veteran."] (From *Does Khaki Become You?*)

I had always wanted to see how Olongapo City looked when a big carrier was in Subic Bay. As soon as I heard the Midway was in town, I took a bus to Olongapo. As we wove our way in and out of disco dens, clubs and bars, everybody appeared like objects of the entertainment world. A certain weirdness permeated the air—of men unwinding after being cooped up in ships and of women, cheap and giddy, prey of pressing economic needs.

That night it was the entire sickly system that glared at me—the nauseating dominance of one nation over another. The people in the joints and in the streets were but pawns playing their pathetic roles. (Sr. Mary Soledad Perpinan, a Catholic nun from the Philippines; from *Tourism/Prostitution/Development Documentation*.)

The beginnings of the present trade in prostitution and sexual exploitation in Asia can be traced to the establishment of foreign military bases in the continent.⁵ Before 1955, prostitution in Asia was

patterned after the local customs and was mainly restricted around the large ports. However, with the influx of military bases in the mid-1950's, prostitution became pervasive and reached its peak during the Vietnam War. Tens of thousands of U.S. men were caught up in a war which many of them did not understand. In order to maintain morale, a program of rest and recreation (R and R) was instituted. Every six months or so, soldiers were granted a leave from the fighting and thousands of free-spending G.I.'s would descend upon the streets of Bangkok, Taipei, Hong Kong, and Manila. The demand for women was insatiable.

It is estimated that by 1973 as many as 500,000 to one million women were working as prostitutes in South Vietnam. The precise number is impossible to calculate because thousands of Vietnamese women worked as cleaners and servants for United States troops and thousands more were raped by U.S. soldiers. All of them were vulnerable to the label "prostitute" because they were at the bottom of the racial hierarchy which determined all relations in the Vietnam War.⁶

The end of U.S. military involvement in Vietnam did not bring about an accompanying end to prostitution and sexual exploitation. On the contrary, wartime prostitution transformed into peacetime sex tourism, of which the U.S. military is a major partner. For example, two of the most notorious places for rest and recreation are located in the Filipino towns of Angeles and Olongapo where U.S. military bases are located. The social cost of these bases in terms of corrupted and dehumanized lives, especially for Filipino women, is very disturbing.

As the home of the Subic Bay Naval Base, Olongapo is the working ground of over 16,000 prostitutes as well as several thousand children of U.S. servicemen. During the Vietnam War, Olongapo was known as a wide open haven for G.I. recreation.⁷ But even today, the demand for prostitutes has not subsided. Several thousand prostitutes work legally and illegally in clubs, bars, hotels, massage parlors, and other so-called entertainment centers, patronized almost exclusively by military personnel.

In Thailand, too, militarization has laid the groundwork for tourism and the exploitation of women's sexuality. In the 1980's, the tourist industry is a major foreign currency earner for Thailand's conservative government. Twenty years earlier the biggest flow of "tourists" into Thailand wore khaki. Some were U.S. army and air force men stationed on the large air force bases in Thailand, which were launching pads for bombing forays into Cambodia and Vietnam. Others were soldiers who came into Vietnam combat zones to Bangkok and Thai beach villages to the south for rest and recreation.

In 1982, the U.S. had 200 military bases and 500,000 military personnel overseas, 92 percent of whom were male. As mentioned in the book *Does Khaki Become You?*, military policy toward civilians in different areas is determined by a number of factors: (a) the imagined racial or cultural gap between troops and local women (a wide gap

permitting soldiers and officers to treat the women as inferior and even more expendable); (b) the level of local hostility, determining how much of a "security risk" commanders presume local women to be; (c) the length of overseas tour required for each soldier; (d) the armed forces' policy regarding male soldiers marrying local women or bringing their wives with them to overseas posts; and (e) the level of economic hardship and social displacement being experienced by working-class peasant women, and thus their potential for dependency on the military and local pimps.⁴

Regardless of the variations from base to base or country to country, U.S. military officials still appear somewhat cautious about how much direct control to exert over their male troops and the local women mobilized to service those troops. Consequently, military accountability becomes obscured and the concerns of the militarized prostitutes—women who are mobilized to provide comfort and sex for troops—are ignored. In this way, military decisions often contribute to the sexual exploitation of those women who are marshaled to serve military personnel.

Prostitution in the United States

A light rain didn't stop prostitutes from pounding their beat along West Fourth Street.

"Hey, you want a date?" a teen-ager called out to men. Her uniform, a pink-and-white mini-dress, sandals and a gold necklace, seemed more appropriate for a high school dance. She wore eyeglasses and a few too many pounds.

She was 16, maybe younger.

"Guys are always asking us to get kids for them. They will pay big," said a veteran prostitute who uses the street-name "Dolly." "For really young blood, they'll pay \$500 an hour. Eleven and 12-year-olds are in big demand." (*Des Moines Sunday Register*, 9/1/85.)

She wasn't a very good prostitute and when she came home three nights in a row without any money he began to slap her around. She was with him for a year and a half, during which time the beatings increased... She decided to leave him and that was when she realized the extent of her enslavement.

He hunted her down, burst into her aunt's house and broke down the door. After terrorizing her he left, but returned three days later. "He told me to bring my baby. So I got the baby and stuff. And we got on the freeway. He asked me about an incident that happened when I first left him and he accused me of lying to him and he hit me in my nose. It started really bleeding bad... I lost track of how many times he hit me. I just know he hit me so many times that after a while I was so weak, and then he said, 'I'm not going to hurt myself hitting you.' And so he went to the trunk and got the base of a jack and he hit me on the head."

He took her home with him. His other prostitute, her stable sister, seeing the severity of her condition, helped her get out and call police a few days later. When she got away the police took her to the hospital where she found that her skull was fractured. (From *Female Sexual Slavery*, pp. 97-98.)

There has been a tremendous outcry against child abuse in the U.S., but very little sympathy has been exhibited toward women who are sexually exploited—especially through prostitution. This may be largely attributed to the widely held assumption that women who are prostitutes "get what they deserve," and that this is the price they must

pay for choosing this type of work. Actually, few women willingly choose to be prostitutes; the vast majority are forced into prostitution and are looking for a way out.

Another assumption is that only women of a particular class, race, or age group are potential victims of sexual exploitation. In her book *Female Sexual Slavery*, author Kathleen Barry mentions that all kinds of women are vulnerable to slave procurers. "It is true that some procuring methods are adapted to particular groups of women and the strategy that works in rural poverty may not work in an urban bus station. But it is primarily procurers and their interests and only secondarily women's age, race or economic class that determine who will end up forced into prostitution."

Procuring women into prostitution is an art that the pimp has masterfully developed. After all, the more women he has in his "stable," the more money he will make. You might ask—how can women be so naive? How can they get caught in this trap? But getting women involved in prostitution is a full-time sales job for a fast-talking pimp who makes it his business to be convincing.

The pimp or procurer uses several tactics. One strategy is to befriend or claim to be in love with a young woman. Troubled teenagers and runaways are especially vulnerable to this approach. Alone in a strange city and without job skills, they will turn to anyone who offers them solace. The pimp makes promises of money, cars, travel, clothes, and the flash and glamour of the good life. The teenager or young woman with no direction becomes an easy victim. Many times she might be involved with drugs and the pimp will support her habit. Generally, a pimp will ask a girl to "prove" her love for him; first by having sex with a friend of his, then by being with other men, and finally, by turning tricks. The traditional pimping strategy involves breaking the victim's will, reducing her ego, separating her from her previous life, and making her emotionally and psychologically dependent.

Other tactics which entrap women into prostitution include the use of recruiting agencies that appear to advertise legitimately for dancers and models. Usually when a girl gets involved, she has to pay money to have pictures taken and a portfolio developed. Once she's indebted to the agency, she is forced to "pay back" her debt by prostituting herself. The pimps or agencies give her a new name, false driver's license, social security number, and birth certificate, in order to evade detection by her family and the police.

Outright kidnappings of girls and women occur not only in poor, rural villages overseas but also here in this country. This is usually done by gangs, syndicates, and organized crime groups. The police documented one case in May 1978, when two men and a woman were arrested for kidnapping, raping, and forcing two fourteen-year old girls into prostitution. The girls were runaways from Pennsylvania and reported to the police that they had been kidnapped from a Sacramento, California, bus station and held for three days until they escaped.

But not everyone can escape. Many who try to leave face physical brutality and torture. One sixteen-year old who was procured in Minneapolis described the treatment her pimp gave her when she told him she wanted out: "First he put his foot in my face which broke my nose and knocked me out. He punched me in my face over and over and kicked me. I kept falling on the floor from being hit in the head. I finally got out the door and was running in the middle of the street. He was dragging me into the place again when the police came."¹⁰

If a woman has children, the pimp often threatens to harm her children, and he uses them as a weapon against her—forcing her back to work if she tries to leave.

So many times, people might say, "She should have tried this," or "Why didn't she do that?" but these women are so fearful for themselves or their children, that they believe there is no way out. They know of other women who have perhaps escaped for a while, but the pimps always seem to find them, beat them, and force them back. Some are even killed. Sexual terrorism not only goes far beyond the personal experience of violence but also involves extreme mental anguish.

This report is not inclusive of every type of sexual abuse, as prostitution is only one of many forms of sexual oppression. For instance, the immigrant laborers' market is another way in which women are used as sexual pawns. Young girls from Mexico and poor areas in the United States are provided for migrant workers in order to keep the workers sexually appeased. Many of these women are mentally disabled or emotionally disturbed and are forced to serve as labor camp prostitutes in return for food.

Still another avenue of exploitation is through the mail-order bride business, which is booming in the United States. Some men, alienated by the growing feminism and independence of women in the United States, have turned to the mail order system, where they seek out passive, subservient, and frequently Asian women whom they believe they can easily dominate and control. With so many Asian women desperately trying to escape the poverty in their own countries, there is an uninterrupted supply of Asian women available through mail order agencies. With virtually no means of supporting themselves and unable to speak the language, these women are literally at the mercy of their potential spouses or employers.

Sexual exploitation also occurs in the home—under the name of family violence or wife beating. Many wives might be surprised to know that they have some of the same fears that prostitutes have when asked to explain why they do not leave an abusive situation. They say they have no resources available to them or they hope that their husband—or their pimp—will reform or they have no place to go or that they are fearful of reprisal.

Victims of sexual exploitation are largely perceived as "throwaway women" but virtually every woman is subject to sexual abuse in one

form or another—from walking down the street and being verbally harassed—to being kidnapped, sold, and forced into prostitution.

Theological Reflection

During a visit to Bangkok, Thailand, I walked with my husband along Patpong Road, known as a “red light” district. As you walk through the streets in the evening, the doors of the bars are opened. I could see young girls working inside as dancers and hostesses, many of them nude. Their adolescent bodies betrayed their young age. The expressions on their faces told me that they had suffered experiences of exploitation and betrayal far beyond comprehension, and all in the service of “entertainment” and tourism. As a U.S. citizen of Asian heritage, my identification with these girls was instant and painful.

I remembered myself at the age of fourteen, full of innocence, spirit and hope. I was seeing young Asian girls who looked just like me. In other circumstances, it could have been my sister, my mother, my daughter, myself, working in those bars along Patpong Road.

Later, back in my hotel room, I looked in the mirror and saw the expressionless faces of my sisters, and I wept.

A Presbyterian woman

“It could have been my sister” . . . yet she was my sister. Every woman is indeed a sister. As a creation of the living God, she is inherently valuable. There are no excuses for violating the integrity of her body or in any way using her as a means for another’s purpose. Violations against Third World women and children are violations against the image of God.

God does however have a purpose for God’s special family. The children of Israel and their heirs through grace by faith were elected by God. Thus, disciples who respond to Jesus’ invitation to follow him make up a new kind of global family which is based neither on blood ties nor place. Jerusalem is no longer the only Holy City and kin relations are no longer the only family. Rather, the family of disciples are those who hear the word of God, believe it and do it. (Mark 3:31-35) The faith of disciples is made concrete in behavior—especially behavior toward the lame, the wage earner, the blind, the poor, orphans, the outcast, the stranger, and widows. In the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament the powerless are center stage. Jesus continued this prophetic tradition by his active ministry of healing, preaching good news to the poor, welcoming children, teaching outcasts, and befriending the underclass of women. In the same way the church is called to practice the teachings of this prophetic legacy. And we must recognize anew that violations against Third World women and children are violations against God’s purpose and against the family of disciples.

Jesus had the hardest condemnation for hypocrites (Matthew 23) and the greatest compassion for sinners. He even declared that tax collectors and prostitutes would enter the Kingdom before the hypocrites who condemned them. In one story a righteous host neglects the most common courtesies toward Jesus, his guest (Luke 7:36-50). On the other hand, a sinful woman washes his feet with her tears,

dries them with oil and kisses them. She takes a great risk by breaking into his presence at all. She shows much love by her abundant acts of hospitality. The host saw her sin and Jesus' bad manners. Jesus saw her humanity and love and the host's bad manners and hypocrisy. As the church and the people of God, we must acknowledge that the hypocrisies of inaction and self-righteous pretensions contribute to the violations against Third World women and children.

Prostitutes were and are the victims of the sins of violation and exploitation by the powerful. Yet often those who directly or indirectly control powerless women and children condemn these same women and children for their sin of prostitution. It is a way of blaming the victim. Victim-blaming is itself the ruse of sinners who either abuse the victim or refuse the call to discipleship to put a stop to victimization. Jesus saw through the victim-blaming game in the cure of the man born blind. (John 9.) Some Pharisees were preoccupied with the question of blame. Why was the man born blind? Surely either he or his parents must be sinners else he would not be punished with blindness. So also contemporary Pharisees wonder how it is that women become prostitutes and how the poor get themselves into such a predicament! Jesus, by contrast, healed the blind man. He acted. He was doing the will of God just as the blind man testified. On the other hand, those who blamed the victim were judged guilty by Jesus. Blaming the victim by the powerful is a sinful substitute for ending victimization of the powerless, of the exploited.

All Christians, as agents of change, are called to affirm human dignity and the life of men and women. We are also called to exercise our social responsibility of protecting and liberating the oppressed and the alienated. We are called to follow Jesus' mission to "preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, to recover the sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." (Luke 4:18.) The cry of captive women and children is a challenge to each Christian. Will we heed their plight or turn a deaf ear to their cry?

Ecumenical Agencies

The following is a listing of organizations concerned about the issue of Third World tourism and the exploitation of women. These organizations have been addressing the problem on various levels and may serve as additional sources of information.

It should be mentioned that two of these agencies namely, the Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism and the Center for Responsible Tourism were particularly helpful during the preparation of this report.

Asian Women's Association
Shibuya, Tokyo, Japan

Center for Responsible Tourism
San Anselmo, California
Virginia T. Hadsell, Organizing Director
Christian Conference of Asia
Kowloon, Hong Kong
Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Women
Bangkok, Thailand
Peter Holden, Executive Secretary
International Feminist Network
 Against Female Sexual Slavery
International Women's Tribune Center
New York, New York
Isis
Geneva, Switzerland
Third World Movement Against the
 Exploitation of Women
Manila, Philippines
UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service
New York, New York
Women's Bureau
Asahi Shimbun Asian Bureau
Singapore
Women's Information Center
Bangkok, Thailand
Workgroup on Prostitution, Tourism, and Traffic
 in Women
The Netherlands
World Council of Churches
Women in Church and Society
Geneva, Switzerland

Footnotes

¹Ong, Dr. Aihwa, "Industrialization and Prostitution in Southeast Asia," *Female Sexual Slavery and Economic Exploitation: Making Local and Global Connections*, Report of a Consultation organized by the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (New York), San Francisco, CA, 25 October 1984, p. 12.

²Kim, Elaine, "Sex Tourism in Asia: A Reflection of Political and Economic Inequality," *Critical Perspectives of Third World America*, Vol.2, No. 1, Fall 1984, p. 216.

³*Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁴Kim, Elaine, p. 219.

⁵O'Grady, Ron, *Tourism in the Third World*, Maryknoll, New York 1981, p. 38.

⁶Enloe, Cynthia, *Does Khaki Become You?* South End Press, 1983, p. 33.

⁷*Tourism/Prostitution/Development*, Documentation, Holden, Peter, Jurgen Horlemann, Georg Friedrich Pfafflin (eds.), Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism in cooperation with the Center for Development Education, revised ed. of the German editions of March and May 1983, p. 18.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁹Barry, Kathleen, *Female Sexual Slavery*, New York, 1979, p. 103.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 79, referring to Testimony to the New York Select Committee on Crime, Public Hearing—Children, Pornography, and the Illicit Sex Industry, 14 November 1977.

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- Mattani, Rojdara Rutnin, "The Role of Thai Women in Dramatic Arts and Social Development Problems Concerning Child Prostitution in Thailand: A core study accompanied by a videotape on the lives of child prostitutes," presented at the International Conference on Thai Studies, Bangkok, August 22-24, 1984.
- O'Grady, Ron, *Third World Stopover*, World Council of Churches, Geneva, Switzerland, 1981.
- O'Grady, Ron, *Tourism in the Third World*, Maryknoll, New York, 1981.
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- "Women: A Cry for Justice," a paper written by a work group of the Committee on Women's Concerns and the Council on Women and the Church, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1984.
- "Women in a Changing World," a publication of the World Council of Churches, Geneva, Switzerland, December 1981.

Resources

Violations Against the Image of God: Exploitation of Women. Brochure with composite vignettes, facts and the "Code of Ethics for Tourists"; Cost: 25¢ each; \$20 per 100. Filmstrip and study guide for in-depth study for one or more sessions. Cost: \$15. Order from: COWAC, Room 1151, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115; COWC, Room 509, 341 Ponce de Leon Avenue, N.E. Atlanta, GA, 30365. Please enclose check with order.

Recommendations Concerning Sexual Exploitation of Women

Adopted by the 198th General Assembly (1986)

As the people of God, committed to love, justice, and service in the world, members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are challenged to demonstrate a new concern for women in the United States and in other countries who are being sexually exploited through prostitution, tourism, military presence and through some of the activities of transnational corporations. Tourism in the Third World often reinforces racist, sexist and imperialistic stereotypes which destroy the family of God, encouraging some people to feel and act superior to people in countries visited.

Inasmuch as the passive attitude of the church and of many church members concerning these issues and problems can be attributed to a lack of awareness, the Council on Women and the Church and the Committee on Women's Concerns recommend that the 198th General Assembly (1986):

(1) Declare that sexual exploitation of women in any form is not to be condoned, disregarded, or treated lightly.

(2) Encourage the study of this report and request the Program Agency and the General Assembly Mission Board (or their successors) to include information about these concerns in appropriate program resources.

(3) Urge all ministers and local congregations to identify and study the problems of sexual exploitation that exist in their own communities, as well as in other countries, which contribute to sexual exploitation through prostitution, tourism, military presence, and the activities of transnational corporations, and seek to effect change through their own circles of influence.

(4) Request all boards, agencies, councils, organizations (or their successors), governing bodies, seminaries, and educational institutions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) which initiate study tours and seminars to promote responsible tourism by following the "Code of Ethics for Tourists" and by selecting travel agents that do not arrange or encourage sex tours.

(5) Urge all members of the denomination who travel abroad in any capacity to follow the example of Jesus by affirming the holiness of every person and place, to follow the "Code of Ethics for Tourists," and to engage the services of only those travel agents who promote responsible tourism and the needs of people in the host country.

(6) Encourage all Presbyterians to explore ways to approach multi- and transnational corporations and to seek changes when those corporations perpetuate injustices that violate the personhood of women, men, and children in their employ. Such unjust practices include inadequate health and safety standards in the workplace, nonsubsistent wages, lack of job security, and the use of child labor.

(7) Urge the Committee on Mission Responsibility Through Investment to distribute this report to selected U.S. multinational corporations who have overseas holdings or operations and request the Office of General Assembly to distribute copies of this report to appropriate offices, agencies, and branches of the United States Armed Services.

(8) Encourage boards, agencies, committees, and councils (or their successors) to relate to and support the ecumenical bodies that are seeking to address and correct the many forms of sexual exploitation of women.

(9) Direct the Office of General Assembly to send copies of this report and information about related resources to all pastors and local churches, missionaries and fraternal workers, governing bodies, boards, agencies, committees, councils, organizations, seminaries and educational institutions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and travel agents that conduct business with the denomination; also direct the Office of General Assembly to be responsible for the translation of this report and related resource into Spanish and Korean and for making the translated materials available to congregations.

(10) Urge all Presbyterians to seek ways to bring about changes within the military establishment which will eliminate practices that economically and sexually exploit women and children near military bases and installations.

(11) Affirm and continue the church's commitment to study and provide funds for economic justice and self-development projects for women inasmuch as the roots of exploitation are often found in economic injustice.