



**2018 Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers Tool Kit**

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## **About**

In the spirit of remembrance and healing and in response to the harm caused by FOSTA/SESTA, the Sex Workers Outreach Project invites sex workers, allies and advocates from around the world to join us in recognizing December 17, the International Day to End Violence against Sex Workers.

Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers was first recognized in 2003 as a memorial and vigil for the victims of the Green River Killer in Seattle Washington. Since 2003, Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers has empowered people from cities around the world to come together and organize against discrimination and remember victims of violence.

As we approach this day, we seek to come together to remember those who we have lost this year, and renew our commitment in the ongoing struggle for empowerment, visibility, and rights for all sex workers.

We also renew our commitment to solidarity. For the majority of victims, violence against sex workers is not just violence against sex workers—it's also violence against the trans community, people of color, women, immigrants, queer people, woman and many other marginalized groups. We cannot end the marginalization and victimization of all sex workers without also fighting transphobia, racism, stigma and criminalization of drug use, and xenophobia. Intersectionality is key!

During the week of December 17th, sex worker communities and social justice organizations stage actions and vigils and work to raise awareness about violence that is commonly committed against sex workers. The assault, battery, rape and murder of sex workers must end. Racism and economic inequality and systems of colonialist, capitalist violence and oppression must end. The stigma and discrimination and criminalization that makes violence against us acceptable must end. Please join with sex workers around the world and stand against criminalization and violence committed against our communities.



## **Fact Sheet**

It should be noted that the Sex Worker community is largely unrecognized as it's population. This is an injustice and impacts our ability to gather statistics about both our losses and our resiliency. Sex Workers as a demographic need to be recognized and supported and funded so that data can be accurately reflected. Here are some of the very limited facts based off of statistics we were able to gather:

- 23% of GLBT murder victims on the 2012 Anti-Violence Project report were killed while engaging in sex work.
- The homicide rate for female sex workers is estimated to be 204 per 100,000, according to a longitudinal study published in 2004. This constitutes a higher occupational mortality rate than any other group of women ever studied.
- A study of New York Street-Based Sex Workers reported that 80% of participants had reported experiencing violence, including 27% at the hands of police.
- In a report on violence against sex workers in India, 70% had reported abuse by police, and 80% had been arrested without evidence.



## **Forms of Violence Against Sex Workers**

Source: “Chapter 2. Addressing Violence Against Sex Workers” in *Implementing Comprehensive HIV/STI Programs with Sex Workers* (WHO, et.al. 2012)

There are several contexts, dynamics and factors that put sex workers at risk for violence.

**Workplace violence:** This may include violence from managers, support staff, clients or co-workers in establishments where sex work takes place (e.g. brothels, bars, hotels).

**Violence from intimate partners and family members:** Stigmatization of sex work may lead partners or family members to think it acceptable to use violence to “punish” a woman who has sex with other men. It may be difficult for sex workers to leave an abusive relationship, particularly when perpetrators threaten them, or have control due to ownership of a home, or the power to harm or refuse access to their children.

**Violence by perpetrators at large or in public spaces:** In most contexts, the antagonistic relationship with police creates a climate of impunity for crimes against sex workers that may lead them to be the targets of violence or of other crimes that may turn violent, such as theft. Some perpetrators specifically target sex workers to “punish” them in the name of upholding social morals, or to scapegoat them for societal problems, including HIV. Sex workers may also face violence from individuals in a position of power, e.g. nongovernmental organization (NGO) employers, health-care providers, bankers or landlords.

**Organized non-state violence:** Sex workers may face violence from extortion groups, militias, religious extremists or “rescue” groups.

**State violence:** Sex workers may face violence from military personnel, border guards and prison guards, and most commonly from the police. Criminalization or punitive laws against sex work may provide cover for violence. Violence by representatives of the state compromises sex workers’ access to justice and police protection, and sends a message that such violence is not only acceptable but socially desirable.

Laws and policies, including ones that criminalize sex work, may increase sex workers’ vulnerability to violence. For example, forced rescue and rehabilitation raids by the police in the context of anti-trafficking laws may result in sex workers being evicted from their residences onto the streets, where they may be more exposed to violence. Fear of arrest or harassment by

the police may force street-based sex workers to move to locations that are less visible or secure, or pressure them into hurried negotiations with clients that may compromise their ability to assess risks to their own safety.

Violence against sex workers is not always defined or perceived as a criminal act. For example, laws may not recognize rape against transgender individuals as a crime, or police may refuse to register a report of sexual violence made by a sex worker. Sex workers are often reluctant to report violent incidents to the police for fear of police retribution or of being prosecuted for engaging in sex work.

Laws and policies that discriminate against transgender individuals and men who have sex with men increase the vulnerability of male and transgender sex workers to abuse. Laws criminalizing HIV exposure may prevent HIV-positive sex workers from seeking support in cases of sexual violence, for fear of being prosecuted. Even where sex work is not criminalized, the application of administrative law, religious law or executive orders may be used by police officers to stop, search and detain sex workers.

This creates conditions in which sex workers face an increased likelihood of violence. Sex Workers may also be made more vulnerable to violence through their working conditions or by compromised access to services. Some may have little control over the conditions of sexual transactions (e.g. fees, clients, types of sexual services) if these are determined by a manager.



## **Organizing Your Own Event**

There are numerous ways to have events in order to recognize December 17th. Some of the core goals should include the following:

### **Educate**

Organizing a march, protest or sit-in to express outrage for the murder of our sex worker community is always a powerful tool. If this doesn't feel safe to you, consider offering a teach-in utilizing popular education models to educate about sex work and the violence we experience, reach out to local harm reduction, LGBT, women's organizations for your proposal.

### **Honor**

Honor the lives of sex workers on this day, either by yourself or as an event. This day can be emotionally draining and some folks prefer to engage with their community while others prefer solace to process the violence. Organizing or participating in a December 17th event can be a method for sorting through associated feelings that may come with this date. It can also be helpful to just light some candles in remembrance and practice self-care alone or with a few members of your chosen family.

### **Remember**

Organize a public memorial event in your town. Invite people to bring writings, stories, readings, thoughts, related news items, poems, performances, etc. Make a circle at the event. Take turns sharing. This will make for a wonderful memorial and be great for consciousness raising and outreach as well.



## Ten 12/17 Event Ideas

1. Organize an event for sex workers only. Organize a special lunch, dinner or activity for individuals surviving on street based economies. Such as a meal, meet and greet, self-defense training, healing session.
2. Honor victims in creative ways. Use art to remember those we have lost and acknowledge the resistance of our community. This can be a mural, origami or whatever else makes sense for your community..
3. Create participatory opportunities for attendees, such as having an open mic, group art project, photo booth, etc.
4. Take advantage of holiday crowds to fundraise and spread awareness. Wrap candy canes with messages about what December 17th is and pass them out at markets or similar events.
5. Have attendees be part of the décor – ask attendees to wear red. Invite attendees to paint a message on a T-shirt.
6. Create ‘shrines’ for victims from your community specifically, or with consent from the victim’s family or friends. Do this by buying a trifold, decorating it with photos and texts, and leaving post-it notes for attendees to write messages, and/or candles for attendees to light.
7. Use public space – organize a memorial in a park, a speak-out outside of police headquarters or a court-building, or start a march from where a victim was murdered.
8. Hold a press conference or speak-out on the week of 12/17 to announce a program that addresses violence against sex workers, launch a campaign or new service, or publicly announce a list of demands to end violence against sex workers in your area.
9. Organize an informal art show. Host it at a coffee shop, local gallery or community space. Showcase work created by sex workers in your community.
10. Use 12/17 as an opportunity to raise funds while raising awareness – Make ornaments, and organize a red-umbrella decorating competition with a 5-10 entry fee. Sell red umbrella ornaments, December 17 stickers, or other merchandise at an event. Organize a fundraising drive near a local grocery store, and give candy canes with information about 12/17.





## **Social Media**

### ***What is social media?***

Social media are the websites and apps we use to communicate, share and create content to share with others over the internet. It can be used

### ***What are different social media tools?***

[Facebook](#) is a social networking and social media company that utilizes statuses, pictures, videos and allows users to create their own events in order to engage with the community. Creating a Facebook event can be a great addition to your SWOP chapter's already created. When creating a Facebook Event for December 17th, be sure to add SWOP USA as a co host to your annual event.

[EventBrite](#). Facebook is also a great avenue to share live streamed video. Please keep reading for ideas on how to live share video while keeping your audience safe. Facebook can be used and posted from computers, tablets and phones.

[Twitter](#) is a micro sharing platform that relies heavily on hashtags. Twitter only allows 280 characters per tweet. Because of this it can be useful to use a URL shorter such as [Bitly](#) when sharing links in order to utilize less characters in your Tweet.

[Instagram](#) is a social networking and social media company that utilizes primarily photographs. Instagram relies heavily on hashtags in order to share to the broader audience beyond one's immediate contacts. Instagram can be viewed from computers, tablets and phones but can

typically only be posted from phones.

[Snapchat](#) is a video and photograph social networking application. Snapchat uses videos and photographs to communicate and network. Snapchat can only be used from cell phones.

[YouTube](#) is a video sharing platform where individuals or companies can create and share their own content. It's viewable and shareable through all platforms.

### ***What are hashtags?***

Hashtags are words that follow the pound (#) sign. These are used on social media to categorize different topics. Hashtags are a great way to interconnect and bring in new viewers as they often connect what we are sharing into the larger dialogue.

### ***Hashtag examples:***

#RestInPower #SWOPUSA #RightsNOTRescue

### **Tips on Photography and Video:**

Remember that consent is critical when sharing images and videos from your event. The safest way to keep the community safe is either get explicit permission from every individual in the frame or consider creative alternatives to capturing video and photos. Some ideas may include photographing from behind the participants heads, videos of the beautiful remembrance alter or display you've created or photos focusing on people's hands/shoes. These may sound silly, but privacy is really important to some folks in our community and should be respected.

### **Images for your use:**





## **Press**

Follow this [link](#) for a template to utilize when inviting press to your December 17th Event.



## **Pronouns**

Respecting an individual's pronouns is critical. Facilitate a safe space for all gender identities by making it a point to have every individual have the space to announce their pronouns when introducing themselves. This can also be done by creating pronoun stickers or using pronouns buttons, such as "he/him/his", "they/them/theirs", "she/her/hers", or just their name, etc. This is one amazing way to create and continue a safe space for trans folks in our community and allows cisgender allies to take the burden off of trans folks.

Be accountable- if you or someone misgenders someone or uses the wrong pronouns, correct yourself or allow yourself to be corrected. Apologize, move on and build community.



## Accessibility Tips

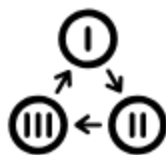
**What is access?** Access is providing accommodations so people with disabilities can be fully included in events. Curating an accessible sends a clear message that people with disabilities are included and have been thought of in the planning process. An easy way to provide access is to be sure to have a contact number or email for folks to utilize for accessibility concerns or requests.

*These tips are not indefinite and people with disabilities should be a part of the planning process.*

Tips for Accessibility:

- Be sure to be transparent about your locations barriers. If possible, try to book venues that have no steps or stairs and do not have narrow doorways. If not possible, make sure you communicate that building is “not chair accessible”. Also consider the bathroom, is there a bathroom stall that allows a wheel chair to move around fully in it and the participant to transfer?
- Consider lighting. Flickering lights can have a negative impact on neuro-diverse people. Floor lamps are a great alternative to provide ambient lighting and lower the risk of a reaction to lighting.
- Consider providing a scent-free environment. People sensitive to chemicals often cannot attend events that have a risk of reaction from others. Perhaps at the bottom of your fliers and online events state the space as being a “Scent-Free Zone”.
- If you’re going to serve food, label it.

- Have access to an ASL interpreter if possible.
- Provide a clear agenda that states “socializing time”.
- Be cautious with language. Obvious words like “retard” are offensive but so are many other words. Consider omitting words like “handicapped”, “tone deaf”, “lame”, etc.



## **Logistics**

### **Publicity - Web:**

Share your event page with SWOP-USA ASAP once your event details are confirmed. Do this by emailing details to [dec17@swopusa.org](mailto:dec17@swopusa.org), or using the form on the 12/17 website. We'll add it to the December 17th website map to help spread the word!

Use social media to engage the community (See below for some social media tips)

Share details with activist organizations and other social service nonprofits in your area.

Search for the contacts of event or news reporter in your area, be releasing a press statement. If you need help with this, feel free to contact SWOP USA and we can guide you.

Create fliers or zines to advertise your event

If you don't have a graphic designer, many online platforms are free and can be used to create some beautiful designs. One of our favorites is Canva.

### **Food/Beverages:**

This year SWOP USA is working with Subway and Panera to secure food for your December 17th events. More details will come to those chapters and organizations that were approved for the December 17th mini grant.

Another great idea would be to have a potluck for your event. Be sure to plan to bring a couple staple dishes and invite the community supplement and join in!

### **Decorations:**

Check in with Florist shops - some may be willing to give day-end flowers to you for the event.

If approved for a mini-grant, your organization will receive a package from us with a banner, candles and other decorative items.

Feel free to supplement these as your community feels fit.



Some great ideas would include: Flowers, candles and similar decorations.

Remember that if any items are donated, that donations over \$75 are tax deductible.