



# ASIAN WOMEN COALITION ENDING PROSTITUTION Spring 2014 Newsletter

[www.awcep.org](http://www.awcep.org)



Photo: (left) Sarah Mah addresses media during announcement of Supreme Court ruling on *Bedford v. Canada* in Ottawa; (right) AWCEP members join allies at International Women's Day rally in Vancouver.

## ***In this issue:***

- **Sarah Mah's nomination for A Bold Vision**
- **Amnesty International, Asian women urge a strong stand for abolition**
- **Parliament to reform prostitution laws**

## **Amnesty International, Asian women urge a strong stand for abolition!**

Amnesty International (AI), the world's largest human rights organization may take a position on prostitution as early as this year. Late January, AWCEP met with the secretary general of Amnesty International Canada, Alex Neve to urge the Canadian section to oppose taking a position that would decriminalize pimping, brothel-keeping and buying sex.

Deeply concerning is a leaked document created by Amnesty staff that is the only information document in circulation to Amnesty leadership. The document is shockingly biased and fails to make a distinction between the buyers and sellers

of prostitution and the women who are pressed by circumstance and lack of choice into prostitution. This is a dangerous error in analysis by an organization that claims that their mission is to end grave human rights abuses around the world.

Along with other leading feminist groups, including the Federation of University Women's Clubs, Justice for Girls, and Formerly Exploited Voices Now Educating, we provided education to Amnesty about prostitution as an infringement on women's equality in Canada and internationally. The undeniable relationship of sexism, poverty and racism that is exploited in prostitution is a key consideration that we hope Amnesty will recognize in their decision-making. The stereotypes

of the 'Japanese school girl', 'geishas' and the 'exotic Chinese girls' used to market women as products to meet male demand fuels racial inequalities.

We know that unless our governments and respected organizations like Amnesty push for progressive legislation similar to the Nordic model, it will be much harder for Asian women, women of colour and Aboriginal women to self-determine and have equal opportunities.

## **Take Action!**

Sign the on-going petition on [change.org](http://change.org). Write to Amnesty about the fact that prostitution is sexism and racism.

## AWCEP member Sarah Mah receives nomination to participate in A Bold Vision conference!

This is a national conference that brings together women leaders and visionaries across Canada to share their ideas for the nation's future. "When 23 men met in Charlottetown PEI in 1864, their collective thinking and visioning ultimately led to the formation of Canada. *We want to know, what do 23 women envision for our country for the next 150 years?*"

*Pictured left: Sarah presenting at a forum organized by the Asian Law Students of Osgoode and the Osgoode Constitutional Law Society in Toronto.*



### Parliament to reform prostitution laws

AWCEP applauds the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada to strike down laws criminalizing prostituted women. However, the group is deeply disturbed that the Court, in striking down the laws as they applied to men who engage in prostitution as brothel-keepers, pimps, johns, and advertisers, did not take into account the profoundly racist and sexist nature of prostitution. The decision to strike down the bawdy-house, living on the avails, and communication in public offences is suspended for

a year, giving Parliament time to introduce new laws.

### Congratulations Cherry Smiley on 'Revolution Songs'!

This March, AWCEP member Ada Tsang spoke on a panel that was part of an art gallery installation created by Cherry Smiley, founder of Indigenous Women Against the Sex Industry. The installation shares stories and experiences from indigenous women, while Ada spoke about the exploitation of Asian women in prostitution.



## Statement on International Women's Day (for the full statement go to [www.awcep.org](http://www.awcep.org))

We are honored to join women around the world on this day to celebrate the militant tradition of working class women struggling for a better world. Abolishing prostitution is a fundamental aspect of women's liberation because prostitution threatens the social, economic, and political security of women. Prostitution narrows the potential futures and opportunities for women, and is a sexist and racist practice that diminishes our ability to participate meaningfully in society.

Today, in the true spirit of International Women's Day, we carry on our commitment to fight for women's equality and freedom. We need to be ready as ever to organize, fight, and insist on the protection and liberation of women for the sake of ourselves, and our sisters here and around the world.

## About us

The Asian Women Coalition Ending Prostitution (AWCEP) challenges the normalization of human trafficking and prostitution of Asian women in Canada and around the world.

Find us on Facebook | [www.awcep.org](http://www.awcep.org) | [awcep.info@gmail.com](mailto:awcep.info@gmail.com)