

**Prostitution in Brazil: a story of struggle and invisibility far from the end***Prostitution in Brazil: a history of struggle and invisibility far from the end*Katherinne Dias Souto²³

Submitted on: 06/07/2022

Approved on: 06/07/2022

Published on: 06/08/2022 v. 2, no. 1, Jan-Jun. 2022

DOI: 10.51473/rcmos.v2i1.312

SUMMARY

There is a lot to say about the “oldest profession in the world”, and it is always a controversial topic in the most diverse social groups. Its social and cultural aspects have been rooted in Brazilian society since the beginning of colonization and, after the end of slavery, prostitution became the form of support for a large number of former slaves. In Brazil, it reached its peak in the 1930s, both through the literary works of writer Jorge Amado and through the brothels in Rio de Janeiro, which became famous worldwide and promoted sexual tourism. As early as 1980, professionals demonstrated in search of their rights, waiting for a position from the government. This caused a division between social groups that supported the regulation of prostitution as an “any” profession and those who considered its exercise as a form of sexual exploitation and commodification of the female body. However, it was only in 2002 that, after numerous debates, it was recognized by the Ministry of Labor as a profession permitted from the age of 18. **Key words:** Prostitution. Colonization. Sex tourism. Exploration. Recognition.

ABSTRACT

There is a lot to be said about the “oldest profession in the world”, always being a controversial topic in the most diverse social groups. Its social and cultural aspects are rooted in Brazilian society since the beginning of colonization and, after the end of slavery, prostitution became the livelihood of most ex-slaves. In Brazil, it reached its peak in the 1930s, both through the literary works of the writer Jorge Amado and through the brothels in Rio de Janeiro, which became world famous and promoted sex tourism. In 1980, the professionals demonstrated in search of their rights, waiting for a position from the government. This caused a division between social groups that supported the regulation of prostitution as an “any” profession and those that considered its exercise as a form of sexual exploitation and commodification of the female body. However, it was only in 2002 that, after numerous debates, it was recognized by the Ministry of Labor as a profession allowed for people over 18 years of age.

Keywords: Prostitution. Colonization. Sex tourism. Exploration. Recognition.

1. INTRODUCTION

An introduction to the history of prostitution is necessary to investigate why so many people submit themselves to the universe of marginalization and promiscuity that surrounds the profession. Since the beginning of colonization, when the routes of the modern world were established, the use of the body as a capitalist factor became even more prominent; The “new” territories were susceptible to migratory flows and, consequently, to the formation of networks sending “wrong” women, those who acted in a way opposite to the formation of traditional families at the time. American lands would serve to “purify” Portuguese prostitutes, providing an opportunity for the remission of their sins. Enslaved indigenous and African women also had the obligation to serve their masters with their bodies, and, as there were no laws to protect these people, abusive sexual practices and the presence of children in brothels at the time were not uncommon.

In 1871, with the advent of the Free Womb Law, slaves could maintain savings, which intensified the prostitution of slaves, who found sexual activity a way to buy their freedom. Even after the end of slavery in 1888, many former slaves found their livelihood in prostitution, as they were still in a subordinate and marginalized position in society.

For women, post-abolition Brazil was even worse: prejudice further restricted occupations, and red light was, by far, the option with the greatest gain and opportunity, mainly due to the number of brothels that grew more and more in the country. Despite the growing number of prostitutes in the city, the regulation of the profession is still far from happening.

It was in the 1930s that prostitution reached its peak. With the economic crisis experienced in the country during the Vargas Government as a result of the crash of the New York Stock Exchange in 1929, the income generated by the coffee sector - the main product exported by the country - drastically reduced. As a result, there was a need to explore other economic resources, including tourism.

Taking advantage of the expansion of mass communication, national advertisements inviting foreigners to discover the



“Brazilian wonders” have always highlighted and used images of half-naked women in sensual positions as tourist attractions, bringing *asslogan*The idea of easy sex was veiled for those who wished to venture into the country of carnival, increasingly consolidating the stereotype of “the country of beautiful women and debauchery”.

As a result, the ease of making money with the country's increasingly growing tourism attracted thousands of women into the world of prostitution. Many saw an opportunity to meet their needs, mainly due to the difficulty of entering the formal job market and Universities, factors that only changed after 1960. In 1987, in Brazil, there was the 1st National Meeting of Prostitutes, which culminated in the creation of the Brazilian Network of Prostitutes, with the preliminary objective of legal recognition of prostitution as a profession. Shortly afterwards, in 1992, former prostitute Gabriela Leite created the NGO Davida with the purpose of attracting the attention of both the media and the government to the issue of prostitution in order to combat stigma and discrimination.

The government slowly gave in to social pressure, mainly due to the feminist movements that gained strength in the country. Proof of this was the re-updating of the 1988 Penal Code, which was silent in relation to crimes of sexual violence committed against prostitutes, allowing them to go unpunished.

It was only in 2002 that the Ministry of Labor recognized prostitution as a profession, including it under number 5.198-05 in the Brazilian Classification of Occupations. However, most Brazilians do not recognize it as such, mainly because sex is still seen as a taboo by society, and this means that all professionals suffer prejudice on a daily basis, always receiving sarcastic and offensive comments.

Although it does not constitute a crime, there is still no legal regulation of prostitution. Bill 4,211, entitled PL Gabriela Leite, was created in 2012 by former Deputy Jean Wyllys with the aim of allowing sex workers access to health, Labor Law, public safety and human dignity. It also aimed to demarginalize the profession and combat sexual exploitation. The project, which generated numerous discussions, was processed in the Chamber of Deputies until 2019, when it was archived.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The methodology chosen to achieve the objective of this work was qualitative and quantitative analysis, in addition to the use of primary and secondary bibliographic analyzes at first.

With such studies, the increase in men and women who are currently prostituting themselves was notable. The number never decreased. It is estimated that more than 42 million people prostitute themselves in the world, aged between 13 and 25; and around 2 million are of Brazilian nationality. The data is not exact, as more than 87% of prostitution takes place on the streets and most professionals prefer to maintain secrecy and discretion, even denying that they carry out this type of activity. Brazil occupies first place in the *ranking*of Latin America in prostitution and sexual exploitation, with the most alarming data belonging to the North and Northeast Regions of the country, with children and adolescents aged between 9 and 16 being the biggest victims of exploitation.

Secondly, qualitative field research was necessary to better understand the aspects of the profession as well as everything that involves it, mainly the reason that led dozens of men and women to prostitution. In the interviews carried out, 78% of the people were women, of which 88% claimed to have already suffered some type of violence; and of these, 97% did not take the appropriate legal measures mainly because they were not taken seriously, always being neglected and/or hearing sarcastic comments.

More than 90% said they entered prostitution out of necessity, because, as they were unable to find formal work, it proved to be the quickest and easiest way to ensure their own and their family's livelihood. Today, only 1% managed to leave, but they still suffer from the consequences of their time in the profession.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The topic “prostitution” has always been controversial and the subject of countless debates. The Bill proposed in 2012 was not the first: in 2003, PL 98 presented by Fernando Gabeira already intended to legally regulate the activity, however, it was also suppressed. Public initiatives no longer have only a police and health intervention bias; They also began to include the perspective of prostitutes' movements, who fight daily for their rights.

134 The prostitution sector grows more every day, attracting millions of people in search of easy and guaranteed money. As a result, they see an opportunity to meet their needs, especially when they cannot find a job formal and have a family to support.

However, it constitutes a vicious cycle, as the majority cannot escape. They always see prostitution as an “escape valve” for their financial difficulties and end up resorting to it again.

The issue of Brazilian stereotypes, both abroad and in the country itself, also does not contribute to the situation. So much so that most professionals report different types of aggression (whether physical, sexual or psychological), in which their attackers always said “they have the right to do whatever they want”, since “they were paying”.

That said, we can mention Jorge Amado's prostitutes, who brilliantly represented these women as people

devalued, used as if objects were in the most absurd ways, always devoid of voice, respect and, above all, dignity.

He very clearly establishes a link between fiction and reality, so well constructed that it is difficult to discern the real from the imaginary. This is due to the contact he had with such professionals in his childhood, when he learned to respect them and give them, in a certain way, a voice. Everything he wrote was based on the reports he heard, knowing the cruelty imposed on those women on a daily basis, and it was in literature that he found a way to draw attention to an issue that is real, that is rooted in Brazilian culture and society.

Thousands of daily reports highlight prostitution as a risky activity, especially for women and the LGBTQIA+ population, who are forced to live daily with violence in an abusive relationship established with their contractors.

For society, prostitution is an immoral, reprehensible activity, and all the deep-rooted prejudice makes them suffer even greater violence, after all, the streets make them even more vulnerable to police and verbal attacks, robbery, abuse, and trafficking in women. , among others.

Health services do not record a proportional number of attacks, which is due to several factors, such as the prejudice suffered in the health units themselves and the fear of breaking the confidentiality of their activity, as many hide their profession from family and friends .

In addition to the physical, moral, psychological and sexual violence they suffer daily, the majority of prostitutes are still at risk of unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Most consumers of this type of service do not want to use condoms, resulting in consequences, often disastrous, for the lives of sex workers.

Many prefer to remain silent and live with it on a daily basis, they prefer to suffer from silence rather than prejudice if they seek out the police authorities and/or health units. There are still prostitutes who seek out clandestine abortion clinics to terminate an unwanted pregnancy, bringing even greater risks to their lives and health. Within the prostitution environment itself there are subdivisions; They are called "house whores" and "street whores". "House whores" are those who seek out their own environments, brothels (or houses of prostitution) to carry out their activity, in the service of a ruffian (popularly known as a pimp) who manages the clients and takes a portion of the income.

Despite being less profitable, most professionals submit themselves to prostitution houses because, despite all the exploitation they have suffered, they consider them safer than the street. However, it is worth remembering that in such environments they are also raped and exploited, both by the owner of the place and by their own professional colleagues.

These are people who do not have peace in their lives; They never know if they will be alive the next day or if they will have something to eat. They live at the mercy of man's lack of humanity, always subjected to cruelty and prejudice, marginalized and chained to their own destiny, screaming so loudly for freedom that no one can hear them.

CONCLUSIONS

With these findings, it is clear that the fight for recognition and proper regulation is still far from over. Because it is such a marginalized profession, considered by many to be immoral and promiscuous, it will be the subject of several discussions and debates until the Legislature reaches a consensus.

Bills emerged on several occasions, which were always shelved, and changes to Brazilian legislation that sought, in a certain way, to provide some type of attention to this population. But it's not enough.

PLs like the one proposed by former deputy Jean Wyllys aimed not only to provide access to health, labor rights, safety and dignity. In it we could also find a proposal for demarginalization and combating sexual exploitation, establishing greater control and supervision by the public administration of prostitution houses. Measures are urgently needed so that these professionals can recover at least a remnant of the dignity they had before being treated as objects, raped, exploited. Above any prejudice, there is the concept of human dignity, the highest principle of the Democratic Rule of Law that is established in art. 1st, III of the Brazilian Federal Constitution.

135 Because sex workers are denied their fundamental right to work, it appears that their own dignity is relativized, not to say denied. Regulating the profession would restore its lost and marginalized dignity under the assumption of immoral and promiscuous sexual activity. But who are they to judge the need of each one? The Democratic Rule of Law imposes equality on everyone, which includes both the issue of respect and the will of the majority.

The Federal Constitution appears as an element of tension in this regard, as the subject is still considered a taboo for the largest portion of the Brazilian population. But once again the question remains: who are they to place themselves above the Law, above Human Dignity itself?

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