

I'm a journalist. I need to interview a sex worker. My deadline is in seven hours...



Picture this: it's 10:30 a.m. You're a television reporter signing on for your shift, and you're based in B.C.'s Metro Vancouver region. You attend your newsroom's morning story meeting, where your managing editor remarks that **just a few hours ago**, a precedent-setting, historical decision has come down from the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC).

WHAT'S THE ASSIGNMENT?

The SCC has struck down three provisions in the Criminal Code **related to sex work**. This looks to be good news for supporters and advocates with ties to the issue, as it means the federal government must work to make changes to applicable laws. However, the general public—your audience—will **want to get a sense** of what the results of the case will mean.

Your managing editor asks you to file a two-minute TV piece

The piece must cover what this decision will mean for Canadians, and from a localized angle. They want you to reach out to a local not-for-profit and/or advocacy group that can explain why this decision is important.

THEY ALSO WANT YOU TO INTERVIEW A LOCAL SEX WORKER

After all, these regulation changes will impact them—but how?

You are told your story is the second one to be shown in the 6 p.m. newscast. Your managing editor says your piece must be sent to the show's producer for 5:30 p.m.

You find the contact information online for advocacy groups fairly quickly.

But **how** will you speak to a local sex worker before your deadline?

Chances are you probably won't.

Sex work is a nuanced, complicated topic

SEX WORK IS WORK, BUT IT IS STILL A **STIGMATIZED AND CRIMINALIZED** OCCUPATION, DESPITE SWAN'S WORK TO CHANGE THAT.

When sex workers are identified **by their real names**, or their addresses are directly/indirectly provided, **they can be put at high risk of harassment.**

When they don't have citizenship, things can become further complicated, as they could lose the lives they've built in Canada.



All temporary residents (including those on a visitor's visa or work permit, international students, or those without any status...etc.) can be **arrested, detained and deported** if they're found to be doing sex work.



If they find themselves in a precarious situation due to status, they can also **lose income**. The loss of that money might have a ripple effect on any **dependents** they support, like **children or aging parents**.



While sex workers may enter the industry due to limited choices—like life circumstances—a **choice is a choice**. They may not be open about their choice of work because of risks tied to **stigmatization** and **criminalization** that has historically been perpetuated.

“At SWAN, we consistently counter the stereotype that most Asian sex workers are trafficked. First, Asian women are not a homogenous group and represent an extraordinarily diverse range of backgrounds, perspectives and experiences in sex work. Asian women in sex work include naturalized citizens, permanent residents, Canadian-born Asians, and temporary Migrants.”

- '*Criminalising clients endangers Asian, immigrant and migrant women in sex work*'

We've put together one example of a sex worker's experience in our [You Choose: Seek Justice as a Migrant Sex Worker](#) tool. Click the below image to access the tool.



BEGIN

You Choose: Seek Justice as a Migrant Sex Worker is an experiential activity in which you assume the role of Su Lin, a migrant sex worker, and make choices that determine Su Lin's actions and the plot's outcome.

Su Lin has experienced two types of violence - a **robbery** and **human trafficking**.

Her experiences are based on a combination of anecdotes im/migrant sex workers have shared with SWAN over the past 20 years.

Be sure to click through it to understand how complicated being a sex worker in this context can be.

SWAN knows it can be tough to establish relationships with im/migrant sex workers

SWAN grew out of a pilot community initiative that extended outreach to local massage businesses. During that project, it became clear the im/migrant sex workers we worked to establish relationships with wanted to discuss a number of other concerns:



THE LAW



IMMIGRATION



EMPLOYMENT



SAFETY

These relationships were **not established over the span of a few hours.**

They were established over **days, months and even years.** Trust must be built in a respectful, supportive and non-judgemental space

It's why we've put together our responsible reporting tools.

We understand how difficult it can be to report on a topic we know needs more attention. We want to make sure our media partners are able to help get the word out on these issues.

SWAN is not here to be a gatekeeper. Based on our experiences as an organization, SWAN is here to help.

Would a sex worker ever speak to a journalist?

There may be situations where a sex worker will be willing to speak to a reporter directly. SWAN firmly believes **the decision lies solely with the individual**.

We've seen investigative reporters who have spoken with sex workers—interviewees may or may not use an alias. Those stories come from days, weeks and months of work; of interviews and writing to get to publishing.

This allows investigative reporters to establish those connections, and to get to know sex workers over a longer period of time.

IN CONCLUSION

Be aware of expectations versus realities.

Relationships with sex workers must be built in a respectful, non-judgemental and supportive space.

The stakes are high for sex workers.

We encourage journalists to please reach out to us if you have any questions.

Find our contact details at www.swanvancouver.ca/contact-swan

Please note: Not everyone's primary identity centers around their job. Not all who engage in sex work will self-ID as a sex worker, despite the broad language that is sometimes used to refer to this community.

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