

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – September 21, 2020

The Sex Workers Project (SWP) of the Urban Justice Center (UJC) announces historic \$1.2 million grant from the Sex Work Rights Fund (SWRF) to expand SWP’s nationwide advocacy and education to destigmatize and decriminalize sex work.

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Sex Work Rights (SWR) is launching sexworkrights.com to advocate for the destigmatization and decriminalization of consensual adult sex work. They believe this is a human rights issue, on the forefront of what is needed to form a kinder and more compassionate world. Social justice advocates and organizations the world over rally around this cause: American Civil Liberties Union, Amnesty International, Freedom Network USA, Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, New York Anti-Trafficking Network, World Health Organization, and many more. SWR recognizes SWP as being a leader in this cause.

After months of relationship building, SWRF has made a generous donation of \$1.2 million to SWP to significantly increase SWP’s capacity, size, scope, and impact. With this gift, SWP is able to hire a Director of Communications, Director of Development, Director of Research, Organizing, and Advocacy, and an Associate Director for State and Local Campaigns, as well as locally based organizing consultants. While continuing to focus on legislative efforts in New York, SWP will also focus on building a statewide campaign in Oregon to decriminalize and destigmatize sex work, partnering with SWR and other national, statewide, and local human rights organizations through 2020 and beyond.

In a movement that is critically under resourced in the United States due to criminalization and sex shaming, a gift of this size is exceedingly rare and desperately needed. Compared with other human rights movements, the sex worker rights movement has lacked needed infrastructure and resources to change public opinion and policy at the local, state, and federal levels for decades. Multiple forms of consensual adult sex work remain criminalized in all jurisdictions of the United States, with the exception of specific counties in Nevada—which make beneficial exceptions for sex work at brothels—but otherwise maintain criminalization.

The impacts of criminalization extend to housing, education, travel, parenting, migration, and employment in the formal economies. The burden of criminalization falls most often on transgender and cisgender women, especially Black/African, Asian, and indigenous/First Nations women; migrants; and those working in street-based economies—preventing these communities from securing their human right to sustainable livelihoods. The ability for SWP to engage in decriminalization and destigmatization campaigns in multiple regions of the United States means exponentially more hearts and minds will change their views about sex work and sex workers, thus increasing public support for full decriminalization of consensual adult work in the sex trades—a broad career field that is inclusive of sex therapies.

“Our efforts to protect, promote, and advance the human rights of sex workers, including our advocacy and education to destigmatize and decriminalize adult consensual work, are part of the broader movements to ensure legal, political, and cultural change that makes the phrase “Black Lives Matter” a reality in this country; and to end all forms of state violence, including mass incarceration, police abuse, and the criminalization of Black/African people, poor and working class people, migrants, indigenous peoples, people living with HIV, people with disabilities, people experiencing homelessness, and gender nonconforming and transgender people. We are extraordinarily grateful to SWRF for this historic and exceptionally generous gift enabling our life saving work,” states RJ Thompson, Esq., Director of SWP.

Those interested in learning more about SWP’s expanded education and advocacy efforts can contact RJ Thompson (he/him/his), Director of SWP, at rthompson@urbanjustice.org

Those interested in learning more about SWR’s sexworkrights.com can visit the site and sign up for their newsletter, or contact them at advocate@sexworkrights.com

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