

Players' Ball Protest

Donna M. Hughes

Maywood, Illinois

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For 30 years, pimps have met in Chicago to celebrate the past year's profits from the exploitation and abuse of women and girls. At the Players' Ball, pimps are honored with awards such as "Pimp of the Year" and "International Pimp of the Year." (See Fact Sheet on the Players' Ball)



Bishop Don Magic Juan, the self-proclaimed king of the pimps, poses in one of his outfits in Los Angeles on July 10, 2003. His "Players Ball Convention" in Maywood tonight has stirred outrage. (AP)

<http://www.suntimes.com/output/mitchell/cst-nws-pimp03.html>

Pimps destroy the lives of young women. They use brutal methods to control women and girls. (See Fact Sheet on Prostitution in the U.S.)

Most anti-trafficking efforts have focused on international trafficking of foreign victims. Now, the movement has come home as caring people recognize that the traffickers are also in their backyards.

This year, survivors, activists, policy advocates, legislators, community leaders, service providers, and the citizens of Maywood, Illinois, organized a protest against the Players' Ball.

Mayor Henderson Yarbrough said this:

“Like other victims of sexual assault and battering, women and girls used in prostitution need and deserve tangible assistance to escape and overcome trauma of commercial sexual exploitation. These practices often cause severe trauma and long-term physical, emotional, and psychological damage. Oftentimes, individuals that are prayed upon by pimps are homeless and runaways, victims' [sic] childhood sexual, physical, and emotional abuse, or have mental health or substance abuse issues. We stand here tonight UNITED! UNITED, free from the chains and restraints of the pimps who are the detriment to the health, safety, welfare and economy of the village as a whole. ... We bring together today community leaders, state officials, survivors, and families to fight against modern day slavery in the spirit of what is right and just....WE SHALL OVERCOME.” – **Mayor Henderson Yarbrough, Village of Maywood, Illinois**

A number of survivors of prostitution and domestic sex trafficking attended the protest and spoke out against pimps.



From left to right: Brenda Myers-Powell of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, Helen Smith, and Tina Frundt, Outreach Coordinator for the Polaris Project

Brenda Myers-Powell, a survivor, described the violence (she was shot 5 times and stabbed) she suffered from a pimp. She called for zero tolerance of pimps.



"It's not glamorous. It's not cute. We're not going to have it."

Panel of state and community leaders speaking out against the violence of pimps.

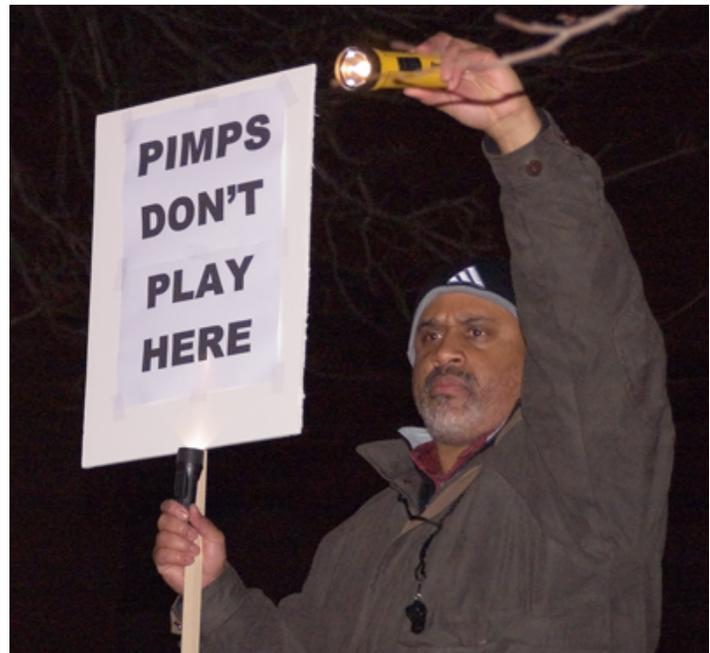
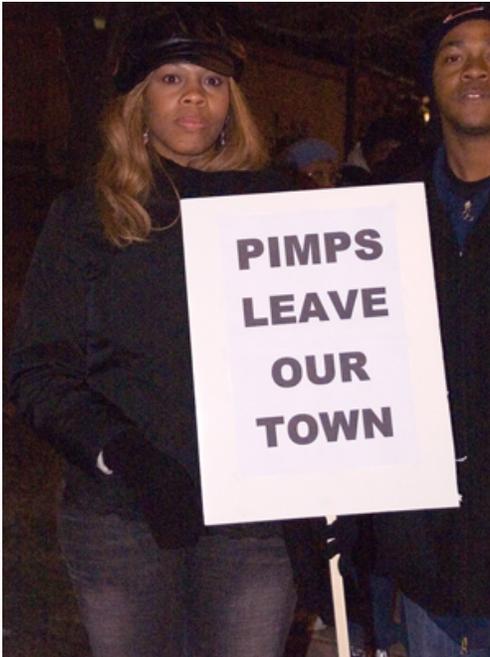


From left to right: State Representative Marlow Colvin (33rd District) & Chair of the Illinois Black Caucus, Rev. Reginald Saffo, United Faith Missionary Baptist Church, State Representative Karen Yarbrough (7th District), Mayor Henderson Yarbrough, Village of Maywood, Bishop Dr. Claude Porter, Proviso Leyden Council for Community Action



From left to right: State Representative Paul Froehlich (standing), (ignore photographer in front), State Representative Deborah Graham (face turned away), State Representative Karen Yarbrough (standing with hat), State Representative Marlow Colvin, Chair of Illinois Black Caucus (seated), Rev Reginald Saffo (standing), Mayor Henderson Yarbrough (seated), Unknown (standing), Bishop Dr. Claude Porter (seated), Brenda Myers-Powell, Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, Helen Smith, Tina Frundt, Outreach Coordinator, Polaris Project, Donna Hughes, Professor & Carlson Endowed Chair, University of Rhode Island

Protestors across from the Mariella Banquet Hall, where the pimps' event was to be held.



"Hey hey, ho ho, all of the pimps have got to go."





Tina Frundt, Outreach Coordinator, Polaris Project

“The 30th anniversary of the Player’s Ball comes one day after the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, which is the date that the UN adopted the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (Dec. 2, 1949). This protest was one of the most meaningful ways to commemorate the Day for Abolition.” – **Katherine Chon, Co-Director, Polaris Project**

Comments by Donna Hughes, Professor, University of Rhode Island



“The Players’ Ball is a celebration of slavery. Pimping is a form of slavery. Pimps are predators that enslave women and girls in order to make money. They target vulnerable young women, particularly girls in their teens. They promise them bright futures, but rapidly the promises turn into beatings, rapes and torture as young women are forced to earn monetary quotas every night. Pimps earn hundreds of thousands of dollars from each victim.

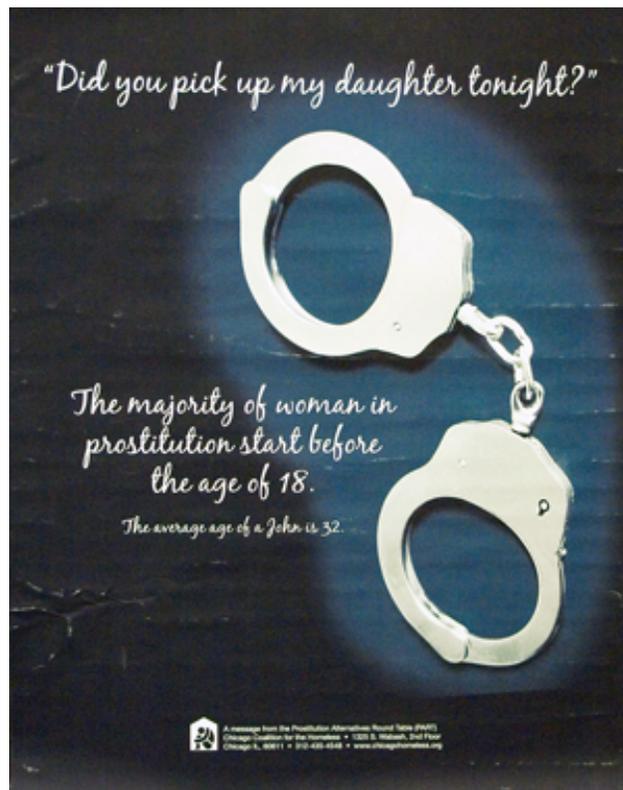
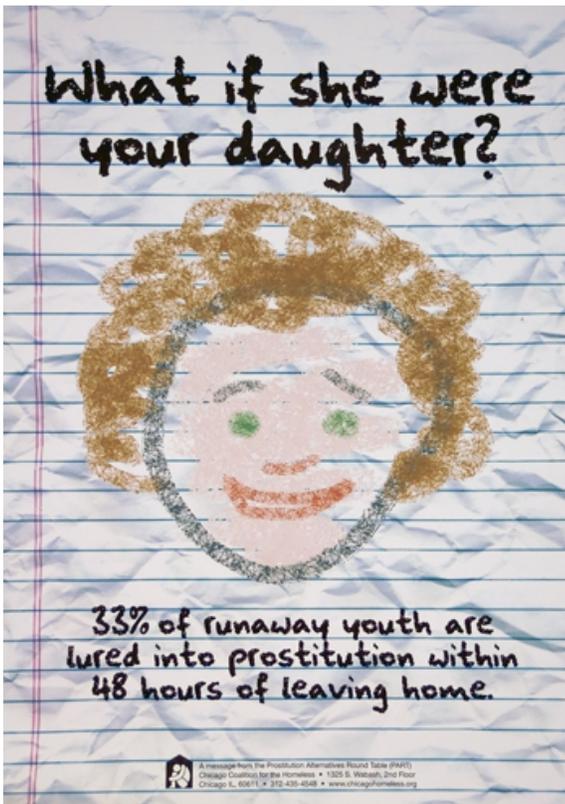
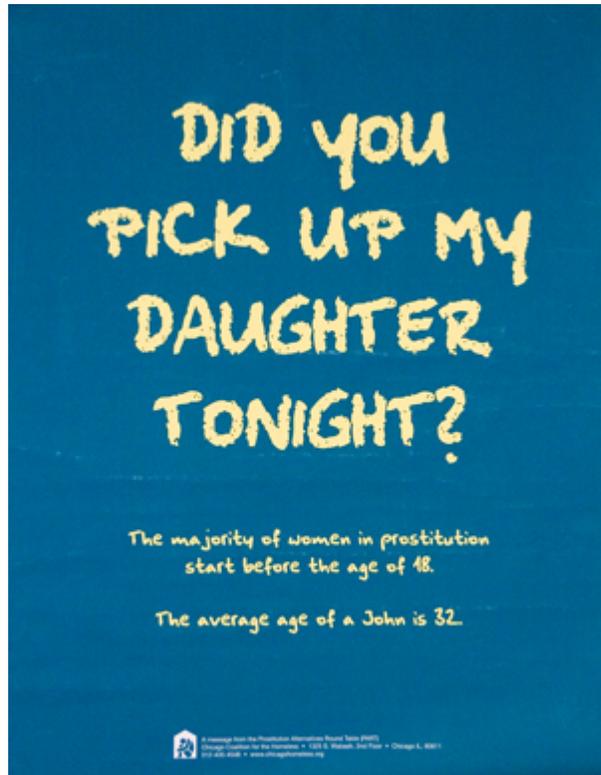
All of this is criminal activity. But law enforcement, town councils, and attorney generals too often ignore the worst violence happening in their communities. Defenders of this form of modern-day slavery have convinced a lot of people that this is a victimless crime – that no one is getting hurt. Pimps have so little to fear from law enforcement that they publicly advertise their criminal activities in the yellow pages, newspapers, and on the Internet. They have so little to fear that they have public events, like the Players’ Ball, to celebrate their enslavement of and profits from young women. This is the 30th annual Players’ Ball.

Things are going to change. We are here tonight to tell the pimps that those days are over. No longer are we going to tolerate their celebrations and awards ceremonies for criminal activity. No longer are we going to tolerate their vicious abuse and exploitation of young women. No longer are we going to allow them to destroy young women’s lives, families, and communities.

In Illinois, the Predator Accountability Act has been proposed. In Washington, Congress passed the TVPA in 2000, and they will soon pass the End Demand for Sex Trafficking Act of 2005. New legislation is important, but let’s remember that everything these pimps do is already against the law. Local and state governments already have many laws against pimping and trafficking they could use tonight to arrest these predators who are flaunting their criminal system.

I’m here to congratulate this community on this protest against the Players’ Ball. Survivors, legislators, activists, and community members here in Maywood and Chicago have just stepped out into a leadership position in a new movement against pimps and the sexual exploitation of young women. I’m thrilled to be here with you to say: No more Players’ Balls. No more pimping. No more violence and exploitation.

Posters designed by survivors of prostitution from the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless



Links to Media Stories of the Protest

FleshPeddlers Bash has Maywood Fuming

<http://www.suntimes.com/output/mitchell/cst-nws-pimp03.html>

Maywood Players' Ball Stirs Protest

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/chicago/chi-0512040421dec04,1,1218639.story?coll=chi-newslocalchicago-hed>

Suburbs Residents Protest Pimp Party

<http://www.suntimes.com/output/news/cst-nws-players04.html>

Players' Ball an Offensive, Ironic Insult

<http://www.suntimes.com/output/mitchell/cst-nws-mitch04s1.html>