

Hypocrisy exposed! Leader of agency that condemns prostitution caught in prostitution scandal

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The whore blogs and sex worker email lists are abuzz with latest Republican scandal. Escorts and masseuses banter smugly, debating the ethics of outing clients as a decriminalization strategy.

According to the 'Brian Ross and Justin Rood Report' on abc.com, "Deputy Secretary of State Randall L. Tobias submitted his resignation Friday, one day after confirming to ABC News that he had been a customer of a Washington, D.C. escort service whose owner has been charged by federal prosecutors with running a prostitution operation."

Tobias, 65, was director of U.S. Foreign Assistance and administrator of the U.S. Agency

for International Development (USAID), overseeing global AIDS funding to other countries. Tobias was responsible for enforcing a U.S. policy, enacted during the Bush administration, that requires recipients to swear they oppose prostitution and sex trafficking.

This policy, according to journalist Jodi Jacobson, "has led to the closure of drop-in centers, classes, and health clinics serving the needs of sex workers in several countries in Asia, and has turned health professionals into snitches for the Administration "

"The extreme hypocrisy of Tobias' promotion of an agenda to stop prostitution is obvious. Tobias, is an actual 'trick' who 'robs' programs of money to fight HIV on the grounds that they don't oppose prostitution, all-the-while indulging in these private services in Washington," writes San Francisco sex worker, Scarlot Harlot.

"Of course zealous efforts to stop commercial sex through punitive policies and criminalization have historically been championed by manipulative politicians-who have also been guilty clients, and religious and ideological fundamentalists," claims

Scarlot. "Historically, these bouts of moralism regarding prostitution usually end in scandal."

As Deborah Palfrey's list is revealed and the hypocrisies of the Republican administration's moralism unravel, the sex workers debate Palfrey's strategy and wonder if this scandal might effect their legal status.

"I've always thought that at least when the clients are holier than thou fundamentalists, law and order gung ho politicians, etc., then when the provider gets arrested, all bets are off. If more of those hypocrites were exposed, perhaps the laws would change," says long time COYOTE activist, Priscilla Alexander.

Although many are gleeful, there is debate amongst the hookers. Some express concern over their security, explaining, "there is a presumption of privacy and discretion and our relationships with clients and security depends on this trust and our ability to screen them."

"Does it break some sacred spy compact, then, to go public with one's client records?" asks Melissa Gira of sexerati.com. "Are sex workers a sexual

clergy, oathbound to a client's secrets, or really, are sex workers more akin to double agents, whose allegiance, at the end of the day, is to their own cause and those who would support them?"

Air America host Rachel Maddow pointed out that sex workers are, once again, the victims. "This besmirches honorable sex workers who wind up getting involved with these creeps," says Maddow.

Sex workers are in fact the victims in Palfrey's case, but not because of the politics of the clients, as former exotic dancer and member of Desiree Alliance, Simone Coles, points out.

Part of Palfrey's contract signed by the escorts stated that they would not engage in prostitution. If any one is forced to testify, and forced to admit to engaging in prostitution under threat of perjury, Palfrey is apparently suing them in civil court for breach of contract.

"This brings to light a problem that is common practice in the adult entertainment industry in strip clubs across the country," writes Simone. "Prostitution prohibition creates an impetus for

managers to coerce them to sign contracts that misrepresent the real nature of the work, denying employee status, and now, leaving them vulnerable to lawsuits. The real crime against sex workers are the criminal prohibitions that set the stage for employers to force them into coercive contracts that can later be used to pit madam against escort in criminal investigations."

"These prohibitionist policies breed all sorts of corruption, demanding abstinence of the lawmakers and enforcers. Reports of police and politicians using the services of sex workers are frequent fodder for juicy news," adds Robyn Few, Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP-USA) Founder.

The first name was revealed by Palfrey in a 'Pro Se Motion for Reconsideration of Appointment of Counsel' dated April 11, 2007 in which she argued that she required funds to hire an 'experienced and fearless' attorney with a team of investigators' as her list of defendants will include dozens of officials who will be required to testify. As an example she names neo-con propagandist, and military strategist Harlan K. Ullman, creator of the "shock and awe" combat theory as a regular customer.

Tobias is the second prominent man to be identified as a customer of the Palfrey's "sexual fantasy service." He is yet another 'well qualified' Bush appointee who came to this job with a resume including a stint as CEO of drug manufacturer Eli Lilly Co. Along with his wife, Marianne, Tobias donated over \$100,000 to Republican candidates and political committees, according to the campaign finance Web site OpenSecrets.org.

"This is just the tip of the...", writes Scarlot Harlot. "Not that I blame Tobias for receiving a 'massage'."

According to Ross and Rood, Tobias said he contacted the escort service "to have gals come over to the condo to give me a massage" and that there had been "no sex" involved.

"No sex? That means he probably got a hand job or a blowjob in US speak. As far as I know that's still considered prostitution no matter what your definition of it is. Anyway, I hope he used a condom in his condo."

As the Bush administration's so-called "AIDS czar," Tobias was criticized by some for emphasizing faithfulness and abstinence over condom use to prevent the spread of AIDS.

ThinkProgress.org points out the central hypocrisy to this revelation, that Tobias "oversaw a controversial policy advocated by the religious right that required any US-based group receiving anti-AIDS funds to take an anti-prostitution 'loyalty oath.' "

Hypocrites and Moralists: The History of the USAID Gag Order

Dictating a moral agenda by manipulating policies of other nations through allocation of funding of health programs began in this administration as Bush instituted gag orders around discussion of abortions by withholding funding to women's health programs. The next target was a gag order/loyalty oath condemning prostitution.

Think Progress reports that "Aid groups bitterly opposed the policy, charging that it 'was so broad - and applied even to their private funds - that it would obstruct their outreach to sex workers

who are at high risk of transmitting the AIDS virus.' But President Bush wouldn't budge. He signed a 2003 National Security Presidential Directive saying prostitution" and related activities" were 'inherently harmful and dehumanizing.'

In fact, the policy was not advocated solely by the religious right. This policy was promoted by a coalition of Bushies, 'fundamentalist' feminists, neo-cons and right-wing religious fundamentalists. It was also tacitly supported by Democrats who have been silent in the wake of the repercussions.

Internationally, progressives have rallied against this policy. In 2005

200 AIDS and human rights groups around the world submitted a petition of protest. Lawsuits were filed on behalf of Open Society International (OSI) and DKT International to challenge the gag order/loyalty oath. The anti-sex zealots, Bushies, right wingers and fundamentalist feminists stood strong as Amicus briefs were filed by San Francisco anti-prostitution advocates Melissa Farley and Norma Hotaling.

In May of 2006 the court permanently enjoined USAID from enforcing the prostitution policy

against DKT, holding U.S. policy requiring overseas HIV/AIDS groups to condemn commercial sex work violates free speech.

In March 2007 the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia reversed DKT International case with little media attention. If the Alliance for Open Society International (OSI) is not reversed, this would split the two circuits and could lead to a Supreme Court review.

Manipulating foreign countries to adopt these prohibitions through funding policies is just another example of the tactics of US imperialism.

"It sounds like our lawmakers and enforcers get pulled by discreet escorts while pulling the plug on poor women around the world for their ideologies and AIDS prevention strategies," writes Scarlot.

According to Ross and Rood, Tobias also admitted that "...recently he had been using another service "with Central Americans" to provide massages."

In fact in 2005 their neighbors in Brazil resisted US imperials and turned down \$40 million in funding for HIV prevention.

"Why did Tobias start talking about employing 'Central Americans? Nobody asked him. He must have a very guilty conscience. According to the new US Trafficking Victims Protection Act, ALL commercial sex is trafficking! So Tobias is involved in a sex trafficking ring which is also par for the course in these cases," notes Scarlot.

According to the Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP.ORG), other programs that have been effected include: "...a class that taught English to sex workers in Thailand that lost funding as a result of this policy" and "In Bangladesh, 16 drop-in centers lost funding when the agency that supported them signed the Pledge the sex workers affected by this describe it as having lost their home, their family, and their sense of community and safety..."

A new video, produced by NSWP, Taking The Pledge (available on the web) demonstrates the Tobias has done to 'escorts' around the world while enjoying their services in Washington. See <http://sexworkerspresent.blip.tv/file/181155/>

Some sex worker organizations have been drumming up support for another Kiss and Tell Campaign like The National Task Force on Prostitution launched in the 1979. "When will sex workers have their human rights -- when every esteemed American is outed as a client? Prostitutes may be for rent, but they are not for sale."

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