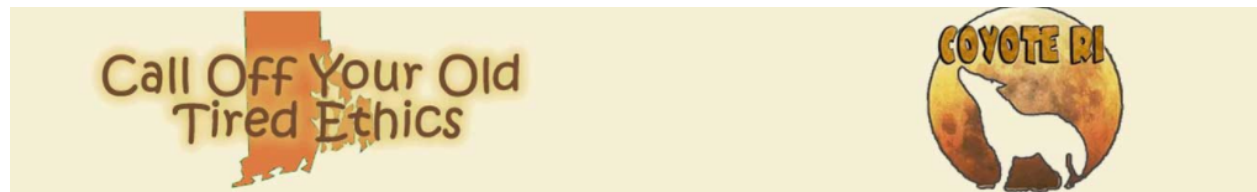


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### **Sex Workers Zoom Bombed at December 17th - International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers**

*Sex Worker Groups Across America Came Together To Commemorate the International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers on December 17th Only to be Victims of Online Sexual Violence.*

San Francisco — On December 17th, The Erotic Service Provider Legal Education and Research Project (ESPLERP) joined with sex worker groups across America in an event hosted by COYOTE RI (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics Rhode Island) to commemorate the International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers - an annual global event to highlight violence faced by sex workers, but their Zoom call was continuously “Zoom bombed” with men masturbating on screen, taking over presenters’ screens, and hacking and impersonating participants.

This clearly organized attack during the course of a somber annual memorial was completely unexpected. “We allow everyone into our Zoom memorial for the Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers,” said Bella Robinson of Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics (COYOTE), Rhode Island. “That feels important to us because we know what it’s like to be excluded from events or to fear having our identities exposed. It got so bad that we had to throw our own people off the call just to minimize the attackers. This is an example of the hate crimes and violence we endure everyday”.

“We were taking our yearly opportunity to come together, organise against stigma and the discrimination that fuels violence, and to remember our colleagues who are or have been victims of violence in 2022. Then a series of people infiltrated the Zoom meeting, kept interrupting, and said and presented inappropriate material,” said Maxine Doogan of ESPLERP.

The International Day to End Violence against Sex Workers was created in 2003 as a memorial and vigil for the victims of the Green River Killer in Seattle, Washington, United States of America. This year that violence continued during an actual memorial event.

The event this year featured:

- A vigil for 29 sex workers who died in 2022, with participants chiming in to memorialize the victims of a Texas based Border Patrol officer Juan David Ortez, who was convicted of killing four streetbased sex workers in 2018.
- A short talk from Catherine Sevcenko, (senior counsel for The National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls, who wrote COYOTE’s Amicus brief in the case against FOSTA) stated “The cowards who zoom bombed the memorial program will not succeed

in silencing the voices of sex workers fighting for acceptance. Incidents like this only serve to strengthen the National Council's commitment to decriminalization."

- A reading of the poem, "I Deserve To Be Safe," by Daisy Anarchy.
- A short talk by Tara Burns about bills for immunity in reporting, announcing COYOTE's new Toolkit for organizers lobbying to be allowed to report violent crimes without fear of arrest in their states.
- Talks by Gabby Monroe of Survivor Siblings and a member of the Decrim PA coalition and Blair Hopkins of SWOP Behind Bars.

All of this with intermittent porn attacks and text across the screen instructing presenters to "shut the f... up."

"People don't see our humanity, so they see nothing wrong with interrupting a memorial for people who've died," said Kayla Katt, the host of the Zoom call. "We were mourning people we have lost. But they seem to think harassing us and making offensive jokes is funny. But what often starts out as a "joke" can escalate to sex workers being murdered."

#### **MEDIA CONTACTS**

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