

Bella Robinson is a sex worker rights activist and advocate with four decades of experience in the sex industry. Driven by her firsthand experience and a deep commitment to justice, she founded the Rhode Island chapter of Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics (COYOTE RI) in 2009, following the state's reversal of its decriminalization of indoor sex work (originally achieved in 1979).

As director of COYOTE RI, Bella focuses on building and strengthening support networks for sex workers in Rhode Island, collaborating with activists nationwide to center the voices of sex workers and trafficking survivors in policy discussions. Her advocacy is informed by her own experience with incarceration, including five years at Lowell Correctional Institute in Florida in the late 1990s, where she experienced sexual assault at the hands of the state. This experience fuels her advocacy for sex worker rights as a crucial alternative to carceral approaches to sex trafficking.

Bella's expertise is unparalleled, shaped by decades of navigating the criminal justice system and the sex industry. Through COYOTE RI, she connects with national and international sex worker rights organizations, mobilizing support for those impacted by violence, both interpersonal and state-sanctioned. She believes in helping to lift less empowered women into leadership positions.

Continuing COYOTE's legacy of impactful advocacy, which includes the landmark 1976 case COYOTE vs. Roberts that initially decriminalized indoor sex work in Rhode Island, Bella conducts research to amplify the lived experiences of sex workers and trafficking survivors for legislators. She champions the rights of sex workers and advocates for policies that prioritize their safety and autonomy, employing legislative strategies, policy statements, and direct engagement in political arenas.

Bella's leadership extends to several other organizations. She is a member of the Erotic Service Providers Union (ESPU), which promotes sex workers' agency through industrial organizing for legal, occupational, social, and economic rights. She served on the board and as secretary of the ESPU Legal, Education and Research Project (2012-2016), a California-based non-profit supporting decriminalization. She also serves on the advisory committee of the Sex Worker Outreach Project Behind Bars (SWOP Behind Bars), supporting incarcerated sex workers, the steering committee of the Womxn's Project, and the advisory committee of the National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls.

A sought-after speaker, Bella has presented at dozens of universities and conferences across the US, sharing her expertise on sex work and trafficking. She also conducted five of the six surveys informing the influential "Sex Work Policy" publications, a project based on over a decade of her work.

