

OBJECT Press Release

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Immediate Release

NEW FILM EXPOSES LAP DANCING INDUSTRY

Women formerly in lap dancing tonight spoke out about the high levels of exploitation and sexual harassment rife within UK lap dancing clubs, to mark the premiere of OBJECT's (1) new short film in Parliament. *'Stripping the Illusion: The lap dancing industry exposed'*, is the result of a collaboration between OBJECT and women formerly in lap dancing, bringing their testimony to life and debunking popular myths surrounding lap dancing. The film sees women speaking out about the psychological and physical toll of working in lap dancing clubs, as well as the industry's impact on how all women are viewed and treated.

The screening was followed by a panel discussion chaired by Libby Brooks of The Guardian which included the following speakers; Nadine Stavonina de Montagnac and Sabrina Mahfouz, who have both previously worked in the lap dancing industry, Professor Sheila Jeffreys of Melbourne University, Lynda Waltho MP, Dr. Sasha Rakoff of OBJECT and Kat Banyard of Fawcett Society.

All speakers underlined the need for an end to the licensing of lap dancing clubs as cafes (2) and called for stronger lap dancing licensing reforms (3), warning that reforms proposed by the Government are too weak. Reforms contained in the Policing and Crime Bill, currently under consideration in the House of Lords, will be optional for local councils – leading to a patchwork licensing regime which will deprive many local communities of their say in licensing – and will not apply to all lap dancing activities.

Sabrina Mahfouz said:

"We need this legislation to be improved and for it to go through because we need to recognise that a strip club is a much more exploitative place than where you get your morning coffee from. The main issue is that weak licensing gives the appearance of acceptability to lap dancing".

Professor Sheila Jeffreys said:

"The sex industry has been globalised and industrialised, but there is a painful, abused vagina at its centre. Strip clubs are a form of prostitution - many forms of physical contact take place in the clubs, even if it takes place outside their four walls. There are extremely close connections between brothels and strip clubs".

Nadine Stavonina de Montagnac said:

"I was interested in adding my voice to the campaign because as a survivor of the lap dancing industry I'd never really had a voice before. Lap dancing is soul destroying and damaging to all women".

Dr. Sasha Rakoff:

“I want to thank the woman survivors of the lap dancing industry whose support for our campaign has been limitless. Their voices must be heard and taken seriously”.

For more information and to request interviews please contact Sandrine Levêque (Object) on 07975 897005 / sandrine@object.org.uk

Notes to editors

(1) OBJECT is the leading human rights organisation which challenges the sexual objectification of women in the media and popular culture because of its links to discrimination and violence against women. www.object.org.uk

(2) Despite offering live entertainment for sexual stimulation lap dancing clubs currently require only a Premises Licence – the same ‘one size fits all’ licence which is applicable to cafes and restaurants.

(3) Following OBJECT and Fawcett Society’s campaign for lap dancing licensing reforms the Government pledged to reform licensing so that local councils will be able to license lap dancing clubs in the same way as sex shops and peeps shows. The reforms can be viewed here:
<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2008-09/policingandcrime.html>

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