

Statement on June 7th, 2013, from the Brazilian Network of Prostitutes about censorship and the intervention and alteration of the AIDS prevention campaign by the federal government

Against the common good and the general happiness of the nation, the government violates the principles of the Constitution and the Unified Health System

The prostitute and sanitary reform movements, which brought about the construction of the Unified Health System (SUS – acronym in Portuguese), have common points in their trajectories: processes of dialogue, creation, and action. As health was transformed into an obligation of the state and right for all – orientated by the principles of universality, equality (without prejudice or privileges of any kind), integrality, decentralization and community participation - the prostitute movement is rooted in denouncing inequality, prejudice, discrimination, and affirming the right to work with dignity, respect and citizenship.

With the government's decision to first veto and then drastically alter the AIDS campaign supposedly constructed in partnership with prostitutes, we see that 30 years later they are using this social group to affirm what they desire, thereby ignoring the achievements of the social movement and violating diverse democratic principles of the SUS.

First, it violates the principle of community participation. The workshop destined to create the campaign, promoted in March by the STD, AIDS and Viral Hepatitis Department, resulted in materials that highlighted happiness ("I'm happy being a prostitute"), citizenship ("Our biggest dream is that society sees us as citizens"), the fight against violence ("Not accepting people as they are is a form of violence") and condoms. What did the government do? It ignored all of these elements that have been proven to contribute to prevention and limited itself to incentivizing condom use, as if it was a gesture that is purely objective and mechanic, disassociated from subjectivities, rights and vulnerabilities. It is the "hygienization" of life.

Second, by selecting only a determinate message from among those constructed in the workshop, it rejects the principle of equality by denying prostitutes the right to express their dreams, ideas of citizenship and affirm their identity and social visibility. In this sense, they are no longer recognized as citizens and users of the SUS.

Prevention and health promotion actions based on citizenship frameworks should highlight, and also be part of, another principle of Health which was violated - integrality.

Moreover, the government's actions place them in an arrogant position by only permitting prostitutes to appear as victims or vectors, and as such, subjects without a voice. They only have the right to be saved by the State, which is the provider of the only element ("get your condom at the health center") that will save them from Aids.

The government's attitude also reveals an attempt to nurture a moral structure of the family at any cost through their cowardly complicity with a discourse that relegates prostitutes and other "inconvenient" segments to the margins of a certain model of society.

By pronouncing themselves against the text, "I'm happy being a prostitute", in the beginning, the government also demonstrates arrogance by not believing that a prostitute can be happy and fear that we express desires of happiness that go against this model of society.

And the politicians' desires? What arrangements are behind these movements? Is there a project for happiness? Why can only they be happy? What is the price to be paid by prostitutes? Our bodies, desires and lives are what are paying the prices of political agreements and party negotiations. This is the cost of the censorship and cutting off dialogue.

Here, we'll stay, happy with our profession and believing that we shouldn't live with violence and discrimination, and need to be respected for our choices as citizens. We insist that the government assume, with courage, the construction of policies based on constitutional principles for the entire population, independent of sexual orientation, gender identity or profession.