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HSTRY 491

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" Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics": Sex and Work in 1970s Seattle and San Francisco

I. Introduction

Sex work is often termed "the world's oldest profession", a presumption that is consistent with its early emergence in colonial metropolises along the American West Coast. Beginning in the mid-19th century and enduring through the present, sex work has provided a viable, albeit precarious and often dangerous, mode of economic self-preservation for women, especially women experiencing marginalization across axes of race, class, and disability in addition to gender. Despite the pervasiveness of sex work through Seattle and San Francisco's pasts, sex workers were largely excluded from moralizing political debates over its legitimacy and had little agency over shifting legal enforcement until the 1970s.

The sexual revolution of the 1960s marked a monumental shift in American cultural attitudes toward sex, pleasure, and the politics of privacy– bringing the issues facing women and sex workers to the forefront of American politics. Flanked by the political energy of the concurrent civil rights movement, and the emergence of organized advocacy for women's rights and queer liberation, the social upheaval of the 1970s provided ripe cultural conditions for the emergence of a fledgling sex workers rights movement on the West Coast.

The most active and influential arm of this movement was organized in 1973 San Francisco under the direction of Margo St. James, a former sex worker and vivacious social justice advocate. St. James' own experiences of criminalization and subsequent labor exclusion

demonstrated to her how moralized cultural attitudes and legal statutes limit the self-sufficiency, sexual privacy, and economic autonomy of American sex workers, and of women more broadly. In the spirit of grassroots social reform exemplified in San Francisco's vibrant queer culture, Margo formed the organization "Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics", or COYOTE, which constituted the first sustained efforts to build formal systems of mutual aid and establish political self-determination for sex workers living on the West Coast. COYOTE used its leverage to advocate for legal change, engage in consciousness-raising efforts, and provide direct services to women in the sex industry. Within a month of its founding, COYOTE's burgeoning organizational efforts were transposed almost 700 miles north of San Francisco to Seattle, where the language and political consciousness developed in San Francisco took on a more institutional character.

To understand how and why COYOTE emerged in 1970s San Francisco, and why the organization took such a different shape in Seattle, I trace the historical record backward, examining the relationship between law enforcement, the state, and the criminalization of sex workers. I use police records and government documents retrieved from the Seattle Municipal Archives and digital archives available through the San Francisco Public Library to elucidate the precarious legal history of West Coast sex work and demonstrate the industry's vulnerability to mutations in political, economic, and social sentiment.

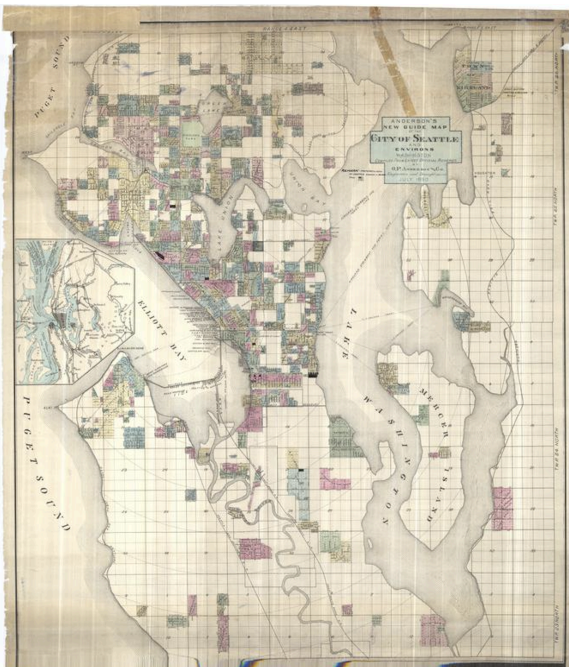
Building upon these histories, I use a combination of municipal records, internal records from COYOTE, publications of COYOTE's biannual journal the Coyote Howls, and archived newspaper articles from the early 1970s to reconstruct the specific historical moment in which the sex workers' rights movement and its explicit political consciousness emerged. Through a comparative analysis of COYOTE's goals and actions in San Francisco and Seattle, I will show

how resistance to historical marginalization and uneven legal enforcement were given voice and expression through the language of civil rights and sexual self-determination.

While both the Seattle and San Francisco branches of COYOTE utilized a robust legal platform to lobby for the decriminalization of sex work and provide direct services and tangible resources to local sex workers, these initiatives were realized in different ways. In San Francisco, Margo St. James' organizing efforts were defined by her unique flamboyant style and vibrant consciousness-raising efforts, while in Seattle COYOTE took on a more institutional structure, relying on the influence and endorsement of academics, lawyers, and social activists.

I argue that these histories are significant not only in elucidating the often hidden dynamics of police interactions with individuals working in precarious, vulnerable, and often unacknowledged informal economies, but also in constructing the preconditions of corruption, governmental involvement in vice, police payoffs, and gendered and racialized sexual assumptions which underscored the activism of COYOTE in the 1970s. While COYOTE ultimately represented a transient political movement, its intellectual goals and concrete initiatives resulted from and furthered broader and more sustained political consciousness regarding the precarious relationship of the law to women's sexuality and sexual labor– a theme that continues to be relevant to contemporary analyses of sex work and its social, moral, and legal legitimacy.

II. Seattle Sex Work 1853 - 1970



Historical map of Seattle, circa 1890.[1]

Both Seattle and San Francisco saw their first significant population booms as a result of the 1848 California Gold Rush, which drew thousands of young, white men to the fledgling frontier colonies in search of work. This disproportionate urban male population fuelled a prolific, and eventually infamous culture of commercialized vice on the West Coast, which was nearly 90% male by 1890[2]. In both Seattle and San Francisco, brothels were among the earliest features of the developing cities and sex work provided one of the few practical sources of income for women.

In Seattle, the inauguration of an enduring sexual economy followed the establishment of the city's primary legitimate industries by only two years. The land now known as Seattle was first settled by white colonists of the Denny Party in 1851 on the traditional territory of the Coast

[1] "Anderson's New Guide Map of the City of Seattle and Environs" O.P. Anderson and Company, July 1890. Seattle Municipal Archives Digital Collections, Seattle, Washington. https://archives.seattle.gov/digital-collections/index.php/Detail/objects/20669
[2]"Growth and Change." Growth and Change - CityArchives, n.d. https://www.seattle.gov/cityarchives/exhibits-and-education/online-exhibits/a-city-at-work/growth-and-change.

Salish peoples, in particular the land of the Suquamish and Duwamish Tribes.[3] The Yesler Lumber Mill opened in 1853, providing the primary source of income in the emerging town and initiating the spatial separation of the legitimate and illegitimate industries along Yesler Way. This disproportionate population of young, single men lent itself to the production of a sprawling and profitable vice industry, where brothels and gambling houses began to thrive with the auspices of bachelor earnings. Historian Meier describes, "these early settlers–prosperous or poor, mostly single, mostly men– didn't just want shelter, supplies, and real estate. They also wanted entertainment."[4] Through this reputation for leniency, and an emerging cultural prominence of sex and sin, Seattle became conspicuous on Puget Sound and later the whole West Coast for the quality, quantity, and variety of its vice.

Seattle's first unofficial brothel was opened the same year as Yesler's mill on the top floor of the Felker House, a hotel owned and managed by Mary Ann Conklin. Conklin purchased the Felker house from David Maynard, an early land developer and advocate for "vice" as a stream of legitimate income to the city – an unpopular position in the Denny party which was primarily composed of conservative teetotalers. Conklin, or "Mother Damnable", operated the Felker house as a hotel on the bottom floor, a brothel on the upper floor, and intermittently as a courthouse when necessitated by the city – though Maynard and other city notables were known to frequent the hotel's upstairs outside of court proceedings, demonstrating the intimate connections between sex, work, and city politics in early Seattle.[5]

In 1854 the Washington territory held its inaugural legislative session, in which it specified the nominal illegality of "seduction", "fornication", "polygamy" and "notorious

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[3] McKenna, Kevin. "LGBTQ Activism in Seattle A Timeline." The Civil Rights and Labor History Project .. https://depts.washington.edu/civilr/lgbtq_timeline.htm.
[4]Gary Meier and Gloria Meier, *Those Naughty Ladies of the Old Northwest*, (Bend, Oregon: Maverick Publications, 1990), 107-108
[5]Rochester, Junius. Conklin, Mary Ann (1821-1873) aka Mother Damnable, January 1, 1999. https://www.historylink.org/File/1934.

lewdness", restrictions which were largely copied from New York state law and, in reality, did little to regulate or restrict prostitution.[6] This early policy reflected an awareness of the developing culture of vice in the territory and expressed broader cultural expectations of traditional sexuality. Seven years after this law was imposed, the city's first official brothel, the Ilahee, was opened in 1961 by John Pinnell who gained consent for his enterprise through the payment of a $1200 annual license fee to the local government, ultimately introducing a system of toleration for prostitution which allowed brothels to operate as effectively legal enterprises through the end of the 19th century.

Early brothels also operated under the stipulation that sexual and other nominally illegal commerce would be constrained to the blocks below Mill and Yesler, a spatial segregation of Seattle's vice district that endured through the 1960s. Pinnell's brothel, the "Illahee"[7], was positioned at the end of Yesler Way, flanked by saloons, gambling parlors, and flophouses that had emerged on this "skid row" over the previous decade. Because of the disproportionate rates of male and female settlers, the Ilahee, or the "Mad House" primarily employed local indigenous women with whom Pinnell bartered food, merchandise, and housing for their sexual labor. He later recruited white women from San Francisco's Barbary Coast, a red light district similar to but more developed than Seattle's vice district, where he had formerly worked in advertising. Patterns of racialization in Seattle's sex industry are reflected in the interconnection between indigenous dispossession, and cultural attitudes that privilege the sexual desires of white men over the needs and experiences of women, particularly indigenous, Chinese, and black women. This theme was reflected in patterns of criminalization and legalization where the sexual desires of white men became the dominant force in restricting and regulating sex work– creating a

[6]Statutes of the Territory of Washington, Volume 1, 1854. Washington State Legislature, Session Laws (1854-Current). https://leg.wa.gov/CodeReviser/documents/sessionlaw/1854pam1.pdf
[7]The name "Ilahee" translates to "home place" or home away from home in Chinook, an ironic inconsistency with its role in the lives of indigenous women.

climate of openness when it was convenient to the police force and a more restrictive one when called for by politics of morality.

Early legal statutes in Seattle restricted sex work across explicitly gendered and racialized lines – initiating patterns of state discrimination and legal extortion that would plague the city through the onset of the civil rights movement. In 1884 city ordinance 42 specifically banned, "soliciting prostitution upon any of the public streets,", and the public presence of, "dissolute Indian women " after dark[8]. Despite the authorized operation of brothels, state regulation of individual sex workers operated within colonial ideologies which made racialized bodies its primary moral, economic, and legal targets – often permitting the conspicuous operations of white sex workers while criminalizing, fining, or jailing indigenous, Chinese, and later black women. This policy directly aimed to privilege brothels and "box houses", primarily staffed by white women, over indigenous women who were less likely to be employed in these businesses and more likely to acquire their clientele through "street walking". In the wake of this ordinance brothels became more popular and "box houses", low-end theaters in which women would perform on stage, serve drinks, and "service" men in the audience, became a popular form of sexual entertainment until 1894 when newly enfranchised female voters passed a ban on the sale of liquor in theaters, leading to the closure of box houses as a form of sexual entertainment.[9]

Following the discovery of gold in the Yukon, huge numbers of prospectors flooded the Pacific Northwest to participate in the Klondike Gold Rush and Seattle again became a hub for vice entertainment and a flourishing underground sex economy. In the decade following the gold

[8]An Ordinance relative to Indian women. Seattle City Council Bills and Ordinances, August 14, 1873, Seattle Municipal Archives Digital Collections. https://clerk.seattle.gov/search/ordinances/42#hb.
[9]Calbick, John, "A Century of Seattle Vice (Part 1)" HistoryLink.org Essay 22535. King County.https://www.historylink.org/file/22535

rush, Seattle's population increased by almost 200%, exploding to 273,194 by 1910.[10] Wealth gained from the Klondike gold rush flowed into Seattle, fueling the vice industry and the establishment of iconic enterprises including John Nordstrom's now multibillion-dollar department store chain. This influx of wealth and power again initiated a period in which flagrant vice was a lucrative underground market for the city and its bribe-prone vice cops.

As Seattle's population grew, so too did its law enforcement body, and by 1910 the police department expanded to 244 men, including 182 patrolmen, and covered almost 50 square miles of territory. Records from 1910 report the arrest of 55 women on charges of prostitution, 20 of whom were fined, 21 discharged, and 13 committed.[11] This number, however, reflects only a small portion of the women actually working in sex work at the time, and during this period those who worked under officially licensed permits, especially white women working off the street in up-scale brothels, were much less likely to be arrested and charged with prostitution. Seattle police were notorious for accepting bribes and sexual favors through the 1960s, meaning women who were able to effectively pay them off were less likely to be charged. When arrests did occur, they disproportionately targeted racial minorities, who were more likely to be excluded from white-owned brothels and work in more precarious and vulnerable circumstances on the street. Despite a population of just over 7,000 by 1910, Japanese people in King County accounted for 308 of the nearly 2,000 arrests made that year. The black population of less than 2,300 accounted for 501 of these arrests – a rate significantly higher than for whites.[12]

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[10] Seattle DPD - 1900 to 2000 decennial Population Overview, n.d. https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/OPCD/Demographics/DecennialCensus/1900to2000DecennialPopulationOverview.pdf.

[11] Police Department Annual Reports 1894-2009, Series 1202-C2, Clerk File 42606, Seattle Municipal Archives, Seattle, WA https://clerk.seattle.gov/search/clerk-files/42606

[12] Police Department Annual Reports 1894-2009, Series 1202-C2, Clerk File 42606, Seattle Municipal Archives, Seattle, WA https://clerk.seattle.gov/search/clerk-files/42606

Seattle saw one of its most dramatic episodes of police and governmental corruption in 1911 when Seattle Mayor Hiram Gill and Police Chief Charles Wappensiein were caught conspiring to build a 500-room brothel—supposedly the largest in the world— on city property behind Beacon Hill's west slope.[13] Following its discovery, the plan was halted and both men were briefly arrested, though Gill was reelected in 1916 after a short interim. Public outcry against this flagrant illustration of state corruption was articulated in the language of early 20th century women's movements, which used moralizing ideologies of white middle-class respectability to condemn the morality of Seattle's vice industries and their impact on broader "straight" society. Police records from 1914 note, "there appears to be no standardization of police work"[14] in the department, which was reflected in these conspiratory efforts, and disproportionate arrest rates.

Throughout the next several decades, Seattle's broadly permissive and tolerant attitudes toward vice and sex work were maintained, with periodic anti-prostitution activism largely reactive to broader social, political, and economic contexts. Seattle's underground sex market experienced a brief proliferation during national prohibition from 1916 to 1933, when clandestine bars and gambling houses acted as prime sites of solicitation and employment for people selling sex; in the early 1930s the city of Seattle did not make any prostitution arrests[15], signaling this broad leniency. The industry later saw contractions during increased anti-prostitution activism during World War Two, and concerns about the spread of sexually transmitted infections to servicemen[16]. In 1948 Mayor William Devin codified the city's long-standing legal concessions to vice through a set of official "tolerance policies" which aimed

[13]Gill, Hiram C. Check of Petitions for Recall of Mayor Hiram C. Gill, 1910-1910, Box: 1, Folder: 5. Recalls and Impeachments, 1802-D4. Seattle Municipal Archives, Seattle, WA.
[14]Police Department Annual Reports 1894-2009, Series 1802-H8, Clerk File 58594, Seattle Municipal Archives, Seattle, WA
[15] Police Department Annual Reports 1894-2009, Series 1802-H8, Clerk File 291862, Seattle Municipal Archives, Seattle, WA
[16] Calbick, John, "A Century of Seattle Vice (Part 1)" HistoryLink.org Essay 22535. King County.https://www.historylink.org/file/22535

to reduce police corruption by limiting its involvement in vice regulation[17]. The city, however, continued to derive large amounts of its municipal revenue from license fees and taxes from illegal entertainments like gambling and prostitution which operated primarily in contemporary Pioneer Square into the 1960s.

During the 1960s, legal and social contexts of sex work changed significantly due to cultural shifts instated by the sexual revolution, and concrete policing reform and cultural reform efforts led by the ACLU, NAACP, National Urban League, National Organization of Women, and Seattle Dorian Society. Liberalization of American social and sexual attitudes allowed for increased awareness of judicial injustices, and led to the revision of laws regulating divorce, adultery, contraception, abortion, homosexuality, and other "victimless crimes". Within this moment of greater attention to issues of sexual privacy, personal freedom, and state suppression, the formation of Seattle COYOTE reacted to the specific historical context of Seattle's sex industry– giving voice to the needs of women marginalized by their occupation, and often also class, race, gender.

By the early 1960s, Seattle's population had grown to almost 560,000[18], and the Women's Bureau of the Seattle Police Department maintained 66 police and 7 civilian personnel in their ranks. In 1962, the department recorded a total of 93 arrests for practicing prostitution, 19 for procuring, and 2 for soliciting a prostitute[19] – an almost tenfold decrease since 20 years earlier in 1942[20] during the Second World War. Of the part one offenses (murder, rape, robbery, assault) committed in Seattle in the early 60s, the densest concentration was the heaviest by far in census

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[17] William F. Devin: Annual Message, 1948-1948, Box: 10, Folder: 9 . Mayors' Messages, 1802-C2. Seattle Municipal Archives, Seattle, WA.
[18]Seattle DPD - 1900 to 2000 decennial Population Overview, n.d. https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/OPCD/Demographics/DecennialCensus/1900to2000DecennialPopulationOverview.pdf.
[19]Police Department Annual Reports 1894-2009, Series 1802-H8, Clerk File 247780, Seattle Municipal Archives, Seattle, WA
[20]Police Department Annual Reports 1894-2009, Series 1802-H8, Clerk File 177282, Seattle Municipal Archives, Seattle, WA

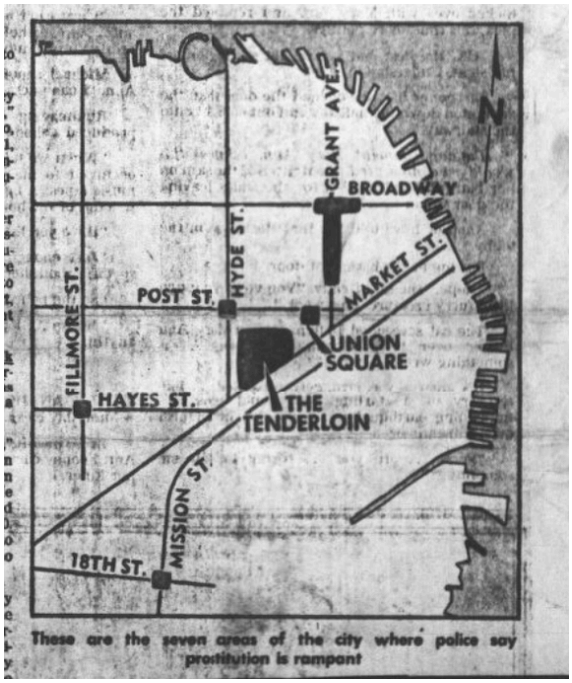
tract 130, which laid at the coastal end of Yesler Way. Even over 100 years after Seattle's first brothels, bars, and gambling houses opened below Yesler, the region's industries and police presence retained its initial character as the city's vice district. Of the arrests made for "commercialized vice" in 1962, 54 were identified as white, 61 were black, and 8 were "Indian" women. In 1960, however, whites accounted for 94% of King County's population and less than half of these prostitution-related arrests[21]. This patterning demonstrates the continuous over-policing of black Seattle residents, an issue that gained voice through the language of the civil rights movement which emerged as a powerful force in Seattle in the 1960s and 70s. While there were likely more black women working in the sex industry due to lack of opportunities, wealth, resources, and connections to other jobs as well as violence and discrimination – the Seattle Police Department arrested black women at a vastly higher rate than they existed in the industry.

A report commissioned jointly by the American Civil Liberties Union and the Urban League of Seattle to after, "...numerous complaints made by citizens of Seattle against members of the Police Department alleging brutality or the misuse of the policing power, particularly against those of minority groups."[22] Despite this identification of over-policing as an arm of social and legal oppression, a 1968 report made by the International Association of Chiefs of Police identified a remedy in increased police presence. The committee ultimately recommended an increase in street patrolling for prostitution, including along Yesler and Skid Row where the department had historically been most permissive and vice was somewhat protected. This report also instituted a system of mandatory screening for sexually transmitted infections in women

[21]Seattle DPD - 1900 to 2000 decennial Population Overview, n.d. https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/OPCD/Demographics/DecennialCensus/1900to2000DecennialPopulationOverview.pdf.
[22]Frantilla, Anne, "Police Accountability in Seattle, 1955-2020", Seattle Municipal Archives, Seattle, WA. https://www.seattle.gov/documents/Departments/CityArchive/Exhibits/PoliceAccountabilityInSeattle.pdf

arrested on charges of prostitution, an invasive and discriminatory policy that was hotly contested by COYOTE. These recommendations demonstrate how Seattle came to integrate with larger systems of law enforcement and shed its permissive attitude for more concrete enforcement in the 1970s, as well as indicating the legal, social, and political circumstances in which JJ would establish COYOTE Seattle as a force for legal lobbying and direct support to historically marginalized Seattle sex workers.

III. San Francisco Sex Work 1853-1970



Historical map of San Francisco Vice District, circa 1964[23]

Like Seattle, San Francisco experienced its first major economic and population boom in the second half of the 19th century as a result of the California Gold Rush, which drew over 150,000 new settlers to the state. Following the 1848 discovery of gold 100 miles northeast of

[23] Records of Coyote, 1962-1989. Clippings, Articles Re: Coyote, National Task Force on Prostitution, Margo St. James, etc. Clippings, etc., 1973. 81-M32--90-M1, folder 260, Sequence 69, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

San Francisco in Coloma, the population of San Francisco swelled from less than a thousand to over 50,000 by 1855.[24] This population boom consisted almost entirely of young, single men looking for work and wealth on the West Coast– resulting in a gender imbalance of nine to one. This high demand for female companionship amongst frontier men, coupled with the under-availability of well-paying jobs for women, led to a situation in which historian Vall-Spinosa estimates "women who sold or exchanged sex often outnumbered other women by as much as twenty-five to one in the early years".[25] As can be seen in the development of Seattle's vice district, the sexual appetites of frontier men and the lack of opportunity for women culminated in an early West Coast culture that tolerated, if not condoned, the buying and selling of sex.

San Francisco's first laws restricting and regulating sex work were almost synonymous with the regulation of Chinese women's bodies, movement, and labor – reflecting broader racialized labor tension and nativist attitudes of white settlers. In 1854 the city of San Francisco passed Ordinance 546, a broad piece of anti-prostitution legislation that primarily led to the shutdown of Chinese and Mexican-owned brothels and had little effect on white women. The Police Chief clarified that this law targeted "outrages to public decency" and "not so much the enterprise itself"[26] signaling continued tolerance for certain covert sexual enterprises.

In the same year, a panel of local physicians lobbied to ban known prostitutes from accessing care at the city and county hospitals. This restriction followed a complete ban on the treatment of Chinese sex workers at the San Francisco Female Hospital, despite the clinic's

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[24]Jenness, V. (1991). *From sex as sin to sex as work: COYOTE, organizational legitimation, and the contemporary prostitutes' rights movement* (Order No. 9208351). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (303924896). Retrieved from https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/sex-as-sin-work-coyote-organizational/docview/303924896/se-2

[25] Benson Tong, Unsubmissive Women, Chinese Prostitutes in 19 th Century San Francisco (University of Oklahoma Press: Norman and London, 1994,

[26]Ibid.

admission of white sex workers,[27] which would have left Chinese women with very few options for medical treatment. Because of racial attitudes on the West Coast which often inherently conflated Chinese women with sex work; this stipulation likely barred those working both within and outside of the sex trade from accessing medical care.

Ten years later in 1866, the California state legislature passed an "Act For the Suppression of Chinese Houses of Ill Fame" which made explicit the ongoing policies that targeted Chinese women in the decade prior. This policy threatened a maximum penalty of $500 or six months in jail for landlords who allowed Chinese prostitution on their premises and instituted a crackdown on Chinese women by the Board of Health and Police Commissioners, though in actuality succeeded not in eliminating the population of Chinese sex workers, but in confining them to more limited and secluded geographic areas.[28] Throughout the 19th century, arrest rates for prostitution mirrored peak anti-Chinese labor sentiment and violence in San Francisco, demonstrating the parallels between early gendered and racialized labor markets developing on the West Coast.

In the fifty years following San Francisco's population boom, the majority of the city's vice economy was relegated to the Barbary Coast, where prostitution served as the main attraction amongst a variety of saloons, peep shows, and other sexually explicit performances. Despite periodic social movements led by women's and religious reform groups, a generally permissive social attitude, and the entanglement of local politicians in the vice economy, allowed prostitution to remain a constant element of the city's economy, entertainment, and culture. Until the early 20th century, this sexual entertainment was only nominally restricted and often

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[27]Hirata, Lucie Cheng. 1979. "Free, Indentured, Enslaved: Chinese Prostitutes in Nineteenth-Century America." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5 (1). Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 3–29. doi:10.1086/493680.

[28] Benson Tong, Unsubmissive Women, Chinese Prostitutes in 19 th Century San Francisco (University of Oklahoma Press: Norman and London, 1994

overlooked so long as the working women remained in designated districts and abided by the city's loose restrictions – and were, of course, white.

Much like the system of licensing and underground payoffs that dominated the relationship between law enforcement and Seattle's turn-of-the-century Tenderloin district, the corruption of the San Francisco Police Department and city politicians was a persistent element of the vice district and its prosperity. Just three years before the arrests of Seattle Mayor Hiram Gill and Police Chief Charles Wappenstien on charges of soliciting and accepting bribes, San Francisco Mayor Eugene Schmitz (1902-1907) was arrested alongside attorney and known political boss Abraham Ruef. Ruef and Schmitz were ultimately indicted and charged with extortion and bribery of the city's board of supervisors to support their financial interests in supplying the city's public utilities. The pair was also charged with providing local brothels in the "french quarter" with liquor licenses under a system of bribery which ultimately made Schmitz and Ruef $5,000 each.[29] Just a year after the devastation of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire, the duo was indicted and, while Ruef spent five years in the San Quentin correctional facility, Schmitz's conviction was ultimately overturned and, like Gill, he continued to serve the San Francisco government in years to come.[30] During her formation of COYOTE, St. James extensively commented on this longstanding contact between law enforcement and sex workers, saying in a 1973 interview, " I know a lot of cops… Some of them are my favorite lovers".[31] Bribery and police payoffs were significant in the San Francisco and Seattle sex

[29]The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that 5,0000 USD in 1913 equates to over $150,000 in buying power in 2024. https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl.
[30] Neil Larry Shumsky, Larry M. Springer, San Francisco's zone of prostitution, 1880–1934, Journal of Historical Geography, Volume 7, Issue 1, 1981, Pages 71-89, ISSN 0305-7488, https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-7488(81)90085-2.
[31] Records of Coyote, 1962-1989. Clippings, Articles Re: Coyote, National Task Force on Prostitution, Margo St. James, etc. Clippings, etc., 1973. 81-M32--90-M1, folder 260, Sequence 5, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

economies through the 1970s, demonstrating a continued dissonance between policies which condemned sex work, and practices which often condoned it for a certain price.

When California women won the right to vote in 1911, sex work came under increased scrutiny as women and other social reformers debated the place of vice economies in the growing urban center. The same year, the San Francisco Board of Public Health imposed strict and invasive health regulations for known sex workers, requiring women in the industry to undergo genital examinations for sexually transmitted infections biweekly, as well as reaffirming the necessity of their relegation to the specific commercial and residential districts between Washington and Pacific streets. This policy included the commissioning of police "sanitary officers" to monitor sex workers, stipulating that, "any person found violating these regulations in regards to limits and boundaries...will be arrested and prosecuted"[32], again both restricting and affirming the extent of the red light district. The imposition of these invasive health practices acted as an early iteration of systems that continued to ignore the bodily autonomy and privacy of sex workers, requiring the nonconsensual sacrifice of privacy under the justification of public health and safety through the 1970s. Both San Francisco and Seattle chapters of COYOTE actively combatted mandatory STI testing, personal recognizance release, entrapment, and the criminalization and arrest of sex workers more broadly during the 1970s – voicing the harms of longstanding corruption and legal intervention in consensual sex acts.

Unlike in Seattle, where the sex industry flourished under prohibition, San Francisco's nightlife was revitalized after 1933, and the city began to regain its reputation as a "wide open" town. Preparation for the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition on Treasure Island stimulated the depression era economy, providing work for unemployed architects, engineers,

[32]Sanitary code of the Department of Public Health of the City and County of San Francisco, State of California, 1911, San Francisco (Calif.); San Francisco (Calif.). Dept. of Public Health, San Francisco Public Library, Americana, 1911. San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco, California.

artists, and others commissioned for the exposition. Opportunities for work, especially in the arts, drew an increasingly "bohemian" crowd to the North Beach area, which became increasingly known for its artistic, subversive, and sexually permissive culture. San Francisco's nightlife flourished as gay and lesbian bars and nightclubs opened in the North Beach area throughout the 1930s, 40s, and 50s. These bars and clubs were often also sites of solicitation and even employment for sex workers of the era – affirming the links and overlaps between the sexually subversive queer and sex worker communities.

The underground queer culture of San Francisco was further fueled by the discharge of "suspected homosexuals" into the city's major Navy port during the Second World War. While San Francisco's Japanese population of almost 8,000 was interned[33], the city saw a flood of these "blue discharges", many of whom had been outed by their discharge and preferred, or had no choice but to remain in San Francisco rather than return to more rural or conservative areas. Following this influx of gay men in the 1940s, the city, and particularly the North Beach, became a social and cultural refuge for increasingly visible gay, lesbian, trans, and queer communities which would thrive in the 1950s.

This subversive queer subculture developing in San Francisco endured through the 1960s, ultimately becoming a defining feature of the city's culture and history. As the sexual revolution took a cultural hold in the 1960s, San Francisco had already developed a progressive and lively sexual attitude, rich with pornographic bookstores, movie houses, and massage parlors – many of which served as fronts for prostitution. As national feminist conversations increasingly debated the repression and moralization of sexuality and questioned its relationship to the individual, the

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[33]"Bay Area Census ." Bay Area Census -- County Population, 1860-2000, n.d. http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/historical/copop18602000.htm.

church, and the state– in 1966 San Francisco voters showed overwhelming support for the liberalization of sexual politics, rejecting Proposition 16, which sought to tighten obscenity laws, and by 1970 the city was home to 47 hardcore pornographic bookstores, 28 pornographic movie houses, and a variety of other underground sexual exploits in the North Beach, Tenderloin, and Polk Street.[34]

It was through the cross-pollination of civil and social rights movements, and the radical political change of the 1960s that Margo St. James drew inspiration for her sex workers union. The sex workers' liberation movement followed movements for black civil rights, women's liberation, and queer rights which provided the intellectual and practical scaffolding for her crusade to decriminalize and destigmatize the selling of sex and combat the politics of middle-class respectability, which relegated these women to the underground and denied them the protections of traditional employment and citizenship.

IV. Founding of COYOTE

Margo St. James, a former sex worker and vivacious social advocate, formed COYOTE in San Francisco as a reaction to systems of discrimination and repression faced by women in the sex industry. Born and raised in Bellingham, Washington (just 90 miles north of Seattle) Margo St. James married and had her only son only a few months after graduating from Bellingham High School in 1955. In 1958 Margo filed for divorce from her husband and left Bellingham to pursue an art career in San Francisco.[35] In a 1986 interview with The Guardian, St. James reflects on her young and sudden entrance into motherhood, “I knew it was a mistake” she said, “I knew I would be a bad mother.”[36] While St. James never had any other children, she reflects

[34]Leigh, Carol. “San Francisco Task Force on Prostitution Final Report 1996.” San Francisco Task Force on Prostitution: SF History, 1996. http://www.bayswan.org/sfhist.html.
[35] Series I. BIOGRAPHICAL, PERSONAL, AND WRITINGS, 1942-2018,. Papers of Margo St. James, 1939-2018 (inclusive), 1966-2000 (bulk). Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute. Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
[36]Clippings, etc., 1986.. Records of Coyote, 1962-1989, 81-M32--90-M1, 273., Microfilm_Reel: M-143, sequence 15 Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute.

extensively in later interviews about her experiences performing abortions for both herself and her companions throughout the 1960s, reflecting a recognition of the stakes of bodily autonomy, body politics, healthcare, and motherhood in a woman's life.

In 1962, St. James was arrested and jailed on charges of prostitution while working as a cocktail waitress in the Barbary Coast, allegations which she vehemently denied. She ultimately attributed the charges to her social circle, in which, “a lot of friends came over to my house after work, and there was a lot of pot-smoking and sex and, you know, whatever.”[37] Following these charges, St. James briefly enrolled in law school at Lincoln University (1963-1964) to appeal her case, winning her innocence a few years later. St. James credits her entrance into law school, prompted by these false accusations, as the true pretense for her entrance into the sex trade. After her father stopped paying her tuition, St.James reflected, “Everybody thought I was turning tricks, so I just said, "Okay." And a lot of guys would come up to my North Beach pad during the day from the Financial District.”[38] Ultimately economic necessity, the debilitating stigma attached to prostitution charges, and her proximity to clientele in the North Beach led St. James to start selling sex in the mid-1960s. Experiences of exclusion, economic need, and convenience/ flexibility are noted throughout JJ’s publications as common precursors to sex work – and while in many ways St.James’ experience as a white, cisgender, and intermittently middle-class sex worker is not demonstrative of broader experiences in the industry, the experiences that initiated her into the industry were not uncommon along the West Coast. Disjuncts between St. James’ positionality and the differing experiences of women engaged in and served by COYOTE are visible in the language and initiatives of its advocacy – which referenced but did not robustly combat intervening factors of race, class, ability, and sex/gender.

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[37] Clippings, etc., 1963.. Records of Coyote, 1962-1989, 81-M32--90-M1, 260., Microfilm_Reel: M-143, sequence 91. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute.
[38] Ibid.

Following her initial acquittal, St.James continued to work sporadically in the sex trade for the next several years and testified to the difficulties she faced finding viable employment with a prostitution arrest on her record. She also credits her brief stint in law school with providing her a broader awareness of how her position as a woman and condemned "whore" impacted her political and social power, "I mean it was only when I went to law school that I began to understand how I was being discriminated against,"[39] she said in a 1973 interview. St. James credited her radicalization in the decade following her arrest to experiences within the sex industry, their impacts on her life outside of the industry, as well as the influence of liberal queer and feminist politics of the era– much of which circulated widely amongst the politically progressive, socially subversive climate of San Francisco.

In particular, she credits Flo Kennedy, a lawyer, civil rights, and feminist activist, for her politicization during this period.[40] Kennedy later became an early supporter of COYOTE and a member of its advisory board through 1977, as well as the founder of Victoria C. Woodhull Memorial Foundation, and an active member of the National Task Force on Prostitution, COYOTE's nationally organized successor. St. James also mentions Elsa Gidlow (1898-1986), a radical lesbian poet who Margo remembers, "... kept shoving feminist stuff under my door."[41] Through personal analysis of her own lived experiences in the industry, and exposure to the literature and politics of progressive feminism, St. James perceived a lack of dialogue and organizing power between feminists and sex workers.

St.James first formed a conscious coalition of women in 1972, as a group of "whores, housewives, and others" (WHO) which represented the social, political, and organizing interests

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[39]Clippings, etc., 1973.. Records of Coyote, 1962-1989, 81-M32--90-M1, 260., Microfilm_Reel: M-143. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute.
[40] Florynce Kennedy Papers, 1915-2004. MC 555, folder #, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
[41]Clippings, etc., 1976.. Records of Coyote, 1962-1989, 81-M32--90-M1, 263., Microfilm_Reel: M-143, sequence 82, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute.

of whores (sex workers), housewives (women engaged in primarily unpaid domestic labor), and others (which was a euphemism for lesbians), and acted as a precursor to the formation of the more enduring organization, COYOTE. St.James' social and legal ambitions, first delineated in the formation of WHO, gained more concrete backing in 1973 when she received a $5000 grant from Glide Church in San Francisco to found the nation's first "hookers union", referred to by margo as a sort of "craft union" for prostitutes.[42] In its early years, St.James professed a broad social and legal reform agenda which culminated in the demand for lawmakers, police officers, and middle-class moralists alike to "Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics" and respect the work, humanity, and right to safety of sex workers.

COYOTE's ideological underpinnings were precipitated by earlier social, legal, and civil reform efforts across the country. Through the 1960s and 1970s, St. James, and later COYOTE, often worked with civil rights, women's, and queer advocacy organizations in recognition of their joint and overlapping struggles. Noting this distinct connection between the sexual criminalization of queer people and sex workers, in 1973 a local article reflected on the formation of COYOTE saying, "It's well past time for whores to organize. The homosexuals organized and now the cops are afraid to harass them anymore".[43] Having lived in the Barbary Coast throughout the 1960s, Margo too recognized the success of the San Francisco queer community in securing greater legal protection and security through organizing, which served as a model for her efforts.

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[42] Jenness, V. (1991). *From sex as sin to sex as work: COYOTE, organizational legitimation, and the contemporary prostitutes' rights movement* (Order No. 9208351). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (303924896). Retrieved from https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/sex-as-sin-work-coyote-organizational/docview/303924896/se-2

[43] Clippings, etc., 1973.. Records of Coyote, 1962-1989, 81-M32--90-M1, 260., Microfilm_Reel: M-143, sequence 54. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute.

Seattle's offshoot of COYOTE emerged just months after its founding in San Francisco, and developed under the organizational and intellectual direction of JJ, CG, and JB.[44] JJ's role as the founding organizer of Seattle COYOTE is significant in defining its unique, institutional character. While Margo St. James' political consciousness emerged as a result of her experience in the sex industry and the cross-pollination of vibrant queer cultures and feminist dialogues in 1960s San Francisco, JJ's involvement in organizing is precluded by her academic background and research focus on the social, legal, and personal politics of sex work. As a longstanding faculty member at the University of Washington, JJ produced much of the literature on sex work cited in COYOTE's public campaigns, and her work played a significant role in legitimizing COYOTE's legal initiatives and social struggle. The synergy of Margo St. James's social activism coupled with JJ's analysis allowed for a network of sister organizations to spread across the nation – and created two distinct chapters of COYOTE in Seattle and San Francisco, one defined by its countercultural zeal and potent subculture, and the other by its institutional strength.

COYOTE's early initiatives in both San Francisco and Seattle viewed their ultimate goal as the decriminalization of prostitution. Both branches engaged in legal campaigns and social consciousness-raising efforts to affect larger cultural attitudes towards the buying and selling of sex– and the illegitimacy of laws and law enforcement practices which made uneven arrests by sex, race, and class. Along with political lobbying and social activism, COYOTE sought to provide accessible medical and legal services, employment, counseling, and education to sex workers. This organization marked a watershed in public advocacy for sex workers. While prior, the legal status of sex work was largely at the will of city law enforcement, COYOTE provided a

[44]Because of the sensitivity of the information contained in COYOTE's documents, the archive housing them requested that the names and identities listed remain anonymous. For the remainder of my discussion of Seattle's branch of COYOTE I will use pseudonyms to protect the privacy of these individuals.

platform for self-advocacy, albeit one that was limited in its intersectional reach. In Seattle, JJ led this platform through institutional reform efforts and outreach programs, though the organization never boasted a large percentage of working women in its ranks.

COYOTE received immediate attention and, just two weeks after its establishment, The San Francisco Chronicle published an article titled “Hookers of the World, Unite” describing the legal services, public outreach, and policy recommendations of the group.[45] Early on, the efforts of COYOTE were validated within the broader academic and legal world by endorsements from prominent academics, politicians, active feminists, and civil rights leaders of the 1960s and 70s. When asked about the initial impact of COYOTE, Margo responded, “I have a feeling, that merely by getting organized, we are starting to bring about a change.”[46] In many ways this prediction was correct, and in the month following the official founding of COYOTE, the organization received news coverage first from Toronto, Oregon, Los Angeles, Denver, and in various international foreign language publications.

The year after founding COYOTE, Margo St. James launched a public campaign for sex workers' rights with the first of her infamous “hookers balls”. This flamboyant event served to raise money for the organization’s assistance services and welfare programs and build bail funds and resources to free women from exploitative pimps or other dangerous situations. The first Hooker’s Ball was held at Glide Church, and was advertised as "the social event of the year for heterosexuals, bisexuals, trisexuals, nonsexuals, homosexuals, and other minorities who feel discriminated against”. A film titled “Hookers” documented this first ball, which became an annual event in San Francisco and was eventually propagated across the country to Washington

[45]Clippings, etc., 1973.. Records of Coyote, 1962-1989, 81-M32--90-M1, 260., Microfilm_Reel: M-143, sequence 5. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute.
[46] Clippings, etc., 1973.. Records of Coyote, 1962-1989, 81-M32--90-M1, 260., Microfilm_Reel: M-143, sequence 17. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute.

DC. “Hookers” was screened across the country at sister organizations, including at COYOTE’s Seattle branch during their inaugural fundraiser.[47]

In Seattle, a more traditional sexual culture and less radical social history made the image and reputation of Margo’s organizing less popular. In a correspondence with a local politician JJ concedes, “... when I originally met Margo St. James (founder of COYOTE) I had some reservations about working with that type of flamboyant organization.” However, she followed up by underscoring the importance of consciousness-raising practiced by St. James, saying, “In fact, without it the press has no interest at all, and publicity for the decriminalization of prostitution is important.”[48] This resistance to St. James' more subversive social rhetoric demonstrates the different cultural climates of San Francisco and Seattle. While in San Francisco “Hookers Balls” was a popular attraction even for city notables, in Seattle the prospect of publicly identifying with COYOTE was seen as dangerous to politicians, especially female politicians.

While COYOTE San Francisco was supported by $5000 from Glide Church, the Seattle branch began with almost no funding which limited its breadth and longevity.[49] This branch operated under the organizational and intellectual auspices of JJ, CG, and JB. JJ played an important role in the legitimizing and initiating legal struggles of both the Seattle and San Francisco branches of COYOTE, and her academic research on sex work was the most frequently cited resource in St. James in her campaigns. JJ held dual master's degrees in history and psychology and a Ph.D. in cultural anthropology, working as a full-time faculty member and professor of psychiatry and behavioral science at the University of Washington Medical School

[47]Clippings, etc., 1974.. Records of Coyote, 1962-1989, 81-M32--90-M1, 261., Microfilm_Reel: M-143, Sequence 54. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute. Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
[48]Clippings, etc., 1974.. Records of Coyote, 1962-1989, 81-M32--90-M1, 223., Microfilm_Reel: M-143, Sequence 74. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute. Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
[49] Seattle COYOTE held its first fundraiser in 1974, raising $500 which helped them rent an office in a building owned by the Seattle Urban League.

for 12 years. Unlike St. James, who was known for her charismatic personality (cite) , the character of this Seattle branch was defined by the role of JJ and her emphasis on an academic perspective, legal reform, and direct services rather than the campaign of publicity and stigmatization like in California. The unique approaches of each branch of COYOTE, affected by the specific historical contexts of sex work in San Francisco and Seattle, and by the distinct organizational styles of Margo St. James and JJ, can be seen in their public campaigns, legal efforts, and membership.

V. Initiatives and Impact of COYOTE

Within the first year of COYOTE's founding, both the San Francisco and Seattle chapters initiated campaigns to reduce discriminatory arrests of sex workers and worked with the ACLU and other legal organizations to implement legal protections for individual sex workers, and those working in the industry as a whole. In San Francisco, COYOTE led many direct action campaigns, the first of which was launched to throw off cop entrapment at a number of local hotels including the San Francisco Hilton, Bellevue Hotel, and Stanford Court[50]– which vice officers claimed accounted for about 40% of all prostitution busts.[51] This method followed in the footsteps of 1960s efforts by gay men to oppose entrapment in public toilets through organizing and putting public pressure on the city, a precedent which was explicitly cited by Margo and COYOTE. [52] COYOTE also provided direct services including clothing and companionship for court, a hotline providing immediate legal assistance, and classes on survival skills while incarcerated called SLIP (Survival Line for Independent Prostitutes).[53]

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[50]Clippings, etc., 1973.. Records of Coyote, 1962-1989, 81-M32--90-M1, 260., Microfilm_Reel: M-143, sequence 57, 65.Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute. Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
[51]Ibid.
[52]Ibid.
[53]Jenness, Valerie, "From Sex to Sin to Sex as Work: COYOTE and the Reorganization of Prostitution as a Social Problem" in Social Problems, Vol. 37 No. 3 (Aug, 1990) 403-420 (University of California Press, 2004)

Throughout 1974 COYOTE worked closely with the San Francisco branch of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) to secure several legal victories for sex workers. Early legal efforts challenged laws that regulated and invaded the privacy of sex workers, including victimless crimes, entrapment, jailing, and quarantining for STIs. San Francisco's branch of COYOTE instigated and sponsored a total of at least 26 lawsuits on behalf of sex workers.[54] The first of these cases filed "under the aegis of coyote", was in August of 1973, just three months after Margo St. James received her grant from Glide Church. This successful suit was filed on behalf of Elane Carleson, a 24 year old woman whose personal property was confiscated during a since-dismissed prostitution case.[55] Only two years after 1972 efforts to block mandatory testing and quarantine for STIs failed, the ACLU and COYOTE were successful in arguing this policy violated protections against unreasonable searches and seizures. Following this suit, Superior Court Judge Ira Brown issued an injunction ordering San Francisco police to stop quarantining, inspecting, and treating presumed prostitutes for STIs.[56]

The Seattle branch of COYOTE built upon the legal initiatives, strategies, and precedents of the San Francisco branch. The first action taken by the organization aimed to change existing policies for personal recognizance release, or pre-trial release, for sex workers. In July of 1973, Seattle COYOTE co-authored a memorandum with Jim Doherty from Municipal Probation Services to presiding judge Patrick Corbett, urging him to reconsider the guidelines for convicted prostitutes. This argument for personal recognizance relied heavily on the rhetoric of San Francisco COYOTE, and their argument for leniency towards sex work as a "victimless crime". While Judge Corbett was later criticized for conservative revisions to Seattle law[57], in 1973 he

[54]Ibid.
[55]Seattle COYOTE [also known as ASP: Assoc. of Seattle Prostitutes (or Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes); also JAWS: Judicial for Women (or Judicial Women in Action)]: mailing lists, 1970s.. Records of Coyote, 1962-1989, 81-M32--90-M1, 428Carton: 22., sequence 51, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute. Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
[56]Ibid, sequence 70.
[57]Ibid, sequence 21.

conceded, there are no, “concrete guidelines available to evaluate prostitution-related offenders in a meaningful and routine fashion”[58]. He consequently, affirmed the Criminal Rules for Justice Court had no systematic pretrial release regulations, meaning there was room for manipulation.

As a reaction to ongoing criticism of police brutality and discrimination, in particular the criticisms of black civil rights activists, freedom patrols, and the black panther party,[59] the City of Seattle Justice Planning Office published a “Comprehensive Plan for Criminal Justice " later the same year. Mirroring national dialogues that increasingly called for less punitive policing, more police oversight, and arguments made by JJ and St. James for the decriminalization of sex work as a “victimless crime" (like drug use, gambling, and homosexuality), the plan reported that enforcing penalties for “victimless crimes” harmed the legitimacy of the entire policing system, as they often operated through discriminatory enforcement, attracted bribes, and had little effect on repeat offenses. The five-year objectives of the committee included a “Full re-examination of laws against prostitution, consensual sexual acts, possession, use and sale of all narcotics, offensive public displays, gambling, and vagrancy.“[60] and cited prior changes in Washington state abortion policy, an initiative advocated by the National Organization of Women (NOW), as a precursor and indicator of changing cultural opinions.

By 1974, COYOTE Seattle had expanded to a working collective of 15 staff members and volunteers, extending and formalizing its network of support to focus on three main areas of impact: direct social services, legal action, and social education.[61] Direct services aimed to connect sex workers with lawyers, employment, job training, counseling, and basic economic

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[58]Ibid, sequence 56.
[59]Black civil rights activists played an instrumental role in curbing police violence and corruption in Seattle. Freedom patrols were organized to monitor the behavior of law enforcement. Schaefer, Kurt. “The Black Panther Party in Seattle 1968-1970.” The Civil Rights and Labor History Project . Accessed April 1, 2024. https://depts.washington.edu/civilr/Panthers1_schaefer.htm.
[60]Seattle COYOTE [also known as ASP: Assoc. of Seattle Prostitutes (or Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes); also JAWS: Judicial for Women (or Judicial Women in Action)]: mailing lists, 1970s.. Records of Coyote, 1962-1989, 81-M32--90-M1, 428., Carton: 22., sequence 82, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute. Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
[61]Ibid, sequence 122.

and emotional support. Sex workers living in Seattle faced historically fewer arrests than women working in San Francisco due to the prolific system of police payoffs and governmental corruption which extended into the 1950s. Unlike San Francisco, where the subversive and countercultural impact of the sexual revolution and queer rights movement laid a bedrock for Margo's expressive, and at times hyperbolic, organizing – in Seattle, it was more subdued and included no working prostitutes in its organizational staff. The same year, the organization applied for funding as a nonprofit and reported assisting a total of 76 women working in Seattle.[62]

In 1974, both organizations began independently publishing regular newsletters. In San Francisco Margo St. James began publishing the COYOTE HOWLS, which ran regularly from 1974 to 1979[63]; In Seattle, Seattle COYOTE[64] was published less regularly, with many articles copied from the San Francisco branch and others penned by JJ. Together, these publications engaged local sex workers in dialog and consciousness-raising – shaping a unique archive of information, opinions, and lived experiences of sex workers in the 1970s.

The COYOTE Howls, published by Margo St. James in San Francisco, reported distribution to an audience of 8,000 by 1977.[65] This included not only sex workers living in San Francisco, but a national audience that connected through women's centers, bookstores, and other organizations. The newsletters contain advice columns, historical narratives, poems, cartoons, lists of sister organizations, resources for housing, health care, reproductive care, and counseling, and images of COYOTE members and other protesters – all of which served to

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[62]Ibid, 150.
[63]The records of COYOTE can be accessed via the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts and in part online at https://id.lib.harvard.edu/ead/sch00278/catalog,
[64]The records of Seattle COYOTE can be accessed via the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts and online via request at https://id.lib.harvard.edu/ead/c/sch00278c00490/catalog
[65] Wexelbaum, Rachel S. "Sex Workers Unite: A History of the Movement from Stonewall to SlutWalk by Melinda Chateauvert," n.d.

connect a community otherwise constrained to the underground. The publications also tell the stories of women who have been arrested, assaulted, and abused in the line of work as well as airing out the names of their abusers, offering an authentic and nuanced view of sex work in 1970s America.

The Seattle COYOTE newsletter, also variously published under the title Association of Seattle Prostitutes (ASP), produced unique material derived from JJ's research at the University of Washington. Her pamphlet, "Perspectives on Prostitution: Resources for Understanding"[66] published in 1980 contains most of the cited research studies published through the local newsletter – and the San Francisco newsletter. The style of these publications is unique from "COYOTE Howls" authored primarily by St. James, which was much more artistic, flamboyant, and political. The Seattle publication reported local news on the arrests of sex workers, as well as official statistics collected and analyzed by JJ. Its initial publication proclaimed " Only by unionizing to demand working rights and the decriminalization of prostitution will we penetrate this shroud of hypocrisy and eliminate the stigma attached to the word "whore"'[67] This statement of purpose clearly outlined decriminalization as the ultimate goal of COYOTE Seattle – similar to the San Francisco branch.

JJ also outlined the cost of prostitution arrests to the city, which she reported to be $341,490 for a total of 1200 arrests. These statistics were used to demonstrate the ultimate waste of taxpayer money and the illegitimacy of penal law enforcement practices. JJ reported 13 recent prostitution crackdowns on bodypainting studios (which she demonstrated to cost $1559 per arrest) and "entrapment" schemes, in which agents would commit a felony (solicitation) to arrest a woman on a misdemeanor charge. She spoke about the ethics and legitimacy of the department,

[66]James, Jennifer. *Perspectives on prostitution: Resources for understanding*. Seattle: Judicial Advocates, 1980.
[67]Seattle COYOTE, 1962-1989, 81-M32--90-M1, 428., Carton: 22., sequence 260, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute. Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

saying, “Your police department is condoning sodomy and your tax dollars are paying for it.”[68] Seattle COYOTE continued to publish reports and press releases warning local sex workers about “citizen informants”, entrapment schemes, and violence. Unlike COYOTE Howls in San Francisco, the content of Seattle’s publications was more practical than socially radical – and the language used throughout tended to be more academic than demonstrative of collective organizing efforts.

Both publications of COYOTE Howls and COYOTE Seattle reflected an understanding of the gendered and racialized factors that intervened in the lives of sex workers, though neither to the extent necessitated to significantly shift sex work arrests by sex or race. St. James continuously condemned policies that required mandatory STI testing for sex workers, contending, “While a female prostitute is forcibly raped of her body tissues, her “John” is free to go about his business without penalty”[69]. Throughout St. James’ advocacy work and JJ’s research and writing, the pair emphasized the impact of overt prejudice on the implementation of justice– and the unequal moral and legal burden placed on sex workers, and not upon their clients. In October of 1974, COYOTE and the San Francisco ACLU brought this claim before Judge Ollie Marie Victorie, who dismissed the cases of 37 women whose male customers had not been apprehended– charging the local police with “intentional, purposeful selective enforcement policy”[70]. Throughout 1974, 7,560 female prostitutes were arrested, while only 12 male customers were apprehended.[71]

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[68]Seattle COYOTE, 1962-1989, 81-M32--90-M1, 428., Carton: 22., sequence 147, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute. Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

[69] Seattle COYOTE, 1962-1989, 81-M32--90-M1, 428., Carton: 22., sequence 42, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute. Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

[70]Seattle COYOTE, 1962-1989, 81-M32--90-M1, 428., Carton: 22., sequence 83, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute. Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

[71]Jenness, V. (1991). *From sex as sin to sex as work: COYOTE, organizational legitimation, and the contemporary prostitutes' rights movement* (Order No. 9208351). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (303924896). Retrieved from https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/sex-as-sin-work-coyote-organizational/docview/303924896/se-2

In an interview later the same year, St. James further clarified the stratifications of privilege and security within sex work along lines of class, race, and ethnicity, saying, "Most of them are black, another aspect of the discrimination– minority women being forced to work on the street because the hotels and massage parlors are owned by white folks who won't hire them or let them hang out".[72] She reported that women working in street walking– who faced the highest rates of violence, arrest, and entrapment – also made significantly less money than their counterparts who had access to brothels or alternative spaces. For women working in San Francisco in the 1970s, these rates could be as low as $10 for a basic sex act, or $20 for more specialized services. Throughout San Francisco's legal history with sex work, regulation and policing overtly targeted racial minorities, making first Chinese women, and later Black and Latina women the primary victims of fines, invasive medical testing, and incarceration. In both Seattle and San Francisco, this history of racialization was reflected in uneven rates of prostitution-related arrests by race and gender in the 1970s.

The same year, San Francisco COYOTE formed a coalition to oppose the legal enforcement of "victimless crimes" which included sex workers along with "pot smokers, homosexuals…"[73] and others targeted by legal policies and practices. The ACLU filed a suit against the state of California, alleging that practices of solicitation and entrapment violated penal code section 226, which makes it, "illegal to offer money for the commission of lewd acts." The coalition ultimately won the case on the charge that the department was, "paying police to commit felonies in order to make misdemeanor arrests of prostitutes". [74]This case and its language were later used in Seattle to protest the discriminatory arrests of sex workers.

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[72]Clippings, etc., 1974.. Records of Coyote, 1962-1989, 81-M32--90-M1, 261., Microfilm_Reel: M-143, Sequence 34. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute. Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
[73]Clippings, etc., 1974.. Records of Coyote, 1962-1989, 81-M32--90-M1, 261., Microfilm_Reel: M-143, Sequence 86. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
[74]Clippings, etc., 1974.. Records of Coyote, 1962-1989, 81-M32--90-M1, 261., Microfilm_Reel: M-143, Sequence 171. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

Despite the success of the case, the enforcement of penalties for "victimless crimes" remained a contentious topic of public debate in San Francisco and Seattle in the years to come. This case further reinforced connections between the social and legal struggles of sex workers and queer people, which were first articulated during the 1950s.

Due to lack of funding and broad social support, the Seattle branch announced in 1975 that, "The emphasis of COYOTE is shifting to primarily education, legal activities, and legislative lobbying." [75]Through this, they ultimately exchanged their broader social rhetoric which called for decriminalization, for a greater emphasis on supportive social services. The more elite and academic makeup of the advisory board made it less radical and subversive than the San Francisco branch – and they continued to work primarily within the scope of existing law. The same year, the Seattle Police Department updated its Vice and Narcotics Manual, reaffirming the illegality of sex work and committing additional pressure to its enforcement.[76]

Few records of COYOTE Seattle exist beyond 1975, and by 1976 the organization had officially dissolved after a short active period of two years and the majority of operations and services provided by COYOTE were passed along to local civil rights, queer, feminist, and labor organizations which continued to provide resources and support to Seattle sex workers – though not a political platform to protest local law and law enforcement practices. The short-lived nature of COYOTE Seattle was influenced by its relative lack of funding and financial support, a low rate of involvement among active sex workers, and a sociopolitical climate that was increasingly critical of the open sale of sex toward the end of the 1970s. Despite the dissolution of COYOTE, JJ continued to promote the importance of sex work reform and published research articles that were frequently cited in St. James' national campaign. Publications produced by

[75]Seattle COYOTE, 1962-1989, 81-M32--90-M1, 428., Carton: 22., sequence 111, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute. Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
[76]Police Department Annual Reports 1894-2009, Series 1802-H8, Clerk File 58594, Seattle Municipal Archives, Seattle, WA

ASP, the loosely organized descendant of COYOTE, were distributed unevenly through the end of the decade and included information about social and economic resources available to sex workers, as well as research on sex work produced by JJ and updates from Margo St. James national campaign.

In 1976, the shape of COYOTE's San Francisco branch also shifted, and St. James' emphasis changed from local organizing to a national campaign for decriminalization. Reports from this year show only 60 of COYOTE's 8500 members claimed experience working in the sex industry, and most members were educated, white, middle-class women.[77] It was at this time that St. James changed her description of COYOTE from a "hookers union" to a "more of a Common Cause-type organization".[78]

Following the active role of COYOTE and the ACLU in shifting legal policies and practices toward sex work, 1976 brought greater police leniency under district attorney Joseph Frietas, who was quoted in the New York Associated Press saying, "If its a nonviolent, noncoercive activity between consenting adults and it doesn't involve any other crime, my office will not bother with it"[79] – demonstrating a clear policy of greater tolerance toward prostitution, and the beginning of a period of relatively few arrests. This period of relative leniency, however, lasted only 11 months, and in a statement made on December 28 1976 the department reported a 1000% incline in street prostitution and that " police now say they have abandoned their low-priority policy, and officials claim arrests of prostitutes are at an all-time high".[80]

Beginning in 1976, many of St. James' local goals in San Francisco were transposed into national politics. Despite the short-lived nature of tolerance policies, she took them as an

[77] Clippings, etc., 1976.. Records of Coyote, 1962-1989, 81-M32--90-M1, 263, sequence 60 Microfilm_Reel: M-143. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
[78]Ibid, sequence 78.
[79]Ibid, sequence 6.
[80]Ibid, sequence 129.

enormous success, claiming in April, “We're pretty much through with the abuse of prostitutes by the police already in San Francisco”.[81] This reaction to limited police reform signaled a deeper unawareness within the organizing ranks of COYOTE to the historical ties between police violence and the experiences of sex workers not racialized as white. Since its initial policies restricting sex work in the 1850s, the over-policing of racialized bodies in San Francisco led to over-incarceration, extortion, barriers to medical care, and loss of rights to bodily autonomy.

St. James held the First World Meeting Of Prostitutes from June 23rd to 27th, inviting members of the DC House and Senate to a (poorly attended) congressional reception.[82] She utilized the recent case of Representative Wayne Hays (D-Ohio) who was exposed for paying a mistress $14,000 per year for sex, arguing “We live in a prostituting society. Everybody does things for the money, don't they?”[83] Margo St. James highlighted the ironies of punitive sex work laws in speeches, publications, and interviews throughout the 1970s. In her later campaign for public office in San Francisco she noted, in relation to this case, "I'm perceived as an outsider, but I've really been on the inside all these years — sitting on their laps in the smoke-filled rooms,".[84] Through this commentary and her overt legal efforts, St.James demonstrated how politicians, lawmakers, and law enforcement engaged in and fueled the very systems they claimed to contain.

St. James received significant attention for her conferences and national lobbying efforts, however, lack of consistent or substantial funds, along with the changing national politics of sex work at the end of the 1970s, blocked COYOTE from retaining its organizational strength and

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[81] Clippings, etc., 1976.. Records of Coyote, 1962-1989, 81-M32--90-M1, 263, sequence 34 Microfilm_Reel: M-143. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
[82]Clippings, etc., 1977.. Records of Coyote, 1962-1989, 81-M32--90-M1, 264 Microfilm Reel: M-143, sequence 55, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
[83] Clippings, etc., 1976.. Records of Coyote, 1962-1989, 81-M32--90-M1, 263, sequence 42 Microfilm_Reel: M-143. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
[84]Clippings, etc., 1988.. Records of Coyote, 1962-1989, 81-M32--90-M1, 275Microfilm_Reel: M-143, sequence 68, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

impact. In 1976, Florynce Kennedy founded the Victoria C. Woodhull Memorial Foundation, a nonprofit that was "designed to be a funding tool for the decriminalization of prostitution and related issues: violence, rape, incest, abortion, child care, welfare, etc."[85]. Margo St. James served as the executive director of the foundation from 1977 until 1980.

After a fire destroyed COYOTE's San Francisco headquarters in August of 1978, The National Task Force on Prostitution absorbed many of its legal and academic functions, and St. James, who continued to work as the executive director of the Victoria C. Woodhull Memorial Foundation, worked closely with both organizations to provide direct services in the San Francisco area. Margo continued her domestic advocacy through this organization until the AIDS crisis shifted public opinion and scrutiny to the politics to sex work in the early 1980s, dulling the initial fervor of the sexual revolution and prompting her move to Europe to work on international campaigns. In 1979, the Victoria C. Woodhull Memorial Foundation received NGO status at the UN and became further incorporated into the National Task Force on Prostitution. The National Task Force on Prostitution held its first convention in San Francisco in 1984, demonstrating the importance of the city to national conversations and political efforts to destigmatize and decriminalize sex work.

VI. Conclusion

Ultimately, the differing historical, social, and political contexts of Seattle and San Francisco, coupled with the uniquely suited organizing of Margo St. James and JJ, produced two distinct branches of COYOTE which used a combination of direct action, consciousness-raising, mutual aid, and legal action to impact perspectives and policies surrounding 1970s sex work.

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[85] COYOTE, Vicky [Victoria C. Woodhull Memorial Foundation]: proposals, 1973-1974, 1978, undated.. Records of Coyote, 1962-1989, 81-M32--90-M1, 599., Carton: 12. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute.

COYOTE emerged during the social and cultural turmoil of the sexual revolution, a political consciousness that was aroused by broader calls for police reform, bodily autonomy, and sexual privacy made by civil rights, feminist, and queer liberation organizers. These antecedent movements were essential in shaping the goals and practices of COYOTE in the 1970s, reflected in the distinct coalitions and campaigns conducted by St. James and JJ.

Through the histories of both Seattle and San Francisco, sex work was intermittently policed when deemed necessary or convenient by city officials, police, or advocacy groups – reacting to outward calls for moralization not the needs or experiences of those in the industry. Early attitudes along the West Coast first condoned sex work as a natural element of the economic and sexual landscape of the settler colonies, where white men dramatically outnumbered white women. Later, as this ratio evened out, women and other reformers brought moralizing politics and traditional family structures to the West, though especially in Seattle broad systems of corruption endured through the 1950s.

Broader cultural phenomena, like the implementation of national prohibition and the sociosexual impact of the Second World War, had differential impacts on the distinct legal and policing landscapes of San Francisco and Seattle in the 1930s and through the 1950s. During this time, the Seattle Police Department was distinct in its continued permissiveness to sex work, following a brief contraction in 1940. San Francisco was more restrictive in its policies, and saw the development of a vibrant counterculture defined by its queer presence in the North Beach area where many sex workers lived and worked, and where Margo St.James planted the seeds of her national organization COYOTE.

Both chapters emphasized public outreach and legal action through partnerships with local organizations and the ACLU to reform legal policies that historically excluded sex workers

in their formation. This was a unique historical moment in both San Francisco and Seattle, where sex work had long been an integral economic and cultural component of the cities' developments, and had long experienced discriminatory arrests, fines, and extortion enforced across lines of gender, ethnicity, and class. For the first time in the early 1970s, COYOTE provided a legal and social platform for sex workers to voice their own needs and experiences to broader society. Despite the limited impact of both organizations in engaging local sex workers broadly, especially after 1976, this organized platform and its acknowledgment by institutions and organizations like ACLU, Glide Church, and the University of Washington, provided unprecedented visibility to the existence of sex work as a transhistorical source of income and form of legitimate labor. Ultimately, both of these branches of COYOTE can be seen within broader patterns of reform which continue to disproportionately police and penalize sex workers over customers, and enforce fines and jail penalties which add to the emotional, financial, and legal burden of sex work. COYOTE intervened in this social and legal climate which limits sex workers' access to safety, security, and state protection.

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