

1971 The US State of Nevada begins to formally regulate sex work, giving counties the right to license brothels.

1972 The first conference between feminists and prostitutes in Manhattan turns into a verbal brawl, as the feminists try to save their 'downtrodden' sisters and a handful of escorts refuse to accept that they have been 'degraded'.

1973 Margo St. James, a former sex worker, sets up COYOTE (Cast Off Your Old Tired Ethics), the first US sex workers' rights group, on Mother's Day in San Francisco. She argues that sex work is work and sex workers should be entitled to worker rights and protection like anyone else.



1975 150 prostitutes take over the church of St Nizier in Lyons, France, to protest against police fines, multiple arrests and the unsolved murders of local prostitutes. Their focus is on their rights as mothers, but as the strike spreads with sex workers occupying churches across France the emphasis becomes on prostitutes' rights. In Paris women form the 'French Prostitutes' Collective' and demand full rights as citizens, calling for a tax system that would give them pension rights and access to welfare benefits. The strike lasts 7 days and ends when the police raid the churches.

Helen Buckingham forms PLAN (Prostitution Laws are Nonsense) in England, shortly followed by the English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP), modeled directly on the French model. Their slogan: "No bad women, just bad laws".

1982 18 members of the English Collective of Prostitutes occupy the Holy Cross Anglican Church in Camden to protest police brutality; the resulting media circus leads to the establishment of an official monitor of police behaviour.



1983 The Alliance for the Safety of Prostitutes in Vancouver stage a demonstration outside City Hall and occupy a church a year later to protest new legislation.

The US Prostitutes Collective stage a street protest in Tulsa against penalties forcing sex workers to become street cleaners.

After years of campaigning, three sex worker groups in the UK – ECP, PLAN and PROS (Programme for the Reform of Laws on Soliciting) finally achieve the end of laws allowing street sex workers to be imprisoned after a third conviction. This quickly turns sour, however, when police step up arrests and courts raise fines, so women still go to jail – for failure to pay fines.

1984 The US Prostitutes Collective protest on the streets of Seattle in response to police inertia over the Green River serial killings. Margo St James and Gail Pheterson set up the International Committee for Prostitutes' Rights, which is later responsible for organising the two World Whores Congresses in 1985 and 1986.

1985 The first World Whores Congress in Amsterdam adopts the World Charter for Prostitute Rights, which lists decriminalisation, human rights, self-determination in work conditions, health control by sex workers, and public education as its main objectives.

1986 150 people, over three quarters of which are sex workers, attend the second World Whores Congress in Brussels.

1989 San Francisco hosts the World Whores Summit. A documentary made during the summit of sex workers and activists discussing human rights can be seen on Scarlot Harlot's blog site:

<http://scarlotharlot.blogspot.com/2006/09/outlaw-poverty-not-prostitutes-pt2.html>

SCOT-PEP is officially set up as a project, although it had been providing services since 1988 - see the later section on SCOT-PEP's history for more information.

1991 The Network for Sex Work Projects (NSWP) is set up, based in London and Rio de Janeiro.

1992 Switzerland legalises brothel ownership. Police figures from 2007 show that Zurich has a similar per capita number of sex workers as Amsterdam - about 11 in 1000 residents.

1993 La Unión Unica is founded in Mexico City by Claudia Colimoro. It organises not just sex workers but all who participate and profit from the sex industry, including taxi drivers, bartenders and hotel workers.

1995 The Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (DMSC) is formed in Calcutta, and has 30,000 members by 1997 - see the section on the DMSC for more about this incredible project.

New South Wales in Australia decriminalizes brothels.

1996 An official sex workers' union is formed in Australia under the auspices of the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers' Union.



1997 The Lusty Lady Theatre in San Francisco becomes the first strip club in the USA to successfully form a union. It's still the only unionized strip club in the States, but the union movement led to national organizing among exotic dancers, and in 2003 the Lusty Lady becomes a worker-owned cooperative.

2000 Sex workers in Soho go on a one-day strike to protest Westminster Council's attempts to evict them by threatening their landlords with compulsory purchase. The English Collective of Prostitutes also accuse police of entering flats without warrants and intimidation.

2001 25,000 sex workers gather in India for a sex worker festival organized by Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (DMSC); the first International Sex Workers Rights Day (March 3rd) is born.

Antwerp city council in Belgium, working with the police and sex workers, opens a tolerance zone which includes Villa Tinto, "Europe's most high-tech brothel".

2002 500 male and female sex workers, some wearing masks and waving banners, protest outside the French parliament against a new crime bill that would change the law on street sex work from permissive (sex workers can only be fined if they disturb the public peace) to draconian (6 months imprisonment or a fine of up to \$7,500) and creates a new offence of 'passive soliciting' that includes dressing sexily.

Sex workers in Venice protest carrying red umbrellas, the first time they are used as a symbol of sex workers' rights. The red umbrella is quickly adopted across the world.



2003 New Zealand passes the Prostitution Reform Bill, legalising all forms of sex work.

International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers is commemorated for the first time, set up by Dr. Annie Sprinks and SWOP in the USA to commemorate the victims of the Green River Killer.

2005 The first European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration is held in Brussels, organised in response to "increasing repressive legislative policies and state practices against sex workers across Europe". The conference endorsed the Declaration of the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (see sidebar later) and made policy recommendations to the European Parliament.



Brazil turns down \$40million from the US government after the Bush administration decrees that countries that receive AIDS funding must explicitly condemn prostitution.

The UN's International Organisation for Migration set up a telephone hotline for trafficked women to pinpoint their location and send in the police. To everyone's surprise, 74% of the calls come from clients, who have proven adept at spotting women who are working unwillingly.

2007 35,000 sex workers in Bolivia go on strike – by refusing to attend their legally-required medical check-ups – to protest violent attacks in El Alto, where sex workers were beaten and 30 brothels burned by mobs demanding that brothels and bars be at least 3,200 feet (almost 1 kilometre) from schools. Prostitution was legalized in Bolivia in 2001, but sex workers are still subjected to harassment from the public and the police.

Sex work activists in Canada launch a legal challenge to Canada's laws against "bawdy houses, communicating for the purpose of prostitution and living on the avails of prostitution" in the wake of the Vancouver murders.

Sex workers in Padua, Italy, go on the march to protest local police crackdowns on clients, dancing and singing through the streets. They also developed their own system to counteract the effect of the £30 fines – pink coupons issued to clients promising to refund them "in kind".

2008 200 sex workers in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, protest against police crackdowns that include unlawful detention, beatings and gang rapes.