

Jason Lazarus
SUPPORT NOT PROTECTION

813-591-0964 (Monument for Sex Worker Solidarity Network, Tampa, FL)

80" x 108"

S5630 Waterproof LED lights, solder, electrical cords, artist tape

2018



SUPPORT NOT PROTECTION is an exhibition arising from recent conversations between Syd Eastwin of the Sex Worker Solidarity Network of Tampa, Florida and artist Jason Lazarus. The exhibition broadcasts the announcement of the newly established SWSN Community Self-Defense Fund, invites donations from allies, and introduces a light monument created for this occasion by Lazarus. A reading by Lazarus, created by the SWSN, will occur at 8pm, March 23rd at The Outlet Gallery, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

The Sex Worker Solidarity Network, started in October 2017, is a grassroots, horizontal movement in solidarity with all sex workers as well as other movements that support the working class and the marginalized. Founded on the principles of intersectionality, solidarity, and self-determination, SWSN has been the leading opposition to the City of Tampa's recent resurrection of an anti-LGBT bathhouse ordinance that, in the words of SWSN, 'does nothing to stop human trafficking and does everything to

create discrimination....it is evident that this ordinance is not actually designed to stop human trafficking but is rather designed to push undocumented or possibly undocumented persons into the for-profit prison system..with immigrants and people of color constantly under attack, we must not allow our county to become a beacon of even more harm. Instead, we must band together and offer solutions that work to actually HELP human trafficking victims and not harm anybody."

In response to the ordinance that targets workers rather than proprietors, they have recently petitioned for the enactment of full immunity for sex workers: any person in a massage parlor, bathhouse, private home or other establishment who dials 911 or the human trafficking hotline to report sexual violence shall be immune from arrest or prosecution (including immunity from deportation or immigration detainment). Their full petition can be read and signed here:

<https://www.change.org/p/hillsborough-county-commission-create-real-solutions-to-end-human-trafficking-not-discrimination>

Emerging social justice organizations thrive on the interplay of mobilization, action, and the recalibration of text and symbols—not only for raising conscious awareness, but for also creating new forms of consciousness. Multiple hierarchies are facing new scrutiny through critical activism whose messages are direct, frontal, and timely.

Artists and activists have much to learn from each other--as Claire Pentecost observes, "I've been told that artists should just be artists, and activists should just be activists, because otherwise we get bad art and lame activism. Such prescriptions reinforce the preference for recognized forms of mastery while pre-empting emergence and ignoring the fact that art, activism and other living forms require continuous renewal."

Powerfully direct messaging in the form of hashtags and cardboard signs comes at a cost, what about the complexities of the lives at stake? Abstraction is a privilege in our age, and it is activists who, uniquely forced into direct messaging, and embodying compounded marginalization, most deserve the time and space to linger in nascent forms.

The social justice work of SWSN is proposing a new form of consciousness, Support Not Protect, that for many, is a leap rather than incremental change. It should look familiar and feel courageous to practicing artists--they are ahead of their audience and filled with conviction.

To make donations to the newly established SWSN Community Self-Defense Fund,
<https://www.sexworkersolidaritynetwork.org/community-defense>

For more information:

[Facebook.com/sexworkersolidaritynetwork](https://www.facebook.com/sexworkersolidaritynetwork)

Twitter: @SWSolidarity

Email: sexworkersolidaritynetwork@gmail.com

Web: [sexworkersolidaritynetwork.org](https://www.sexworkersolidaritynetwork.org)