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Following up on his scathing indictment of the international sexual enslavement of women in *The Natashas*, investigative journalist *Victor Malarek* lays bare the other side of the crisis?the men who fuel the demand.

Each year more than 800,000 women and children are lured, tricked or forced into prostitution to meet an apparently insatiable demand, joining an estimated 10 million women already ensnared in the \$20 billion worldwide sex trade.

To date, most research on the subject has focused on the various issues that propel these women into the trade, but little has been investigated, or written, about those who trigger the demand?the “Johns.” In this hard-hitting expos?, Malarek unmasks the kind of men?and organizations?that foster and drive the sex trade, from America to Europe, Brazil to Thailand, Phnom Penh to St. Petersburg and Costa Rica. The Johns is a chilling look into a dark corner of the world that these men have created at the expense of countless women and children.

The Johns: Sex for Sale and the Men Who Buy It Details

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Author : Victor Malarek

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Jenni says

What a difficult book for me to rate simply on stars. On one hand, I couldn't put this book down, engrossed within the first few pages. I've read a few books written on the subject of the women (and children) involved, but no book I've read so far has done so much to analyze the demand side of sex trafficking. This was a very thorough bit of research into the world of prostitution from the standpoint of the buyers that fuel the "trade" in human flesh, domestically and globally. I poured through it in two days.

With that said, on the other hand I couldn't read more than a chapter WITHOUT putting it down, to process what I had just absorbed and to calm the anxieties and absolute RAGE that I was feeling! I quipped to a friend as I was reading this that "I may never date again," but joking aside this book was disturbingly eye opening for me, an insight into the world of the men who pay for sex - their thought processes, the rationale they use to justify their choices, the support systems and networks in place to keep the behavior going. It also covered a wide range of topics pertinent to the enabling of "paying for play": pornography, sex tourism, corruption in foreign governments and "good old boys" clubs helping each other out to avoid problems. I found myself so disgusted with what I was reading, depressed not only for the women and children involved but for the men, most beyond redemption for their heinous choices.

The author offered plenty of solutions to how keep the fight going - against the excuse of it being "the world's oldest profession" and thus not a worthy cause - as well as a very detailed dissection against the "legalize prostitution" camp's arguments. Sure, it's easy to stick your head in the sand and ignore the problem, or shrug it off as something that is happening "somewhere else." But an issue as serious as the one discussed in this book (yet as one that is given very little coverage in relation to many other societal problems) has no chance of being taken seriously without impassioned advocates such as this author making it known and shoving it in our faces whether we want to hear about it or not.

So, although I conclude this review utterly disturbed, I'm grateful to have read this book. As you will be too. Know your world. This is a very sad part of it.

Jesse says

The book suffers repetitive prose, excessive quotes and an almost paradoxical glorification of the opinions of what, we must admit, is a staggering amount of our populace. However, these functional, craft-oriented realities can easily be used by the defensive or the frightened to push off what Malorek's fundamentally vital point is: these opinions are lurking in a majority setting. These repetitive statements are repetitive because a majority of Americans agree to them. These johns are married. They have girlfriends/boyfriends. They maintain normal lives but are allowed, and are raised to, examine themselves as sexually dominate, driven beings.

I'm disappointed that he didn't explore the world of pornography and its connection to Prostitution further, and felt that he should have introduced the book with the idea that legalization of this disgusting trade is not a solution. Further, he does little to allow those who are staunchly pro-legalization (happy hooker-theorists) to feel welcomed to a new idea, and his prose isn't necessarily persuasive as it is demanding.

I prefer demanding, but I doubt there will be many five-stars for that reason and for craft concerns... but I'd rather this book be reviewed at the top of the pile so people know of its existence then continue to turn blind eyes against those who hurt so many women so regularly.

Melanie says

I didn't give this book 5 stars because of the subject matter, which, in itself, takes off that last star.. It's a fascinating book that delves into one of the halves that make up the sex trade and trafficking industry, the "Johns". It was harsh to read, because it's so much more comfortable to close our eyes to the reality of what, on average 2.5 - 3 MILLION people (the majority of which are women and children) suffer every year in this 43 billion dollar industry. Victor Malarek strives to crack open what is, by its very nature, a secret and anonymous relation between traffickers, the Nataschas (his first book) and "the Johns". A real eye-opener, easy to read, and a book I recommend to anyone who's ready to face the harsh reality.

Harvey Smith says

I started this book feeling almost weird to reading about men who buy sex. It didn't take me long to have my eyes opened very wide. It's a deal where a "john" is feeling entitled and looking for power and control.

It's men who see themselves as as better than women essentially. There is a lot of rationalization that goes on in the mans mind in the process, about how he's helping the poor downtrodden woman earn a living. It is a rationalization. Most of the children and women are being victimized, trafficked by pimps, and in essence being held in slavery. Trafficking in humans and prostitution are very entwined. The U.S. State Department estimates that 800,000 people are trafficked around the world at any one time. It is a huge illegal industry that is driven by demand, which far outstrips the supply of women available in a given market, which then brings kidnapping and literal human trafficking and enslavement into the picture, often with underage girls and children. In the Western world studies show that as many as 80% of women in prostitution entered the trade before they turned 18.

So, how about legalizing prostitution? Not a great idea. It almost conveniently gives it an air of respectability. In addition, the legal sex trade is given rules and regulations. In reality, in areas where the sex trade is legal, the illegal market is up to four times larger than the legal market. In essence, legalization is in fact a gift to "johns".

The root cause of prostitution is that men buy. A progressive way to bring the prostitution industry under control is to look at the approach Sweden has taken. Instead of criminalizing and blaming the women involved (most often against their choice), they instead made BUYING sex a crime, thereby holding "johns" criminally responsible.

Sex tourism is alive and very well in the world, the "john" again rationalizing that he's entitled to buy and use prostitutes for what ever purpose he wants, including torture and violence. Oh, and rationalizing that they are helping the woman or child's family escape economic hardship by exchanging money for sex.

It has been called the world's oldest profession, and that the sex trade is inevitable. The fact that it exists at all is damaged masculinity has, and still is the root cause.

Paul says

A very disturbing but necessary book. The stories of frequenters of prostitutes. The thing that stuck out to me was the sense of entitlement these men thought they had. They are very unevolved and self-righteous about taking advantage of trafficked women. They hate the idea of feminism (like, you know, women should have rights) and call feminists feminazis.

The most disgusting part are the stories of men who take sex vacations where they take advantage of prostituted women. 14-year-olds forced to hold hands and be buddies with middle-aged men who are either seeking "yum yum," oral sex, or "boom boom," sexual intercourse. Makes you want to hate all men just based on these few jerks.

Some hopeful news: Norway and Sweden are now arresting johns instead of prostituted women, and the women are considered victims. It's greatly cut down on sex work in those countries. It's an important book in that it reveals the large number of retrograde men that unself-consciously pursue their lusts and are rather proud of it. Awful to think of the prostituted women in third-world countries who can make an income no other way.

No mentions of Anthony Wiener.

Connie says

Informative reading on a side of prostitution that many people don't focus on, the men.

Idiosyncratic says

Nothing you wouldn't expect here, except one revealing little observation from a john who developed a conscience about the women. He said that, if you have any conscience whatsoever, don't just look at the woman's body or face - look into her eyes. You will see that, for all her laughing and smiling and gushing over you, her eyes will tell how she really feels about you and the situation. (He had to quit after that.)

Birgit says

very insightful read about a very disconcerting issue in our society today. I recommend this book to educate people about the dangers of modern sex trade (pornography and prostitution), and hopefully, get more people forcing legislation to change in their societies - Swedish model is currently the best - , and to abolish modern day slavery (for women, girls and boys).

"The entire social tragedy boils down to one word: dignity - the dignity of women and girls worldwide. In prostitution there is no dignity, no empowerment, no equality in any form. True equality between men and women will always be beyond reach as long as men feel they have a right to rent a woman's body. It is not a

right, and it never should be. WE NEED TO DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO ABOLISH PROSTITUTION." - Victor Malarek

Valerity (Val) says

This book is a change from the usual telling about the women involved in prostitution and focuses on the Johns who indulge, why they do and why many think its a better bet than marrying, and some who do both.

K.D. McQuain says

This book is full of profiles of the types of men who frequent prostitutes and information about the effect that this "hobby" has on them, their "service providers", and society as a whole. It was pretty dry and could have benefited from a less statistical, more personal approach. In all, a good source of information but a tough read.

Millicent says

Nobody writes about the flesh trade as in-depth and with as much principled honesty as Victor Malarek. In his previous book 'The Natashas' he brought the scourge of human trafficking to mainstream readers. This time around he analyses those behind the demand in paid sex. He looks at the different forms of paid sex, the justification and mentality of johns, and the different effectiveness of legislation around the world in tackling violence against women and children. Because I read so much on the subject, there was little that was news to me, but I still recommend this book because Malarek's writing is so accessible and honest. He reproduces the arguments of the pro-prostitution lobby and demolishes them with sound rebuttals. I have never read any tracts by the pro-prostitution lobby that was as sober and honest about the reality of sex work. When I first heard of this book many years ago, I believed prostitution could exist without violence towards women and children. After years of research, I no longer do.

Book says

The Johns: Sex for Sale and the Men Who Buy It by Victor Malarek

"The Johns" is a difficult discussion about the world's oldest profession or as the author would conclude oppression, prostitution. Award-winning journalist Victor Malarek takes the reader on an uncomfortable journey into the world of the sex trade as one of the most overlooked human rights abuses of the planet. This unpleasant 328-page book includes seventeen chapters covering a spectrum of topics on the sex trade with a focus on its users.

Positives:

1. Generally well-written, well-researched book.
2. The fascinating but difficult topic of the sex trade.
3. Malarek has great command of the topic and covers it from many angles.

4. The book doesn't waste time in disclosing the central argument of this book. "What we are witnessing today is nothing less than international sexual terrorism against women and children at the hands of men, and little is being done to stop the carnage".
5. Discusses the causes of the global plight of women. "Poverty, chronic unemployment, domestic violence, and drug addiction top the list of root causes."
6. Provocative conclusions. "I have come to this unwavering realization: prostitution — all prostitution — is not about choice. If anything, for the overwhelming majority of women ensnared in the trade, it is the ultimate act of desperation. It is survival sex."
7. Does a very good job of describing the johns. "What this brotherhood reveals is that, when it comes to sexuality and prostitution, johns' attitudes are remarkably consistent throughout the world. On these forums — whether in the U.S., Canada, Australia, or Europe — it quickly becomes apparent that the search for paid sex is all about entitlement, power, and control."
8. Some high-profiled cases revisited. ""Norma Ramos, co-executive director of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, based in New York, said: "The contradiction and hypocrisy of Governor Spitzer being a supporter of the recently passed New York State antitrafficking legislation, while he himself is part of the demand that fuels sex trafficking, constitutes an enormous betrayal of the human rights and women's rights movement that works to end human trafficking.”"
9. Discusses why johns do it. "Pay for play — which some johns shorten to P4P — may be easier, cheaper, and more of a sure thing. But even more important for many single johns, as the previous examples show, is that it is also hassle-free."
10. The danger for women in prostitution. "Research has shown, time and time again, that for women in prostitution there is no such thing as a safe place."
11. Some quotes are indelible. ""Shame only afflicts people with morals. I have no morals."
12. Traveling johns and why they travel. "Thailand is the sex destination for prostitution tourists. Airlines from all over the world land daily at Bangkok International Airport and disgorge herds of johns in search of paid sex. Not one of these men seems the least bit concerned that he is actually breaking the law."
13. Probably the most difficult topic to get through, predator johns. "The refuge, near the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica, was home to thirty girls, aged ten to sixteen. All had been robbed of their innocence, forced to service men, most from abroad." Sickening just reading that.
14. The impact of the porn industry. "Research on the effects of repeated exposure to hard-core is virtually unanimous in its findings: men soon lose respect for women and develop an increased sexual callousness toward them. As they progress to more deviant, bizarre, or violent porn, they begin to trivialize rape and form distorted views of women, sexuality, dating, and marriage."
15. An interesting look at the legalization of prostitution. "The negatives of legalization far outweigh the positives. Given the inherent violence in prostitution and the degradation and humiliation visited daily on vast numbers of prostituted women and girls, it is difficult to fathom why anyone — indeed any government — would support legalizing a trade for the few who purportedly choose it when the overwhelming majority never chose it, definitely don't want it, and desperately want out of it." "Legalization sends a message that it's okay to purchase women for sex, to impose their sexual will via the almighty dollar."
16. Conclusions backed by research. "After years of research, study, and sometimes acrimonious debate, the Swedish government flatly rejected the notion that prostitution is a choice, that it is legitimate work and that it is something women, girls, and boys want to do. It concluded that the majority of people caught up in the flesh trade are victims who are economically, racially, or ethnically marginalized and oppressed."
17. Discusses how to get rid of prostitution or the most appalling aspects of it. "The United States is the only real sheriff on the world stage actively pursuing child-sex tourists and prosecuting American offenders at home."
18. An excellent epilogue that lists things we can do. "THE TRUTH IS SIMPLE: if there were no demand, prostitution would not exist. Prostitution is not about women's sexuality. It's about men."

Negatives:

1. A very difficult and uneasy topic to get through. Some of the contents is very disturbing and even feels gratuitous.
2. Repetitive.
3. Lack of supplementary material to complement the narrative. No graphics, no charts, and formal bibliography.
4. Limited amount of information that I didn't already know.
5. Can there be a world where men and women can purchase sex in a safe and respectable manner? Not according to Malarek, but I just wonder...

In summary, this was a very difficult book to get through because of the graphic nature and harm it has caused and continues to cause to countless women and children. In general, I agree with most of the conclusions of the author, prostitution is a human rights abuse. The book could have used supplementary material to complement the narrative and at times I felt it was tedious and gratuitous but overall Malarek reaches compelling conclusions and does so while considering both sides of the ledger. Unpleasant but a necessary read, I recommend it.

Further suggestions: "The Natashas" by the same author, "Not for Sale: The Return of the Global Slave-Trade and How We Can Fight It" by David Batstone, "The Slave Next Door" by Kevin Bales, "Sex Trafficking" by Siddharth Kara, "Somebody's Daughter" by Julian Sher, and "Girls Like Us" by Rachel Lloyd, "Renting Lacy" by Linda Smith, and "Half the Sky" by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn.

Bryan says

This is a must read for anyone who thinks prostitution is a victimless crime. Through investigating the motives and beliefs behind Johns, or mongers as they refer to themselves, the author makes a very clear case for holding johns responsible for their crimes and for making the buying of sex a crime. Interestingly, those countries that have legalized prostitution have not solved the many problems with prostitution in their countries, and in most cases legalization has made matters worse. Prostitution is exploitation, plain and simple, and should not be tolerated by any society that respects human rights.

Ruth Seeley says

This was a tough book to read and I'd have rated it higher were it not for the far-too-extensive quotes from men who post on bulletin boards about their experiences buying sex and 'the girlfriend experience' (extra charges may apply). It would have benefited from fewer quotes and more summary/analysis. Still, this is an important book. I particularly liked Malarek's challenge to those ex sex-workers who claim they don't get any respect and fight for the rights of prostitutes. His point: all women should have equal rights and equal opportunities, and if they actually did, there isn't a single one who'd willingly become a prostitute, Pretty Woman fantasy notwithstanding.

Caitlin says

Probably the best book you can read on human trafficking and prostitution, where the focus is on the

perpetrators instead of the victims. This is important because without these men buying sex, there would be no prostitution and human traffickers wouldn't sell people. Prostitutes usually don't have a choice to be prostitutes, men who pay for sex do have a choice and there lies the difference.

This book shows how the inequality of the sexes in society leads to the idea of men that sex can be bought or sold and that they 'need' or 'deserve' it. I like that legal prostitution is being criticized in this book as well, because in the Netherlands (where I live) it also has been made clear that it didn't solve anything since women in prostitution still face lots of violence and dehumanization. I'd like to see in a couple of years that organizations picked up the goals written at the end of this book and see how they have worked and to be improved further from there.
