

Managing the Impact of the Caribbean Sex Trade on Tourism

Source: Charles Lewis

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By Charles Lewis

A newly formed NGO, Sex Trade Impact (STI) is calling on policy and decision makers in tourism sectors across the Caribbean to take a closer look at the phenomenal growth and size of the local, regional and international sex trade and the impact it has on the industry.

STI appears merely as a thought provoking initiative from the outset, but a closer look at its objectives brings to light the importance and need for public and private sector organizations to take steps to the minimize the impact of the global sex trade on their tourism economies.

Headed by its founder and president Charles Lewis, STI is based in Barbados. The organization was launched to offer facilitation, training and consultancy services to government agencies and private sector organizations to deal with issues stemming from the Sex Trade.

The organization's first initiative is to host a series of tourism seminars around the region, commencing with its October 15 debut in Barbados, which will feature speakers from numerous areas of interest, relevant to the cause of protecting investment from the negative impact of the Sex Trade.

These seminars are geared toward educating tourism officials, owners, directors and managers on the challenges brought about by an ever growing Global Sex Trade, magnified by the vulnerability of the region to this age old practice.

Lewis states "Regional policy and decision makers in all public and private sector organizations can no longer trivialize the impact of the sex trade. The lure of the rich lifestyle and making 'Big Money' is causing a dramatic increase in the number of people in the Caribbean becoming sex workers.

"The success of our tourism industry is also boosting the migration of foreign sex workers to our shores, in search of wealthy clients."

Lewis further states that, "In acknowledging their dependency on tourism, government officials, owners and managers can no longer pretend that the sex trade issues do not affect their establishments and the industry on the whole."

With 25 years in the Sex Industry under his belt, Lewis has for many years identified many of the problems which are usually overlooked or swept under the carpet. Left unmonitored these issues will continue to undermine years of tourism development.

The work of STI does not stop at tourism. The NGO is also focusing on the health issues and joins the fight against the spread of AIDS/HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

They are also developing initiatives to promote the destigmatization of sex workers and the protection of their human rights.

Lewis continues, "One of the aims of STI is to become an effective medium through which government

agencies and Sex Workers in the Caribbean can communicate to voice their concerns and resolve issues. More information on the objectives of Sex Trade Impact can be found on their website. www.sextradeimpact.com

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