

University of Rhode Island

From the Selected Works of Donna M. Hughes

August 14, 2009

Sex Radicals Target Rhode Island

Margaret Brooks, *Bridgewater State College*
Donna M. Hughes, Dr.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons CC BY-NC-ND International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).



Available at: https://works.bepress.com/donna_hughes/86/

International Sex Radicals Campaign to Keep Prostitution Decriminalized in Rhode Island

Part 1

Margaret Brooks and Donna M. Hughes*

Citizens Against Trafficking responds to the letter from 50 academics who support the status quo of decriminalized prostitution (indoors) in Rhode Island.

On July 31, 2009, a letter co-authored by Ronald Weitzer and Elizabeth Anne Wood and signed by 48 other “members of the academic community” was sent to the Rhode Island General Assembly opposing any bill banning prostitution indoors.

Citizens Against Trafficking has learned that their letter is not an isolated action, but part of a larger “Rhode Island Campaign.” Citizens Against Trafficking is working on a multi-part analysis of the authors and signers of the letter, the statements they make in the letter, and their campaign methods.

Part 1 focuses on initial discoveries made by Citizens Against Trafficking researchers about some of the authors and signers of the letter. We found shocking information about what they stand for and the goals of their international campaign. We will describe how members of this group are using sophisticated communications technologies to rapidly mobilize other sex radicals from around the world and how they are targeting Rhode Island legislators and media.

The leading signers of the letter call themselves “sex radicals,” meaning they oppose any limits on any sexual behavior as long as it has the superficial appearance of being consensual.

The signers of the letter say they are “members of the academic community.” The media quickly converted that into “50 professors.” In fact, quite a few are not full-time professors or administrators at these institutions; rather, some are adjunct faculty, graduate students, or retired. At least one signer seems to be an undergraduate.

A complete analysis of the assertions in their letter could be long and detailed—and well, quite academic. We will try to succinctly characterize what the sex radicals advocate and debunk their “happy hooker” claims. Because some of the things we found out are so beyond society’s norms, we have included footnotes with links so readers can verify what we found.

First of all, who are the signers of the letter and what do they stand for?

The first co-author is Ronald Weitzer, Professor of Sociology at George Washington University, a well known advocate of allowing prostitution indoors supposedly because indoor prostitutes are happier and healthier.¹ We will show the fallacies of his statements in more detail in a later Bulletin, but just briefly we'd like to point out that most victims of trafficking are kept indoors, where they are controlled by pimps or enforcers.

The second co-author of the letter is Elizabeth Anne Wood, Assistant Professor of Sociology at Nassau Community College, part of the State University of New York (SUNY). Wood runs keeps a web site "Sex in the Public Square" (<http://sexinthepublicsquare.org>) where she and other sex radicals discuss and "encourage more public displays of sexuality."

Here are some of Elizabeth Wood's views and practices that she posted about herself online:

- "I do think that sex with animals can be consensual ... I do not think that people who enjoy this should be stigmatized .. [these] kinds of sex acts ... can be done in ways that are relatively safe. I don't think the desire to do them is bad or wrong."²
- As moderator of Sex in the Public Square, Wood introduced a discussion of "Do kids need protection from sex or from sexually explicit material?" One of the discussants complains: "[I]f you're a parent, how can you raise sex-positive kids? ... Even if you ethically believe that your kids are ready to handle the details of mom and dad's BDSM [Bondage, Discipline, Sadism and Masochism] sex play, there's only so much that you can tell them before it triggers alarms at Child Protective Services and your kids wind up in a foster home and you wind up in police custody."³
- For years, Wood has struggled with feeling "invisible." During her sabbatical leave she started to feel "more like herself, more free," which led her to start acting out her latent exhibitionism. "During my sabbatical I had some ... exhibitionistic urges that I allowed myself to explore."⁴ Earlier this summer, she stripped on a dock and swam naked in the

¹ See Weitzer's op-ed in the *Providence Journal* "Some lurid prostitution myths debunked," June 19, 2009.

² See "About" Elizabeth Wood at <http://sexinthepublicsquare.wordpress.com/about>, July 17, 2007

³ See discussion introduced by Wood at <http://sexinthepublicsquare.org/node/82>, May 27, 2007

⁴ See Wood's discussion of "Professionalism, invisibility and exhibitionism" at <http://sexinthepublicsquare.org/node/403#comment-653>, September 16, 2007.

Mystic River, within sight of a restaurant and boats passing by. She said she wanted to declare her independence from society's rules, but she also wondered if anyone saw her and might complain.⁵ The exhibitionist's intention is to shock and force unsuspecting people to view their nudity. Citizens Against Trafficking wonders if the administration at SUNY is aware that one of their faculty members is crossing the line into sex offender territory.

- She believes that requirements for coverings while swimming are harmful to children's healthy development because they teach "shame" of the body.⁶
- In her blog, Wood says she practices BDSM (Bondage, Discipline, Sadism and Masochism).⁷

One of the most active members of the sex radicals' Rhode Island campaign, Michael Goodyear, says that they will be "predictably attacked as perverts and pedophiles."⁸ Ah ... well we'll let the reader be the judge of that.

Second, why are they interested in prostitution law in Rhode Island?

None of the letter signers lives or works in Rhode Island. They live in other states in the U.S. and other countries, including Canada, New Zealand, the Netherlands and Finland.

The sex radicals are targeting Rhode Island for their own extreme sexual libertarian agenda of preventing any legal limits on any sexual behavior.

The sex radicals are very worried that we might achieve a "moral victory."⁹ Yes. They refer to Rhode Island passing a law against prostitution as a moral victory for us---and they're opposed to that.

⁵ See "Swimming naked: A declaration of independence" at <http://networkedblogs.com/p6850872> , June 30, 2009

⁶ See "Swimming naked," cited above

⁷ See "About" Elizabeth Wood at <http://sexinthepublicsquare.wordpress.com/about>, July 17, 2007

⁸ See Michael Goodyear, "Rhode Island: The Next Step," <http://sexinthepublicsquare.org/MichaelsBlog/Rhode-Island-the-next-step> , August 9, 2009.

⁹ See Michael Goodyear, Comment to "An academic response to criminalizing prostitution in Rhode Island," <http://sexinthepublicsquare.org/ElizabetsBlog/an-academic-response-to-criminalizing-prostitution-in-rhode-island#comment-11958>, July 18, 2009

They are afraid that the decision in Rhode Island will set a precedent for other states and countries. “[I]ts significance is enormous in the debate over morality and law. ... We should not underestimate the symbolic function,” writes Michael Goodyear, one of the signers of the letter. The sex radicals are adamant about protecting legal prostitution in Nevada. “If Rhode Island joins the other 48 States in prohibiting the exchange of sex, the pressure on Nevada to conform will be considerable, and ... immediately appear in arguments to prohibit sexual exchange in other jurisdictions.”¹⁰

This explains why sex radicals from all over the U.S. and beyond are so concerned about our debate and likely passage of a law against prostitution. We have become the battle front for the sexual radicals and their agenda.

Third, the sex radicals have organized what they call the “Rhode Island Campaign”

The sex radicals have created a “Rhode Island Campaign.” One of their chief strategists is Michael Goodyear, an oncologist from Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia, Canada, with a side interest in “sex work.”

They say their letter from 50 academics is just the first phase of their “Rhode Island Campaign.” For now, they are satisfied with defending decriminalized prostitution indoors, but co-author Wood explains their future goal—decriminalizing outdoor prostitution as well.

“The letter does not explicitly call for the decriminalization of loitering (and in effect street prostitution) because it is intended to address the specific legal change that is on the table in Rhode Island. The need right now in Rhode Island is to resist a dangerous change in the law. *After that we can move on to affecting positive changes.*”¹¹

The sex radicals have now moved on to the second phase of their campaign; they are organizing a second letter, written by the same people, but to be presented as coming from “sex workers.”

Their international campaign is being orchestrated using Internet technologies, such as blogs, Twitter, and Facebook. They are “amplifying” their campaign by posting messages on network sites for sex-related blogs, such Carnal Nation and Courtesan Press, to encourage their radical allies to contact RI legislators and the media. Citizens Against Trafficking has heard that the

¹⁰ See link in Note 9

¹¹ See Elizabeth Wood, “An academic response to criminalizing prostitution in Rhode Island,” <http://sexinthepublicsquare.org/ElizabethsBlog/an-academic-response-to-criminalizing-prostitution-in-rhode-island>, July 20, 2009.

media and legislators are being bombarded by messages opposing any change in laws -- might this be the source?

These prostitution advocates are apparently seeking to make the entire state of Rhode Island a red-light district. Wood states in her blog that she believes "Hosting sexually oriented businesses on busy main streets in our own towns would be healthy for our communities and for the businesses."¹² The experience of the Bulmers after a spa-brothel moved in next door to their children's science center in Middletown contradicts this assertion.

The sex radicals think their letter has had a persuasive impact on Rhode Islanders' views. Citizens Against Trafficking thinks the letter has got an inordinate amount of attention considering what these sex radicals advocate and defend. Their supporters on the Mix Tapes for Hookers web site are planning a party in Providence for late September. They're inviting "hookers, strippers, rentboys, sex educators, porn stars, burlesque performers, dominatrices, go-go boys, and more." They say Rhode Island is the center of a national prostitution debate and we aren't even aware of it: "This is a small town and there's not a ton of notice."

Citizens Against Trafficking will continue to work for prostitution and trafficking laws that protect people from exploitation and prevent Rhode Island from becoming the sex radicals' capital. And because we love our animals we won't tolerate sexual abuse of animals either.

* Margaret Brooks is a resident of Warwick and Professor of Economics and Chair of the Economics Department at Bridgewater State College in Massachusetts. Donna M. Hughes is a resident of Wakefield and co-founder of Citizens Against Trafficking. She is a Professor and holds the Carlson Endowed Chair in Women's Studies at the University of Rhode Island.

¹² See Elizabeth Wood, "How (not) to close a strip club," <http://sexinthepublicsquare.wordpress.com/2006/06/29/how-to-close-a-strip-club>, June 29, 2006.