

AFRO e-newsletter (April 2011)

1 SEX INDUSTRY BIZ NEWS

Due to the development of information technology, multi-function mobile phones are now much more affordable and popular. There is no doubt that technology brings convenience. However, we must also be aware of crisis that may come along.

Recently we have heard from sex workers that some customers requested to make video calls before paying a visit. They claimed that they would pay for the calls later when they visited the sex workers. There are also customers who requested to take pictures with sex workers after using their services, saying that they would like to keep the "sweet memories" with them.

Making video calls or taking pictures may sound common. However, we would never know what the real purposes might be. We should exercise caution as videos and pictures can be quickly and widely spread throughout the internet.

According to Hong Kong Law, copyrights of pictures/photos/videos are usually owned by the photographers. Even if we unfortunately find that our pictures are widely spread, it may be very difficult for us to make a complaint.

How to protect ourselves?

We should always stay alert and be prepared to protect our privacy. We should:

1. try not to make video calls with customers
2. pay close attention and check if there is a camera hidden in the customer's pocket, bag or other belongings
3. be aware of the customer's mobile phone so as to avoid secret photo or video taking
4. not accept a customer's request for taking a picture as we won't know what he is going to do with it
5. wear a pair of sunglasses or other accessories to protect ourselves when taking pictures for online advertisements. Staffs of the websites usually claim that they would make the pictures blurred, however, it is known that there are software that can make the blurred pictures clear and disclose the identifies of the people pictured.

2 WORK REPORT

2.1 New AFRO Staff

Hello, everybody! My name is Ka Yi (KY). I am the new Assistant Programme Officer of AFRO. To me, the work of AFRO is really exciting and challenging. And I hope I can meet the various challenges, together with all fellow sisters and colleagues.

2.2 Meeting with the Crime Prevention Bureau

AFRO and other sex workers support groups' representatives went to the Police Headquarters on 20 April to attend a meeting with the Crime Prevention Bureau. Those who attended the meeting on behalf of the Bureau include a chief superintendent, a senior superintendent, a superintendent, a chief inspector and 2 senior inspectors.

Various issues were brought up at the meeting, such as how to deal with a robbery case, whether it would be advised to keep the suspect inside the room when waiting for the police to arrive at the scene etc. Some of the highlights are as follows:

Q: In case of a crime against a sex worker, such as a robbery, a rape or deceiving for free service, is it not possible to bring the offender to justice?

A: It is possible to bring the offender to justice. In this case, the sex worker should not clean up the crime scene. She/he should try her/his best to make note of the characteristics of the offender, such as his appearance, hair style, outfit and age etc, report the case to the police and assist the police in indentifying suspects.

She/he can also call for help from fellow sex workers.

Q: Is it illegal to keep the offender inside the room and not let him go before the police arrive at the scene?

A: The sex worker can prevent the offender from leaving. However, this can only be done when her/his safety is assured.

A sex worker working in karaoke club reported to AFRO that during a recent license check-up, a female police officer claimed that she suspected the sex worker of drug procession and inserted her fingers into the sex worker's vagina for a search. We are strongly against such an act and we reflected this case to the representatives of the Crime Prevention Bureau at the meeting.

The representatives of the Crime Prevention Bureau indicated that the mentioned female police officer might have violated regulations and advised the sex worker to file a complaint at the Complaints Against Police Office.

We consider the above-mentioned act a severe humiliation. Sex workers should be respected and protected as everyone else. We urge all sisters who have encountered police abuse to report the cases, so as to protect themselves and to save others from further harm. We are very much willing to offer assistance and support!

2.3 April Gathering - Birthday party and AFRO Club's 1st Anniversary

To celebrate the 1st Anniversary of AFRO Club, we have invited members to come and have a party together.

At the party, members were able to meet and get to know each other. It was also reiterated that AFRO Club is a platform for sex workers to get together, to raise issues that they concern, to voice out for sex worker's rights and protection, and to work towards decriminalization of sex work.

We welcome all fellow sisters to join AFRO Club as a member!

3 FUTURE WORK

3.1 Monthly tea gatherings

Topics for the forthcoming four months would be:

- Information on sexually transmitted diseases
- Information on evidence collection
- Summer outing
- Think Positive!

3.2 Daytime Volunteer Training

We are now recruiting daytime volunteer (2011). There will be 7 training sessions (5 on theory and 2 on practice).

Date: 10/6, 17/6, 24/6, 8/7, 15/7 (Friday, theory sessions) 18-29/7 (Any 2 afternoons on practice)

Time: 3-5pm

Venue: AFRO's Drop-in centre

Quota: 20

Training fee: \$200 (\$100 for full-time students)

For enquires and application, please contact 2770 1065.

4 AFRO NEWS READING

Now 'superheroes' step in to help protect prostitutes from the Craigslist killer

24th April 2011

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1379952/Now-superheroes-step-help-protect-prostitutes-Craigslist-killer.html>

Self-styled superheroes have offered their help in fighting the serial killer thought to be behind the murders of over a dozen prostitutes in New York City.

The New York Initiative (NYI) - a group of vigilantes who model themselves on comic book superheroes - have posted an advert on classified ads website Craigslist offering 'rescue teams' for hookers whose clients' turn violent.

NYI, who identify themselves as a group of 'martial arts trainers, security specialists, emergency first responders, drug counsellors, former military police and former law enforcement', are also offering free martial arts and weapons training to the women.

The murderer stalking New York - dubbed the Craiglist Killer because he targets women selling sex through Craigslist - is thought to be behind the deaths up to 13 prostitutes.

Most of the bodies so far found had been dumped in scrub land on the southern coast of Long Island, New York. All had been strangled and stuffed in burlap sacks.

According to their advert, NYI have offered their help to prostitutes because 'apparently the law doesn't respect your personal choices and that means cops are slower to follow through when it comes to you.'

The group is offering 'a number to call and a few one-number or one-word codes you can say or text to us so that we can contact someone to assist you with a possibly violent date.'

They add: 'We will react quickly and without hesitation every time, using our considerable contacts to the full extent of their reach.' And they promise not to involve the police unless there is a risk of 'serious danger'.

The New York Initiative patrol the streets of Brooklyn and Manhattan by night, attempting to deter crime.

Though they are loosely affiliated with the so-called Real Life Superheroes, unlike their more colourfully-dressed counterparts they tend not to wear masks and capes.

According to their website the group is composed of 11 members, with roles ranging from medic to combat specialist.

'Our primary goal will always be to help those in the most need to the highest ethical standard and to the maximum effect,' they say.

The 'Craigslist ripper' case started in December after the disappearance of 24-year-old Shannan Gilbert, a New Jersey prostitute who advertised on the site.

Although her body has not been found, the remains of 10 others have so far been uncovered with Maureen Brainard-Barnes, 25, Melissa Barthelemy, 24, Amber Lynn Costello, 27, and Megan Waterman, 22, the only identified victims so far.

Detectives have also investigated the possibility that the same serial killer may also be responsible for the deaths of four prostitutes in Atlantic City in 2006.

New York detectives have begun to piece together a picture of the Craigslist killer.

According to experts, the man police are looking for is a white male in his mid 20's to mid 40's, financially secure, well spoken and drives a nice car or truck.

Able to charm his victims into a false sense of security, he will also have access to burlap sacks as part of his job and will have been treated for poison ivy infections received as he disposed of the bodies in thick undergrowth.

Comment:

Although the killer is yet to be caught, it is thrilling to know that there are people who care for sex worker's safety and are willing to offer help.

AFRO's website: www.afro.org.hk

Email: afro@afro.org.hk

Tel: (852) 27701065

Fax: (852) 27701201