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**Human Rights Advocates Demand Law Enforcement Stop the Super Bowl Raids!**

Sex workers, allies and activists across Arizona are calling foul on Gov. Doug Ducey’s announcement of a statewide media campaign to fight sex trafficking in advance of Super Bowl LVII in Glendale this February.

The PR blitz bolsters a long-discredited myth: That the Super Bowl is a magnet for the sex trafficking of adults and children. Year after year, federal and local law enforcement use so-called ‘anti-trafficking’ campaigns as an excuse to round-up sex workers, primarily people of color, immigrants and the unhoused. Super Bowl raids destroy lives, forcing sex workers through the criminal justice system for a publicity stunt, while failing to “rescue” the hordes of victims they claim exist and wasting millions of dollars, that are desperately needed for real problems in our state.

“An arrest for prostitution can be life-ruining, limiting educational and work opportunities and separating families, sometimes permanently. It can also be deadly,” said Juliana Piccillo. “Marsha Powell died in Perryville prison in 2009 after being left outside for hours on a 108-degree day while serving a 27-month sentence for prostitution. The Maricopa County Attorney’s Office declined to prosecute any of the 16 Arizona Department of Corrections officers that were responsible.”

Statistics just don’t support the governor’s contention that human trafficking is “pervasive” in Arizona. The FBI’s human trafficking numbers for 2020 show that Arizona law enforcement agencies reported 28 trafficking offenses involving forced commercial sex acts, with zero cases involving labor trafficking. Compare this to more than 3,200 reported rapes in Arizona for the same year.

“Data shows that every day in Arizona, more than five people die from opioid overdoses, and the state has no sense of urgency, said Arlene Mahoney, Executive Director at Southwest Recovery Alliance (SWRA). “Yet, here is this unfounded myth about sex trafficking during the super

bowl, and resources are allocated to increase policing folks that already exist at the margins of society due to the criminalization of sex work. Those resources are needed for public health crises affecting our community. They can dress it up, using the guise of sex trafficking, but once again, bodily autonomy is being criminalized.”

A 2021 report from the USC Gould School of Law’s International Human Rights Clinic [strongly advocates against raids](#), calling them “ineffective” against trafficking and “traumatizing” to sex workers, predominantly women of color.

We are asking the media to refuse to be complicit in this annual ritual, and to speak to sex workers who are being rounded up, harassed and criminalized in order to provide positive headlines for the police.

SEE WHO ELSE AGREES:

*“No data actually supports the notion that increased sex trafficking accompanies the Super Bowl... Whether the game is in Dallas, Indianapolis or New Orleans, the pattern is the same: Each Super Bowl host state forms a trafficking task force to “respond” to the issue; the task force issues a foreboding statement; the National Football League pledges to work with local law enforcement to address trafficking; and news conference after news conference is held. The actual number of traffickers investigated or prosecuted hovers around zero.”*

— Kate Mogulescu, founder the Trafficking Victims Advocacy Project at the Legal Aid Society, [New York Times](#).

*“...despite massive media attention, law enforcement measures and efforts by prostitution abolitionist groups, there is no empirical evidence that trafficking for prostitution increases around large sporting events.”*

— [The Global Alliance Against Trafficking In Women](#)

*“This is urban legend that is pure pulp fiction.”*

— NFL spokesperson [Brian McCarthy](#)

*“After reviewing the available academic research, we concluded that ‘Super Bowl sex trafficking’ as reported in the news media is not empirically supported.”*

— [Anti-Trafficking Review](#)

*“The Super Bowl is often referred to as the single largest human trafficking incident in the United States. This simply isn’t true.”*

— [Safe Horizon](#)

*“[The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children] said the Super Bowl likely doesn’t attract more sex traffickers than any other large event. What’s more, is also concedes there is no way to quantify the problem.”*

— [Super Bowl Prostitution Forecast Has No Proof](#) (WFAA)