

Red Umbrella Day (RUD)

sex workers contribute to the event

This is my third year attending Red Umbrella Day, and also my third year speaking. For me, it really is a privilege to be asked to stand up here and say a few words about this important day.

I'd like to share a quick story with you, a little off topic, but I will bring it back to the whole idea of Red Umbrella Day.

A few months ago I was discussing with a friend the other week about things like London having CCTV cameras everywhere and the whole concept of "Big Brother" watching. I made the comment of "Well if you are not doing anything wrong why should it really matter if people watch your every move?"

It was there that my friend stopped me and made a point that really hit home. Regardless of whether I am doing right or wrong, what I should be concerned about, is the invasion of my privacy.

One of the most fundamental of human rights is a right to privacy, and in saying what I did, I was basically giving my right to privacy away, without a fight, just handing it over.

So this story got me thinking about today. Everyone has the right to feel safe and be safe. In saying this, I can also say that everyone has a right to expect not to have to put up with violence in any form.

Unfortunately, as sex workers, society tends to give that right away. How often do you hear "Well, she is a prostitute, what did she expect?"

I would like to think she would have expected to be safe. Still be wary and on guard as we know bad things do happen, but still have faith in this essential human right.

So it is days like today that brings awareness to this issue. Today is the International day to stop violence against sex workers.



It doesn't matter what someone does for a living, a prostitute or not, no one should ever have to be a victim of violence, and never should it be acceptable.

If we can use today to raise awareness and change peoples' ways of thinking and change the phrase "she is a prostitute, what did she expect", then we can make a real effort to make the sex industry a safer place to work.

One main way to make it safe is to make prostitution on the street legal and this year coming is going to be a big year for that. I don't know details but I do know that movement is being made towards this.

Until then, let's make an effort to look out for ourselves and our co-workers, the girls you work next to on the street, or if you're someone who lives locally, look out for the girl you might walk past each day.

And always remember:
 "You have the right to feel safe and be safe"
 Keep hold of that right.
 Have faith in that right and never let anyone try to take that right from you.

Clare