

Felicia's story

My name is Felicia. I'm 39 years old. I come from Limpopo Province, a place called Libode. I finished my matric in 1990 and I didn't get bursaries. I am the elder daughter with two siblings and one handsome son. My mother and father got divorced. In that situation I moved to Jo'burg looking for a better life or greener pastures. Because my plan was to get a job and to go to the university to study.

So I phoned my former schoolmate while I was in Libode and told her that I'm not working and want to come to Jo'burg. She said I must come and stay with her. I was very scared when I arrived in Jo'burg because Jozi is the home of crime. I stayed with my friend in a flat for almost six months in Hilbrow. And life was so difficult for me b'coz I was scared to go to town to look for a job in shops and factories.

For six months I was looking for jobs in the shops and factories but with no luck. During this time I survived or I was supported by my former schoolmate/friend but I didn't know what kind of job she was doing. But in the evening she packed her mini skirt [isgcebhezane], wore wigs and make-up, and only coming back in the morning the next day. In the meantime I would be left in the flat all by myself.

I suspected that there was something going on. So I ended up asking her what's her real job was. She asked if she can trust me and I she told me it's supposed to be confidential. It must be between me and her. She told me that she is a sex-worker. She sells her body b'coz she didn't find jobs in Jo'burg. She asked me to join her. I didn't have a choice, I also didn't find any.

My first day at work was so difficult b'coz we were working on the streets of Jozi where I'm afraid of. Other clients were so cruel and I ended u lost. But with the like of God I was saved by other girls from the streets who showed me the place to relax.

My biggest problem during sex work is; other clients want to take you to their places while u are at their places, they take you without giving u money or refuse to use condoms. Others beat you for nothing-others call their friends to rape you b'coz u are a sex worker. They say you deserve to be raped. They think sex workers are not human.

My biggest problem with the law and the police; I will start with the law; I think it will be better for us if they decriminalize sex work b'coz it's our job, we don't kill anyone when we are selling our bodies, we're supporting our families. We don't break the law like criminals. It is our way of living. Police; Police are crooks. We're better than them. We don't break the law. They need to be trained to work with sex workers when it is decriminalized. They are the ones who are supposed to support us not to abuse us. But as I know my rights, if they harass me, I laid the charges for them b'coz every person got rights no matter which job you are doing.

I think the best way to solve this would be to organize workshops and meetings with their seniors to talk with the not harass and abuse sex workers and their clients. I believe that the laws on sex work should say/state: They decriminalize sex work as I said last that it is our job, we support our families, we are not bread winners at home.

Forward with the Decriminalization of Sex. VIVA SEX WORKERS VIVA.