



SCHOLARS
STRATEGY NETWORK

As the Super Bowl Approaches, Anti-Trafficking Organizations Do More Harm Than Good

Victoria Nelle McMahan-Parra, University of Nevada-Las Vegas

This year, Las Vegas is leaning into major sporting events. Not long after hosting the first Formula One race, our city is preparing for Super Bowl LVIII. And with these major sporting events, draconian rhetoric around sex trafficking is taking over Sin City. Shrouded in language around protecting women and children, the actual victims will be sex workers just trying to make a living.

In the shadow of major sporting events such as the Super Bowl, a surge in anti-sex trafficking rhetoric is obscuring a critical truth: the ineffectiveness of these initiatives. Despite the millions of dollars pouring into anti-trafficking organizations annually, a troubling disconnect emerges — it is not clear that funding is directly reaching survivors and victims, and instead these campaigns push racist, classist stereotypes about sex trafficking survivors.

This misdirection of resources highlights a fundamental flaw in these organizations' operations. They are less about providing tangible aid to survivors and more about leveraging survivors' pain for financial gain and political influence.