

This recording is an interview with sex worker and former New Westminster resident, Susan Davis. The major themes discussed are sex work, activism, safety, transgender, clients, the Internet, New Westminster, and Vancouver

Interviewers: Andrea Walisser and Leigha Smith

Date: 10 September 2013

Date Range: 1986 – 2013

Sound Recording Length: 1:16:57

In 1986, Susan Davis, at the age of nineteen, decided to become a sex worker, the economy in Nova Scotia was in a slump, and she found that sex work was a good option for her to make money. After dislocating her shoulder by slipping on ice going to an out-call, Davis worked for a drug dealer, which eventually landed her in prison. After being released from prison she wanted to leave Nova Scotia. She briefly lived in Toronto and Montreal, but finally settled in Vancouver because it was near the ocean. She resumed her sex work career in Vancouver and lived in Burnaby. She soon realized that her pimp was becoming oppressive, so Davis moved in with a friend who lived on 4th Avenue in New Westminster. Like many other sex workers in New Westminster, Davis hitchhiked along 12th Street looking for sex buyers. Eventually, Davis relocated to the Metrotown area of Burnaby, but returned to New Westminster after she got married. Today, Davis is still a sex worker and also operates a butcher shop with her partner in Vancouver. She is a member of the City of Vancouver Sex Trade Task Force and is a social justice advocate critical of the ways government and police have dealt with the sex work industry. Her main focuses are on the decriminalization of sex work and the need for increased safety for sex workers.

Section 0:00 – 18:29

- In this portion of the recording Davis provides background information on how she first entered the sex work industry, recalling the night she injured herself going to an out call and how that incident led to a series of events which eventually landed her in jail for drug possession. She discusses why she left Nova Scotia, how she eventually settled in British Columbia, and describes the logistics of doing sex work, and asserts that the discourses of trafficking have actually made the sex work industry more dangerous for sex workers within the Lower Mainland.

Section 18:30: – 45:02

- In this portion of the recording Davis discusses her experience as a sex worker in New Westminster, the sex work industry in New Westminster and how the City's approach to sex work has shifted over time. She describes the demographic of her clients when she worked in New Westminster. Davis also describes occupational health and safety issues for sex workers, the changes in how this information has been transmitted among sex workers, and the health risks that sex workers currently face.

Section 45:03 – 55:52

- In this portion of the recording Davis discusses her typical workday, emphasizing how it varies depending on the type client, and how being a sex worker has increased her understanding of men and the pressures they experience in society.

Section 55:53 – 1:16:57

- In this portion of the recording Davis describes the dangers that sex workers face, especially for transgendered individuals. She discusses her activism and the campaigns that she waged to improve safety for sex workers and to decriminalize sex work. Davis also expresses her views on how the Internet has affected the sex work industry, in particular the safety of sex workers and sex buyers. Lastly, Davis finishes the interview explaining why the labour aspect of sex work is important to her and that she believes the sex industry within the Lower Mainland needs establish industry standards.