

Last updated: **Tuesday, February 7, 2006, 2:08 AM EST**

Search

GIVE FEEDBACK



Advanced Search

Front Page

News

Sports

Editorial

Columns

Letters

Lifestyle

Western News

Contact Us

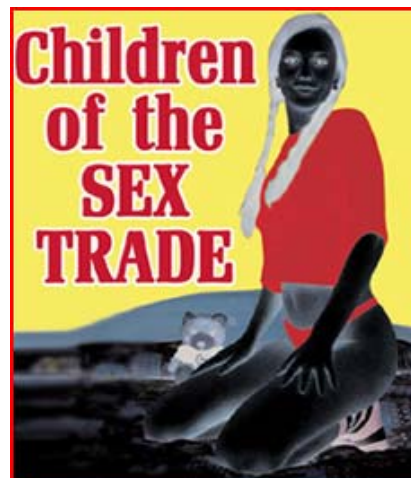
News

The children of Jamaica's sex trade

Observer Reporter
Sunday, June 26, 2005

She's 17 and she became a 'masseuse' almost two years ago when pregnancy forced her to drop out of one of Kingston's more prestigious girls high schools.

Now, she is just one of the many young girls that work in the commercial sex trade.



"I used to go to Queens High School and I got pregnant two months before I graduated," the teenager told an undercover Sunday Observer reporter.

"My parents put me out, and after the baby born my friend told me about the massage parlour."

The petite teenager is a pro now, with a blood-red business card, a home of her own and a job in an upper middle-class community in Constant Spring,

editorial cartoon



Lifestyle

[Galaxy of stars on board for Soul Train 20](#)

[Abijah headlines multimedia show](#)

[Blues on the Green returns](#)

poll

Who do you think should become the new president of the PNP?

- ☐ Karl Blythe
- ☐ Omar Davies
- ☐ Peter Phillips
- ☐ Portia Simpson

Cast Your Vote

[View Results](#)



Kingston.



A teenager who engages in the sex trade.

"The money is good, that is why I do it," she said, explaining that she can make up to \$20,000 a week by selling her body. That's after she gives her boss a cut.

"I live in a nice apartment and my child is being looked after," she said.

The young girl became a little cagey when asked if her employer knows her age, but after a few seconds she said, "I told them I was 20, but they never ask for my birth certificate."

Lisa Scott, a 19-year-old from Westmoreland, now 'works' out of Trelawny.

There was simply too much competition in Negril when it came to her particular line of work - exotic dancing with a fair amount of prostitution thrown in for good measure. She moved to Trelawny about a year ago and now she dances on weekends at a popular go-go club, not too far from Wakefield.

But every Thursday Lisa and many other "dancers" go back to a club in Culloden, Westmoreland, where club operators meet to select dancers for the weekend.

The businessmen have to pay a \$200 fee to the operator of the facility before they are allowed to select the dancers of their choice.

Baldwin King, who runs a club in Trelawny, is among those who make the weekly trek to Culloden to select dancers.

"There are usually more than 100 girls available, and they come from all over the island," King said.



"The girls - some of them as young as 17 - are usually well dressed-up and they are demanding at least

\$1,000 plus food and accommodation to dance for one night," he added.

Blaine, the degree of young children coming into the sex trade is at an all-time high

Lisa, a high school drop-out, charges \$1,200 to dance nightly. Her income is supplemented by "doing business" with several men who visit the club regularly and find her attractive. Some customers buy her drinks and cigarettes.

Up to two years ago, she was unemployed and could not afford to pay her bills.

Now, she says, she earns enough to take care of her monthly expenses and she is able to put a little money in the bank.

Hoping to earn enough money to live comfortably, Lisa says she has no immediate plans to leave the oldest profession on earth.

Like the former Queens High student, Lisa is one of many children - girls and boys - who sell their bodies in massage parlours, nightclubs, or some simply walk the streets even though prostitution, carnal abuse and employing a minor are all illegal.

"A lot of people know about it, we know that underage children are being lured into nightclubs as go-go dancers," said Betty Anne Blaine, a member of a team called People's Action for Community Transformation (PACT) which, for the last 12 months, has been doing USAID-commissioned research on trafficking in persons in Jamaica.

Earlier this month, the US State Department tagged Jamaica as a transit point for illegal migrants moving to the US and Canada and claimed that Jamaican children were being trafficked internally for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

While they have not yet found any evidence of trafficking (which is defined internationally as a combination of recruitment, movement and exploitation), PACT researchers have uncovered other worrying anecdotal information, Blaine said.

"A lot of young girls are being lured into the sex trade and what we are seeing is that the sex trade is definitely a gateway to trafficking," she told the Sunday Observer. "The degree of young children coming into the sex trade is at an all-time high and this must make us uncomfortable in Jamaica."

In a study on child prostitution in Jamaica, published by the International Labour Office in 2000, it was

estimated that more than 100 girls were working as go-go dancers in clubs in Montego Bay. Fresh data is now being collected by PACT.

The ILO report had warned of an islandwide problem of children engaged in prostitution.

"In Montego Bay, 20 girls and 10 boys between 10 and 18 years from several inner-city communities were identified as being involved in sexual activity for gain on a large scale," said the report prepared by Leith Dunn and her team.

"They are organised in groups, an adult is usually in charge of the younger ones but they work independently of each other."

These young sex workers, the report said, could be seen along the Gloucester Avenue Hip Strip and the beach, popular tourist spots.

Dunn and her team also cited examples of groups of young girls, between 13 and 18, working in the tough inner-city community of Canterbury; and boys between 10 and 16 who had sex with men at the UDC-owned Dump Up Beach.

Beaches, the Norman Manley Boulevard, West End Road and the community of Lime Tree Lane in West End were all identified as popular pick-up spots in Negril.

The cruise ship pier in Ocho Rios is also a popular spot, based on Sunday Observer investigations last week.

Over the last few years, massage parlours that have sprung up across the island have become increasingly popular venues for those who want to dabble in prostitution. Last Wednesday night, a steady stream of customers were seen trudging in and out of some of these establishments in Kingston and all the parking lots were full.

Men were by far the biggest customers but some women were also seen going into these massage parlours. According to the former Queens High student, some of her clients include police officers and politicians. The Sunday Observer was unable to verify her claim.

"What is happening is that 'people in high places' are running these clubs, they know about what is happening, and it's all a big cover-up," Blaine said.

"It must be that 'big people' know what's going on and are involved, because these clubs flourish. Don't we have laws so that we can lock them down? Why

aren't we enforcing the laws? Somebody has to answer that question," she added.

Meanwhile, young girls like the former Queens High student get on with their 'jobs'.

For new clients, she lists her 'skills' and prices using well-rehearsed lines. It cost \$1,800 an hour just to get into a room with the petite teenager. Any, and everything, else is extra.

A request for "conversation only" did not seem to deter her; she has had stranger requests.

"My clients do all type of freaky things so I can do anything you want," she said.

Life has been better for her and her child since she got involved in the sex trade, she explained.

"Men pay good money for sex. Five grand for oral sex either way," she said, with just a tinge of what sounded like pride.

Some of her clients include lesbians and men with sexual fetishes, she said matter-of-factly.

"Men ask you to do freaky things, like beat them with leather belts. Each customer is different and we learn to tickle their fancy," she said.

The teenager also provides escort services and will visit clients outside the parlour, but that costs extra. She doesn't intend to be just another 'masseuse' for long.

"I am planning to go back to school and build upon the four subjects I passed at school. I want to do business management and open the best massage parlour in Jamaica," she said.

Staff reporters Karyl Walker and Mark Cummings contributed to this story

Talk Back

Related Articles

No comments have been posted

No related articles were found

[Post your comments](#)

[Back to Top](#)

[News](#) | [Sports](#) | [Editorial](#) | [Columns](#) | [Lifestyle](#) | [Western News](#) | [All Woman](#) | [2004 Olympics](#) | [TeenAge](#) | [Education](#) | [Food](#) | [Business](#) | [Health](#)

[Copyright](#)© 2000-2001 Jamaica Observer. All Rights Reserved. Terms under