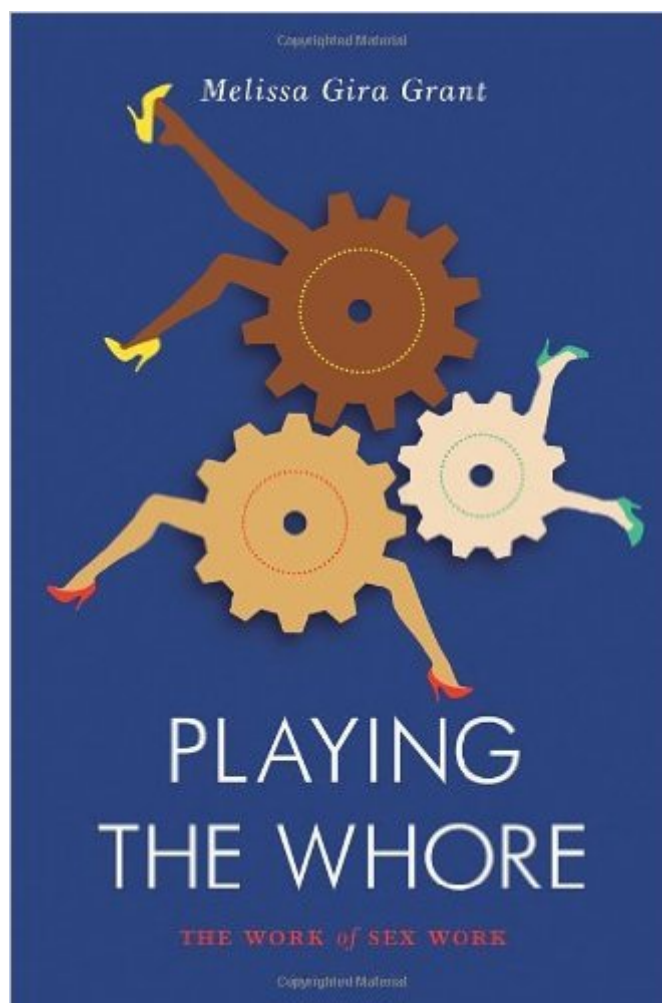


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# Playing The Whore: The Work Of Sex Work (Jacobin)



## Synopsis

Recent years have seen a panic over “online red-light” districts, which supposedly seduce vulnerable young women into a life of degradation, and New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof’s live tweeting of a Cambodian brothel raid. But rarely do these fearful, salacious dispatches come from sex workers themselves, and rarely do they deviate from the position that sex workers must be rescued from their condition, and the industry simply abolished – a position common among feminists and conservatives alike. In *Playing the Whore*, journalist Melissa Gira Grant turns these pieties on their head, arguing for an overhaul in the way we think about sex work. Based on ten years of writing and reporting on the sex trade, and grounded in her experience as an organizer, advocate, and former sex worker, *Playing the Whore* dismantles pervasive myths about sex work, criticizes both conditions within the sex industry and its criminalization, and argues that separating sex work from the “legitimate” economy only harms those who perform sexual labor. In *Playing the Whore*, sex workers’ demands, too long relegated to the margins, take center stage: sex work is work, and sex workers’ rights are human rights.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“*Playing the Whore*” by Melissa Gira Grant is among the very best feminist books I’ve read. Ms. Grant is an accomplished author who articulates labor’s struggles in the sex industry as few

have done before. This powerful book is certain to reenergize feminism by giving voice to the women who have been marginalized and exploited for too long. Ms. Grant reminds us that for a short while, sex workers participated in feminism's first wave when talk of capitalist exploitation was on the table. Ms. Grant excoriates the second wave feminist movement for its elitist, postmodern fixation on appearances and its spineless decision to sweep sex work under the rug. Ms. Grant might be thought of as a third wave feminist who, as a product of the information age, is unafraid to move the discussion forward by talking in an open, constructive and unapologetic manner about the role of sex work in the economy. Ms. Grant is very effective at highlighting the contradictions of punitive U.S. policing policies that unnecessarily compounds the misery of working women. Ms. Grant's work suggests that if we aim to challenge the worst aspects of patriarchy including its complicity in misogyny, we should start with challenging the unjust laws that only serve to make women more vulnerable to male predation. I also liked how Ms. Grant blasts the self-appointed saviors who seem more intent on buttressing their own credentials than improving the lives of women. Ms. Grant correctly sees these fund raising efforts as an exploitation of sex workers by another means. Instead of sensationalism and salaciousness, what we need is a honest discussion about what can be done to improve the conditions of a trade that is as old as human history. Ms.

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