

Letters to the Editor

Re: "Sexual Tourism" by Ce'Ara Cannon

Thank you for informing readers of the rise of sexual exploitation in Costa Rica resulting from the growing sex tourism industry. It is true that prostitution is legal in Costa Rica, but that many of the activities surrounding the industry, such as child prostitution and human trafficking, are illegal. The United Nations, the Costa Rican government under President Solís, and international organizations such as the Walk Free Foundation are highlighting these issues, but the problem persists.

I would, however, like to make several observations about your article. First, while sex tourism is indeed on the rise in this country - Interpol recently named Costa Rica the fastest-growing capital for sex tourism in Latin America - it is also true that Costa Rica is not the only country in the region with such an industry. Honduras, Paraguay, Venezuela, Guatemala and Brazil, where there was great concern regarding the number of sex tourists who traveled to the country for the World Cup this summer, all have thriving industries.

Sexual exploitation and human trafficking occur north of the border as well. While the PROTECT Act made it illegal in 2003 for U.S. citizens to travel to another country to have sex with a minor, it is estimated that 80% of sex tourists in Costa Rica hold a US passport, and that many of the trafficked persons from Costa Rica end up in the United States or Canada.

The Walk Free Foundation estimated that 57,000-63,000 people were enslaved in the United States last year, largely (but not solely) from sexual exploitation, including an increasing number of children. Meanwhile, Canada's slavery index stood at an estimated 5,800 people.

I wonder why you chose to focus on Costa Rica rather than discuss increased sexual exploitation and human trafficking throughout the continent, in the United States or specifically in North Carolina.

You mention that prostitution is illegal in "most countries." This, too, is an accurate statement, as the number of countries where prostitution is illegal (109) does just outnumber the 93 countries in which prostitution is legal, regulated, or where no laws exist. It is interesting to note, however, that prostitution is legal or regulated in every country on the American continent except four: French Guiana, Suriname, Guyana, and the United States (minus Nevada).

It should also be pointed out that Costa Rica is not unique in having transgender prostitutes working (or being forced into work) within the country. In Nevada, male, female and transgender sex workers can be found. In the Philippines, it is estimated that 70% of transgender youth have been forced into prostitution.

As a side note, while Costa Ricans are tradi-

tionally socially conservative (Article 75 of the constitution states "Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Religion" as the "official religion of the Republic"), much progress had been made in recent years concerning LGBT rights. In May of this year, President Solís defended his decision to raise a rainbow flag above the Presidential House for International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia by saying, "This is the house of all Costa Ricans. When we say all Costa Ricans we mean all, without exclusion, without violence, without harassment in absolute respect for the rights of each one."

I want to thank you again for raising these important issues. I want to caution, however, that we also look at the issue of sexual exploitation in our own backyard before framing it as an issue of "the other."

Best wishes, and keep up the good work with The Clarion

Adam Beeson

Cannon spent a semester in Costa Rica as a part of her minor in Spanish. This topic was not chosen randomly, but as a carefully constructed response to personal observations and information that she likely gleaned during her months abroad.

Compliments on 'The Williams Effect'

I would like to compliment you on the informative and thought provoking article you wrote about Robin Williams and depression in The Clarion. Not only was the subject matter clearly stated, well integrated, and very relevant, but you also used figures of speech and the language exceptionally well. I majored in English at college and was an FBI hostage negotiator. The former helped me to appreciate how well the article was written; the latter how appropriate the subject matter.

Stan Jacobsen

Director of Safety, Security, and Risk Management
Brevard College

Chaplain offers spiritual support to those struggling with loneliness, depression

Thank you for "The Williams Effect: A Belated Funeral Song," an excellent article addressing a very important subject. Loneliness and depression are complex conditions, and quite often include a spiritual dimension; so may I call attention to an additional BC resource for students, staff or faculty

facing these problems? Yours truly, the College Minister. I offer a listening ear and a hope-filled heart, as one who has weathered both loneliness and depression myself and has found solace, courage and life through my faith. My office is located (quite fittingly) in the Stamey Wellness Center. I welcome drop-ins (Mondays and Wednesdays), and appointments. My email address is: mad-duxcl@brevard.edu.

Rev. Christine Maddux

Editor's Note:

Thank you all for your responses. It is exciting to know that readers have been inspired to contact us regarding our articles, and we hope that you will continue to do so.

We do, however, request that you speak with the editors, rather than the student, if you have questions or concerns about a story. Furthermore, if you would like to air a personal dispute, please e-mail me at fohnerkj@brevard.edu. We formally request that you do not contact writers directly about their articles, as the content published in this newspaper is the responsibility of the editorial staff.

I appreciate your consideration.

Kara Fohner

THE CLARION

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