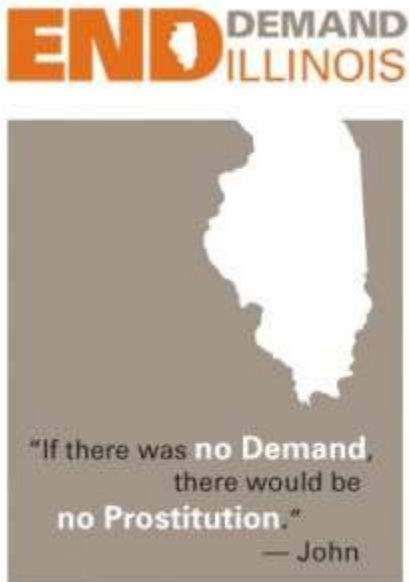


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[A Tale of Two Women and Two Men](#)

by Ambassador Mark P. Lagon



CHICAGO – This week I was in Chicago for the launch of the [End Demand Initiative](#) (EDI), a coalition effort Polaris Project is supporting. Led by the indefatigable and innovative [Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation](#) (CAASE), this initiative stands to test in Illinois a model which could be a vanguard effort for the whole country.

EDI proposes to do two basic things: punish buyers of commercial sex where they haven't been, and not punishing prostituted people where they have been.

Thursday's events orbited around striking statements of two important women, and two rather interesting men.

Catharine MacKinnon, keynote speaker and legal scholar, spoke to a teeming crowd of more than 200 EDI coalition members, including youth activists survivors, and law enforcement. She framed a tremendous case for how prostituted females don't exercise the choice or "agency" so blithely assumed by society.

Following the EDI public forum, another leading light in the feminist firmament endorsed the initiative wholeheartedly. The [Chicago Foundation for Women](#) has funded CAASE since it's inception. A dynamic 75-year-old Gloria Steinem addressed a crowd of 2000 as the honored speaker of the CFW's 24th Annual Gala. She endorsed the initiative as an example of the model that can and must sweep the country.

It was quite a day to sit down and listen to these twin titans of the last half-century's movement for gender equality.

But I have to say I was especially encouraged by the example of two men standing up for peddled and battered women. We need more men like them to stand up for feminism and for female human trafficking victims in particular.

The first is Tom Dart, Sheriff of Cook County. He's created an approach to divert prostituted females to social services and to attack the demand from the johns. He recently [launched a lawsuit against craigslist](#) for this exact purpose: to attack demand on the new frontier of the decidedly-not-benign sex trade.

Dart stressed that the laws on the books to punish prostituted females are "horrible and dysfunctional." The Sheriff said disarmingly, even with press present, "So by and large I try to ignore the law." By this frank quip he explained he meant that the law must be applied to punish johns, but he can't in good conscience arrest and jail prostituted people.

Dart has formed integrated teams of law enforcement and survivors of prostitution to help the prostituted people they find and refer them to social services. Appealing also to fiscal pragmatism, he says money will be saved by focusing spending on social services rather than endless cycles of arresting and releasing prostituted people.

Equally striking was Ernest Brown, the soft-spoken man who is Chief of the Organized Crime unit of the Chicago police. He is determined to seek ways to get evidence on pimps, a number of whom are also traffickers, by ways that do not involve punishing prostituted people or conditioning their receipt of social services on giving evidence. On a side conversation, he told me he wants to do the "homework" in investigations in order to have first-hand evidence on the pimps and traffickers that doesn't rely solely on obtaining secondhand accounts from traumatized females threatened by those very perpetrators.

Dart and Brown are impressive. They are law enforcement leaders who really "get it." They get that selling females and demand from commercial sex buyers enables human trafficking. They are both modest and unassuming; neither has a hero complex.

And it's good to see men step up.

[Illinois is the epicenter of innovation](#) to fight commercial sexual exploitation in America. I've seen that all the successes in the anti-trafficking movement have involved broad, disparate coalitions. CAASE is a very special outfit which has a knack for building trust among allies — including two outstanding men in law enforcement. Catharine MacKinnon and Gloria Steinem, and more importantly the 16,000 prostituted regularly in Chicago *, are lucky to have those guys on their side.

*according to DePaul law scholar Jody Raphael