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A Brief History of Prostitution

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A Brief History of Prostitution

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According to the British television show *Secret Diary of a Call Girl*, 4 percent of the residents of New York -- an estimated populous of 250,000 -- were working as prostitutes in 1831. The trade flourished from there, but in 1875, the U.S. government took a sterner stance on the profession and passed the Page Act of 1875, a federal law that outlawed the practice of importing women into the country for the purpose of prostitution.

By 1910, the U.S. government estimated that 1 out of every 50 American women were working as prostitutes. Perhaps that number influenced lawmakers to pass the Mann Act that same year. The federal law was against "prostitution or debauchery, or for any other immoral purpose." According to prostitution.procon.org, the law dealt with forced prostitution as well as harboring or transporting immigrant prostitutes across state lines.

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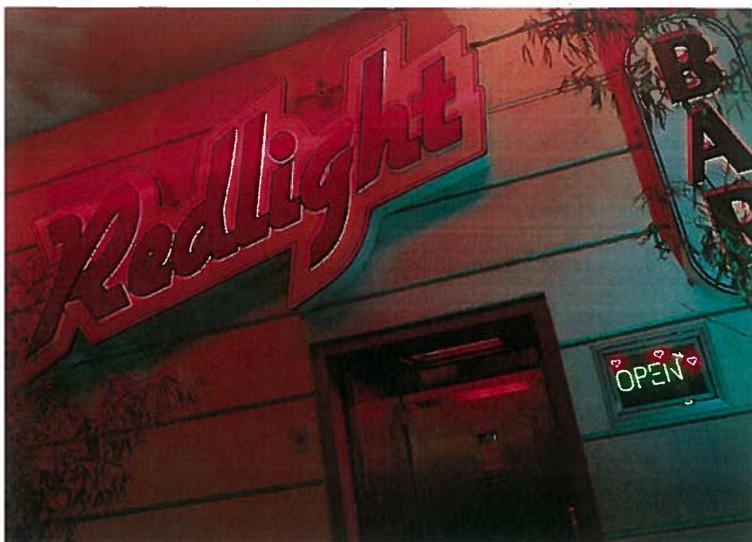
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In 2009, Norway made prostitution illegal. That same year, Taiwan took a completely different tack and legalized the business, according to prostitution.procon.org.

Most recently, in September 2010, an Ontario, Canada, court struck down several provisions within the country's anti-prostitution laws, CTV News reported. The practice was not illegal in that country, but the laws in place made nearly everything related to prostitution, including operation of brothels, a crime. The government is now attempting to enact new laws in an effort to keep the country from becoming a destination for sex tourists.

While prostitution is illegal in nearly every U.S. state, the practice continues today. According to Associated Content, citing data from *Secret Diary of a Call Girl*, nearly \$14.5 billion dollars is spent on prostitution every year and more than \$23 million a year is spent enforcing prostitution laws.

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