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Victims' Advocate

A free newspaper supporting victim's rights published monthly by The Justice Coalition. The opinions of contributing writers are not necessarily those of the Justice Coalition's Victims' Advocate or the Justice Coalition. The Justice Coalition's Victims' Advocate welcomes both editorial and photographic submission, but they cannot be returned. Please allow six weeks for a response to submitted works. Calendar information is welcome but must be submitted one month in advance of the event.

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Mixed messages about sex sent to young girls



Answers from Janie

by Janie Simpson, L.C.S.W.

A comment I've heard frequently since the Super Bowl halftime show is, "Those dancers were dressed like streetwalkers!" That word is just one of many we use for prostitutes. Others are call girls, harlots, whores and ladies of the night.

In America there are opposing and confused views of prostitution. On one hand, it is still considered a crime to solicit for sex. We look down on people who are willing to sell their bodies for someone's sexual gratification. On the other hand, we glamorize prostitution in music, movies and musicals – even as far back as big-hearted Belle in *Gone With the Wind* or Miss Mona in *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*. In those movies, the prostitutes are portrayed as generous, rich and wise.

The shock and outrage over the Super Bowl halftime show is a perfect example of our confused perspective. MTV is not new. The show was no more than what is shown daily on MTV.

Girls dressed like "streetwalkers" are on prime time television every day. In fact, you can sit in a mall on a Saturday afternoon and see how girls and young women are dressing. Women dressed like prostitutes and simulating sex acts as they danced during the halftime show should not have been a surprise to any of us. Janet Jackson and Justin Timberlake's exploitive performance was standard operating procedure for them.

Another example of a confused message to young women is that their value lies in their sexuality. At local high schools, girls receive unwanted sexual touches, but do not tell because they will be teased or ridiculed. In fact, boys are getting the idea that it is cool to do a pelvic thrust on a girl. Girls accept this disrespectful and shallow

treatment because they want attention and acceptance.

Prostitution is the extreme equation of value with sexuality. When a woman accepts money for a sex act, that is all she believes she has to offer. In reality, it is not glamorous at all; it is desperation.

One afternoon as I sat in an office for about an hour waiting to conduct some business, I noticed a young woman about 20 years old outside on the busy street. In that hour she was picked up three times by different men. In about 15 minutes, she was back on the street. As I left the business, she was being picked up again. She had a dead expression on her face; she looked empty, desperate and alone.

I wondered how she came to believe that sex was all she had to offer in order to receive the reward of money.

It is a confusing message we are sending to young women and men, the consequences of which are often desperation and emptiness.

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