

RENTBOY.COM RAIDS WILL IMPACT THE SEXUAL HEALTH, SAFETY & HUMAN RIGHTS OF MALE SEX WORKERS

SWOP is concerned about the seven executives and employees of Rentboy.com who were arrested yesterday in raids conducted by the Department of Homeland Security assisted by the New York Police Department. There is a considerable body of evidence pointing to the fact that GLBTQI people prosecuted for sex work are subjected to alarmingly high rates of harassment, including physical and sexual abuse, when they are behind bars.

SWOP stands in solidarity with Rentboy.com, and supports the global decriminalisation of sex work and the end to raids on our colleagues. We particularly feel for the male sex workers in the United States currently worrying about how they will eat, pay rent, and indeed survive, without the work they may find by choosing to utilise this well-known, popular, and openly public-facing website.

As a sexual health organisation for sex workers, we stand in solidarity with our colleagues at HOOK. HOOK is a male sex worker health organisation that not only outreaches to male sex workers across the United States, but is also used by male sex workers all over the world for information on harm reduction practices. HOOK has been around for almost as long as SWOP. The Male Workers' Handbook that SWOP distributes is partly derived from a HOOK resource.

Today HOOK's vital work just got that much harder, as male sex workers likely move underground in fear of their own prosecution; prosecution just for performing their chosen job. The increase in HOOK's workload will also come at the loss of funding. Rentboy.com used a portion of their profits to fund this vital sexual health project, demonstrating their investment in the health and safety of the adult male sex workers who chose to utilise their website.

It is of particular disappointment to SWOP that this raid follows so closely on the back of the Amnesty International resolution to support the decriminalisation of sex work globally.

Should any NSW male sex workers be negatively impacted by this disappointing news affecting their global colleagues, SWOP provide can peer support via SWOP Connect on (02) 9206 2166.

SWOP's Chief Executive Officer Cameron Cox is available for further media comment.

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