



# IMPACT REPORT

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2023



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**Woodhull  
Freedom  
Foundation**

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The only human rights organization working full time to protect the fundamental human right to sexual freedom.



**LORETTA J. ROSS**

Activist, Public Intellectual, Professor

“

The Woodhull Freedom Foundation is simply the best, most outstanding fighter for human rights in the area of sexual freedom in the world. I'm proud to be associated with them.

”



# 2023

# IMPACT REPORT

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# Introduction

## A message from our President.

Dear Woodhull Community,

As we mark the 20th anniversary of the Woodhull Freedom Foundation, I find myself reflecting on the incredible journey we have undertaken together. Beginning with our initial offering of testimony to Congress in 2003, our path has been one of advocacy, resilience, and unwavering commitment to the cause of sexual freedom.

Looking back at the past two decades, I am deeply grateful to the donors, allies, and communities that have stood with us through thick and thin. Your support has been the bedrock of our success, enabling us to navigate challenges, champion our cause, and make a meaningful impact on the landscape of sexual freedom.

This year has tested the mettle of our organization. Faced with unprecedented challenges, our donors, partners, and staff have risen admirably to the occasion. Their resilience and dedication to the mission of Woodhull have been nothing short of inspiring. I am immensely proud of the crucial strides we continue to make together in advancing the cause of sexual freedom.

This impact report provides a comprehensive overview of our work this year. This work matters more than ever because of the developing threats we face. Recent events, such as the Supreme Court's overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, underscore the fragility of legal precedents we once considered settled. Justice Thomas's concurring opinion in that case called for a revisiting of rights related to sexual activities and same-sex marriage.

Moreover, we find ourselves grappling with an alarming surge in censorship. Federal legislation like KOSA threatens our privacy rights under the guise of protecting children. Attacks on the trans community amplify the broader war on sex and sexuality. Book bans have forced libraries and online platforms to remove content related to sex and gender.

We've expanded our educational programming. Live events on social media platforms, webinars, and in person at conferences and colleges have allowed us to share our message with new communities and broaden our circles of conversation. We look forward to an even more ambitious agenda in 2024.

What is "wrong" may be daunting, but what is "right" is the enduring commitment of the Woodhull community. As we embark on the next phase of our journey, let us draw strength from our shared history, celebrate our victories, and confront the challenges with renewed determination.

With gratitude and commitment,



**Ricci Joy Levy**

President and CEO

The Woodhull Freedom Foundation



# 2023

## By the Numbers

### Research Projects

One form of advocacy is research providing data supporting (or opposing) harmful legislation or prosecution. We are engaged in two major research projects, one focused on sex worker rights and the other on debunking the myths around pornography.

2

### Podcasts

We were proudly featured on four podcasts this year, sharing our message and expanding our reach.

4

### Amicus Briefs

We actively engaged in shaping the legal landscape by filing six Amicus Briefs on cases pertinent to social media, censorship, and technology.

6

### Webinars

We hosted 12 webinars in our 'Censoring of Sexual Freedom Series', delving into crucial discussions, fostering a more informed discourse.

12

### Press

We made waves, being featured or quoted 17 times in various publications.

17

### Speakers

We collaborated with 24 experts who contributed and enriched our educational series.

24

### Sign-On Letters

We championed critical causes through our support for 26 sign-on letters. From shaping Internet legislation to advocating for reproductive justice and beyond.

26

# INTERNET CENSORSHIP

## FOSTA Lawsuit Update & Conclusion



Our Legal Team returned to court on January 11, 2023, to argue *Woodhull Freedom Foundation vs. the United States of America*, making a strong case about the unconstitutionality of the Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act (FOSTA). It had been five years since we filed our suit. After an almost seven-month wait, the DC Circuit Court handed down their ruling in favor of the US government, upholding FOSTA.

While the court did not decide the way we would have hoped, it issued a narrowing construction of the law and determined that FOSTA “does not proscribe facilitating prostitution more generally, which could extend to speech arguing for the legalization of prostitution or that discusses, educates, or informs about prostitution.” It also clarified that the law “does not reach the intent to engage in general advocacy about prostitution or to give advice to sex workers generally to protect them from abuse. Nor would it cover the intent to preserve for historical purposes webpages that discuss prostitution.”

**W**oodhull remains committed to fighting against censorship and discrimination against sex workers. We will continue to speak out against damaging legislation like FOSTA and provide our supporters with the tools to do the same.

We want to thank our legal team, Bob Corn-Revere of the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE), Lawrence G. Walters of Walters Law Group, Aaron Mackey, Corynne McSherry, and David Greene of Electronic Frontier Foundation, and Daphne Keller of Stanford Cyber Law Center for their tireless effort on behalf of Woodhull and our co-plaintiffs.



# INTERNET CENSORSHIP

## Action on Bad Internet Bills

Based on what we've seen in 2023 and what we anticipate in 2024, how we use the internet will change forever. Legislation like the [Kids Online Safety Act \(KOSA\)](#), the [Restrict Act](#), and the [Stop CSAM Act](#) were just a few examples of legislation that claim to protect national security or protect children online while significantly impacting our privacy and violating the First Amendment.

In July, we collaborated with our allies at Fight for the Future, ACLU, Defending Rights and Dissent, and Electronic Frontier Foundation for the Bad Internet Bills Week of Action. We launched an important tool for individuals to make their voices heard about legislation that would negatively impact our digital rights.

**O**ver 300,000 actions were taken to oppose this slate of legislation!, during the course of the week.



This Fall, we issued a call to action and letter-writing campaign addressing the harms of the pending Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA). Our action focused on the inherent human rights violations triggered by KOSA. So far, we have reached Senators from 25 states with our letter, and we plan to continue collecting letters until the end of the congressional session. We look forward to more time engaged in direct legislative advocacy in 2024.



# FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS

## The Entrapment & Harassment of LGBTQ People



Creating Change, the nation's foremost political, leadership, and skills-building conference for the LGBTQ+ movement, welcomed us to their annual conference for Woodhull's Human Rights Commission on the Entrapment and Harassment of LGBTQ+ people by Law Enforcement.

These civil and human rights violations devastate individuals and their families but rarely receive public attention due to media and community bias, stigma, and victim blaming. California State Senator Scott Weiner welcomed our attendees and spoke about the importance of continuing to shine a light on this issue.

Commissioners included representatives from the Legal Aid Society of New York City, the San Francisco Department of Policy Accountability, and the Drug Policy Alliance. Our witnesses were people who had been affected by this kind of entrapment or harassment in various ways. All attendees received a [fact sheet](#) about the negative impact of entrapment and harassment and the positive impact that decriminalization could have on the LGBTQ+ community.

Entrapment and harassment of gay and bisexual men, trans people, and sex workers by law enforcement continue to be widespread in all parts of the country.



# SEX WORKER RIGHTS

## Spokes Hub

One issue for people who have been marginalized and ostracized by society is finding their voice to advocate for their needs. Our program to address that gap in experience, Spokes Hub, is now in its second year. Spokes Hub is a virtual educational program supporting people with lived experience in the sex trade in developing their voice and authority on issues relating to sexual freedom. Participants are encouraged to deepen their understanding of complex issues through peer learning and research and to expand their advocacy skills through writing and public speaking. Graduates of the program are granted access to a financial "Awards Pool," whereby they can be compensated up to \$250 for public education or advocacy work that is otherwise unpaid.

**W**oodhull continues to advocate for the full decriminalization of adult, consensual sex work. We recognize, too, that decriminalization is just one part of the whole picture for sex workers.

Spokes Hub hosted 17 live classes this year, with 126 participants from four different countries logging in. All participants are current or former sex workers or survivors of exploitation. Spokes Hub also distributed over \$10,000 to graduates from the Awards Pool. Spokes Hub is a joint project with New Moon Network.

## LOBBYING

### In New York's Capital

In April, Woodhull's COO, Mandy Salley, joined our allies at Decriminalize Sex Work to lobby for two bills that would make the lives of sex workers in NY less dangerous. Mandy, along with other New Yorkers, met with state representatives to discuss S1966, an act to amend the penal law in relation to individuals engaged in prostitution who are victims for witnesses to a crime, and S4266A/A5288A, an act to establish a task force on missing women and girls who are black, indigenous, and people of color.



# RESEARCH

## The Impact of Deplatforming on Sex Workers

Thanks to an anonymous donor, the Woodhull Freedom Foundation is able to support a new study on the effects of “de-platforming” adult sex workers in the U.S. conducted by Professor Samantha Majic of John Jay College of Criminal Justice and Melissa Ditmore, a student at the CUNY School of Public Health & Health Policy and Graduate Center alum.

De-platforming is when a digital platform stops featuring or accepting advertising from certain individuals or companies, in this case, platforms like Craigslist Erotic Services, Backpage, myRedBook and Rentboy no longer accept advertising for sex workers.

“

Past research shows that criminalizing sex work does little to make workers safer. Bills like NY State’s SB3075, which would decriminalize some prostitution offenses, are a slow and small step towards recognizing this reality,” said Professor Majic. “Now, with de-platforming, we want to understand the extent to which pushing sex work further back into the shadows puts people in more danger.

”

## Behind the Science of Porn and Sexuality

In the midst of a moral panic around sexual expression, antiporn, anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-sex work extremists routinely misrepresent sex research to convince legislators, regulators, journalists and consumers that sex and sex-related content is physically, mentally and socially harmful. We’re addressing and debunking those misrepresentations.

Researchers assembled by Woodhull Freedom Foundation are conducting a comprehensive analysis of existing studies, consulting experts in the field and producing a clear and authoritative whitepaper that clearly and succinctly distills the science, fact-checks major claims and provides resources for those looking to dive deeper.



# EDUCATION

## Censorship Series

The Woodhull Freedom Foundation has been fighting censorship for the past 20 years. Sex and sexual expression, and speech are often the first targets for censors. The first step in fighting against the dangers of censorship is educating the public about all of the ways censorship negatively impacts our personal freedoms.

Woodhull has always emphasized the importance of education in their advocacy. In response to the need to demonstrate how censorship can affect individuals personally, we launched a monthly virtual series called "The Censorship of Sexual Freedom."

We also facilitated a virtual webinar hosted by our friends at the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE) in October. Woodhull's President and CEO, Ricci Levy, moderated the panel of artists, activists, and lawyers about a case of artistic expression in Idaho. Last Spring, Lewis State College removed several works of art from an exhibit. The artwork dealt with abortion or reproductive healthcare. University officials removed the artwork, stating that it violated Idaho's No Public Funds for Abortion Act. The conversation highlighted how censorship is pervasive and linked with anti-abortion measures.

Over the past year, the series has featured 11 different webinars and 24 different speakers. We're happy to report that just under 300 people have registered for these programs, and the recordings have been viewed more than 600 times on our YouTube page. We've tackled book bans, privacy, and censorship on the internet, pornography, art, and more. There's much more to discuss, and we'll be continuing the series into 2024.



# REACHING New Audiences

We began our very deliberate outreach to new audiences in March at the inaugural Sexology Summit for Pleasure Professionals in Washington, DC, hosted by Sexpert Consultants, LLC. Ricci Levy, CEO, and Mandy Salley, COO, had the honor of keynoting the event, discussing the Censorship of Sexual Freedom.

In late June, Ricci and Mandy headed to the NOW Annual Conference. They presented a well-attended workshop that tied the issues of equity, equality, sexual freedom, and bodily autonomy together in a conversation about censorship.

In July, Ricci headed to Memphis for FreedomFest, the annual festival where free minds meet to celebrate freedom in an open-minded environment. It is independent, non-partisan, and not officially affiliated with any organization or think tank. We were honored to exhibit, host a panel on free speech with First Amendment attorneys Larry Walters and Bob Corn-Revere, and participate in a main-stage conversation about free speech and comedy.

**O**ne of the ways that we can ensure future success in the fight to gain full recognition of our fundamental human right to sexual freedom is by engaging new supporters in our issues.

We had the opportunity to engage with people who were excited to hear about our work, how our issues are their issues, and how the loss of the rights we're fighting to protect will impact their lives. We look forward to returning next year!

In addition to our national focus, we've begun to do local, in-person events about censorship and sexual freedom.

We hosted an event for Banned Books Week with a local book club called the NYC Book Hoes, which featured a panel discussion, a banned book giveaway, trivia, and, most importantly, sexual freedom prizes!

We co-sponsored a debate with Braver Angels and the New York Young Republicans on "Smashing the Patriarchy" in New York City. This was Braver Angel's first event in New York, and we were honored to be included. On the affirmative side, Mandy Salley took the stage at the Comedy Cellar and spoke about how patriarchy hurts everyone.



# COLLEGE OUTREACH

We were invited to host two different panel discussions at Nassau Community College in conjunction with the Fall production of Alabama Story. The play tells the true story of the courageous librarian Emily Reed, who took on a wannabe book-banning Senator in 1959 Alabama and won! The play highlights how damaging censorship can be and how censorship so often affects the most marginalized in our society more severely.

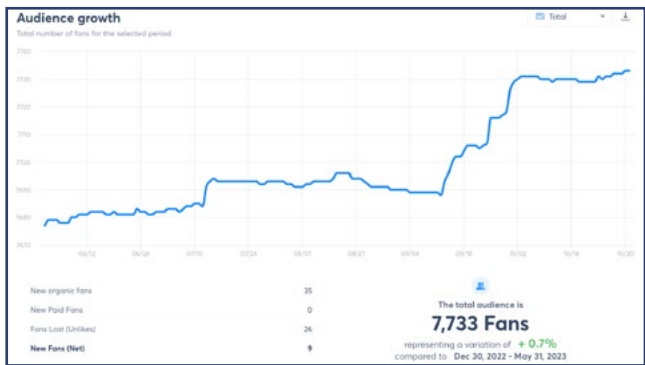
We were invited back to Temple University to guest lecture for Dr. Jennifer Pollitt's Sexuality Education class. Our conversation included an overview of the human rights framework, censorship, sex work, sexual freedom, and more. The students were curious, insightful, and engaged.

We look forward to continued partnership with Dr. Pollitt and her students at Temple.



# Increasing Our Engagement & **SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE**

In 2022, we enthusiastically embraced social media to spread the word about the vital importance of our work. This year, we hosted more programming on social media platforms than in the past, with great results! Mandy Salley hosted 10 different Instagram Live discussions this year with guests from Old Pros, the Sexual Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS), The Cupcake Girls, New Moon Network, the Bisexual Resource Center, Fight for the Future, the Disability Rights and Education Defense Fund (DREDF), and Open Relating . We also hosted our very first LinkedIn Live program in November with renowned researcher Dr Val Webber. We have been thrilled with the audience we've been able to reach via our social media platforms this year.



2023

Social Stats

27,674\*

9,100\*

7,238\*

\*Total impressions, including multiple views from individual users.

We've increased our engagement on LinkedIn as we've withdrawn from X, FKA Twitter. We are actively exploring alternatives and, in the meantime, continue to invest in Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn as avenues for publicizing our work and programs. It's ironic to be hosting conversations about social media and censorship using the very tools we're raising concerns about!

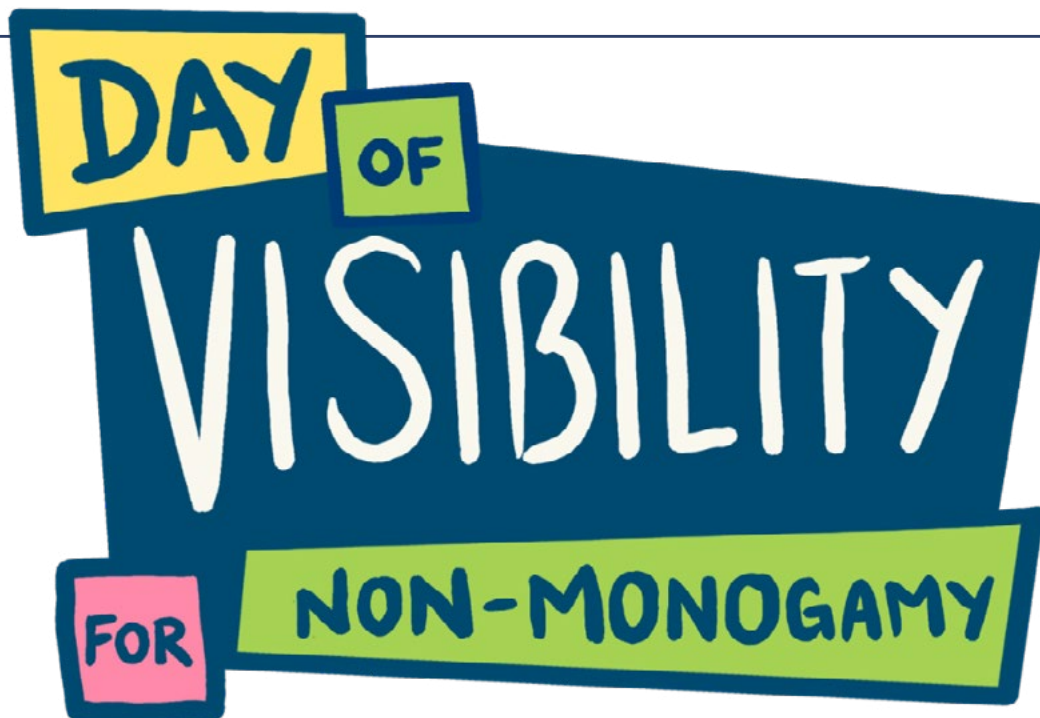


# PARTICIPATION IN COALITIONS

A cornerstone of our philosophy at Woodhull is that, while we may not agree about everything, we always seek an opportunity to collaborate with others where there is an intersection in our goals and work. One of the ways that we work with other organizations is by participating in working groups and coalitions. Most of these coalitions meet on a regular basis to discuss their work and opportunities for collaboration. One example of our coalition work is the Bad Internet Bills of Action referenced earlier in this report. We make it our job to know about who else is contributing to preserving human rights and creating relationships with them.

We are active members of several coalitions, including the Free Expression Network, where Ricci Levy is a member of their Steering Committee; the 12:01 Network, a group of progressive organizations focused on ending authoritarianism; the Sex Ed Coalition and the group participated in the inaugural Day of Visibility for Non-Monogamy this July.

**We value the wisdom, resources, and time we gain from these groups. Together, we will continue to further Woodhull's mission and work with their help!**



# THE WOODHULL TEAM

## Welcoming Interns & New Ambassadors

This year, we expanded our staff, welcomed three interns, and added two new Ambassadors to the Woodhull Team!

### STAFF

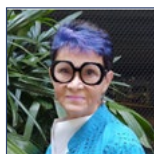
While Mandy and Ricci remain the only full-time staff at Woodhull, we've expanded our supplemental staffing to include Karen Seymour, who works with us on social media, and Bea Wharton, Woodhull's Executive Assistant.

### INTERNS

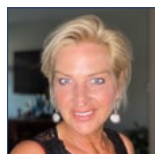
Students from the University of Maryland, Temple University, and Tulane University joined us for the Summer and Fall semesters to learn about Woodhull's work, help us research legislation, build action tools, create educational social media content, and write about our issues for our blog and publications.

### AMBASSADORS

The Woodhull Freedom Foundation Ambassadors program is a dynamic community of passionate activists who actively engage with and support the organization in a more informal capacity than traditional board membership. Ambassadors play a pivotal role by not only spreading awareness but also providing valuable advice on projects and contributing financial support when possible. It's a collaborative and energetic initiative, where individuals become influential advocates, shaping the organization's impact and driving positive change.



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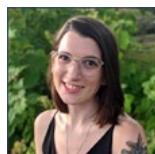
Alex Andrews



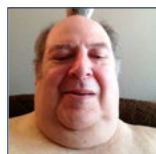
Rev. Dr. Beverly Dale



Julie Gillis



Mariah Grant



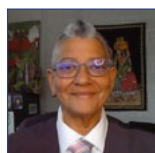
Mark Kernes



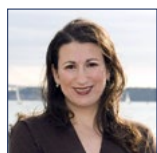
Elizabeth Larison



Christopher  
Cormier Maggiano



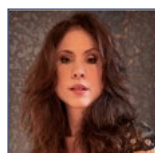
Lisbeth M.  
Melendez Rivera



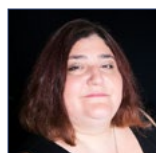
Susan Milstein



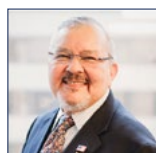
Perry Monastero



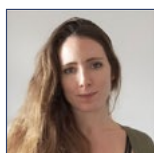
Gabrielle Penabaz



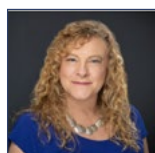
Tamara Pincus



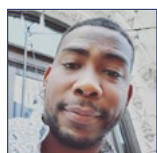
Diego Miguel  
Sanchez



Emma Shapiro



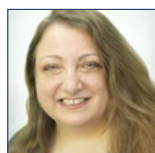
Elisabeth Sheff



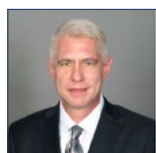
Christopher Smith



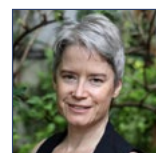
Carlie Steen



Cathy Vartuli



Lawrence G. Walters,  
Esq.



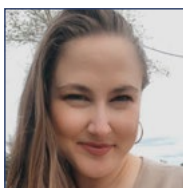
Elizabeth Anne  
Wood

Not pictured: Anita Wagner, Valerie White

We welcome our two newest Ambassadors:



Reba Corinne  
Thomas



Erin York



# DISCOVER

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

For 20 years, Woodhull has been a leader in the fight to protect democracy and our fundamental human right to sexual freedom.

- » We're fighting censorship.
- » We're working to eliminate discrimination based on gender or sexual identity or family form.
- » We're protecting the right to engage in consensual sexual activity and expression.

We can't do our work without your support. Please consider making a gift today to support our continued work to protect those rights and to secure them for future generations.

If you would like to make a donation, please [click here](https://woodhull.app.neoncrm.com/forms/primary-donation-form) or visit us online, <https://woodhull.app.neoncrm.com/forms/primary-donation-form>.





**WILL CREELEY, LEGAL DIRECTOR**  
Foundation for Individual Expression  
(FIRE)

“

The Woodhull Freedom Foundation is a brave, smart, and determined defender of core human rights. WFF stands up and fights for free expression, even — especially — when things look tough. Woodhull leads with love of community and commitment to principle, bringing people together in common cause. Thank goodness the First Amendment has the Woodhull Freedom Foundation in its corner.

”

