

Prostitution fact that
prostitution was rife in



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Prostitution has been dubbed as the oldest profession on earth and it is alleged to have existed for as long as man has. While the truth of this assertion remains unverifiable, it is a fact that prostitution was rife in the American Islands of Hawaii during the Second World War. The steady stream of soldiers and sailors provided a huge demand for the trade which was met by the various brothels in operation. The article by Beth Bailey and David Farber articulates the role that prostitutes played in Hawaii in the cause of World War II. This paper shall analyze the major arguments that the authors present in their article on the strike by the prostitutes in Hawaii. One of the major arguments advanced by Bailey and Farber is that the society was willing to tolerate prostitution since it deemed the trade to be a necessary evil in the war period. As a result of the war, Hawaii experienced an influx of lower class males who were mostly soldiers and sailors. The authorities thus conceded that the existence of prostitutes was necessary to provide for the sexual needs of the male population.

Well regulated brothels would help avoid spread of venereal diseases and incidents of rape or seduction of the Hawaii's young girls and women. This argument holds true since as the authors note, as a result of the brothels, peace was maintained in Hawaii and the rate of venereal diseases amongst the military units in Hawaii was lower than any other military unit in the country. The authors also propose that in as much as segregation was practiced in most of the brothels, this segregation was only aimed at conforming to the racist beliefs of most of the clients who were of Southern origin. It is therefore implied that segregation in the brothels did not spring from hatred of any race or person but rather it was motivated by the

prostitutes desire to appease their majority clients. This argument is not fully convincing since the Hawaiian society was already split along racial lines and as such, one can assume that the segregation practices exhibited in the brothels were merely a reflection of what was going on in the society.

According to the article, the prostitutes were out to exploit the boom experienced in the trade as a result of the war and they reaped handsome rewards for their efforts. The authors demonstrate that the operations at Hotel Street were run by women and that the system was streamlined for efficiency and to ensure all control was by the women. These assertions allude to equality and women empowerment in the prostitution business. However, the author's suggestions that there was no inequality in the Hawaiian brothel system is unsound especially after considering the number of hours that the prostitutes had to work and the men they served per day. The Hawaiian social structure had been constructed such that prostitutes only operated in certain designated location away from public. However, this condition was broken in the months that followed the Pearl Harbor attacks.

Bailey and Farber advance that this breaking away of prostitutes from the designated areas and into the public further undermined the racist system that had been established in Hawaii since this move revealed the fallacy of racial superiority that had up to that point being propagated by the white elite. This is a convincing argument and as the authors further assert, the struggle of the prostitutes was but a precursor to even more critical social reform movements in future America. This paper set out to analyze the article on the prostitute strike at Hawaii during the Second World War. The various arguments that the authors presented have been analyzed and their

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believability gauged. From the arguments advanced, it is clear that prostitution was a necessary evil in the World War II era and that it led to the redefinition of the class structure in Hawaii. While the prostitutes were eventually evicted and the brothels closed, these professionals played a key role in blurring the racial lines in Hawaii.