

Bleed Purple

Economies of Affect and Labor Politics on Twitch.tv

Kat Brewster, Amanda Cullen, Kat Lo

Department of Informatics
University of California, Irvine

canaries and camwhores in the coal mine

affect, labour, and on-demand work on privately owned digital platforms (you know, like twitch)

kat brewster | @katbamkapow | hello@kb.place
UCI Informatics



this presentation is about

- Labour models on lean, privately owned, digital platforms
 - Models which have allowed: the gig economy, the sharing economy, the on-demand-work economy, etc.
 - Lean platforms: those which rely on user-generated content
 - Platforms like Twitch.tv, but also labour models which cross platforms: Patreon, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter
- Fragile financial systems in place on privately owned digital platforms
- Relationships of affective labour on privately owned digital platforms, and its consequences
- FOSTA/SESTA, and the future of work

this is the literature i'm working from

Nick Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism*

Melissa Gira Grant, *Playing the Whore:
The Work of Sex Work*

Sarah Banet-Weiser, *Authentic: The
Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand
Culture*

Silvia Federici, *Wages Against
Housework*

T.L Taylor, *Watch Me Play* (forthcoming)

Ann Cvetkovich, *Depression: A Public Feeling*

I am grateful for the work of internet culture writers Julia Alexander and Patricia Hernandez. I am similarly indebted to the sex workers who write about navigating online platforms, rules and regulations, and the law – especially Vex Ashley and Four Chambers.

research questions

- What **is** a wage on a lean, privately owned digital platform? How do its users understand their wage?
- How might these wages become alienated from the labour which purports to produce them?
- How are these wages related to affective economies, and **who is at risk** from being de-platformed for being read as transgressive?

let's talk labour models & platforms

A digital platform is: any website or digital application which allows two or more people to interact. Often, these platforms allow users to “build their own products, services, and marketplaces.”

A lean platform “attempts to reduce their ownership of assets to a minimum and to profit by reducing costs as much as possible.”



growth before profit

“Uber, the world’s largest taxi company, owns no vehicles... and AirBnB, the largest accommodation provider, owns no property.”

Tom Godwin, TechCrunch, 2014.

“Before the internet, it would be really difficult to find someone, sit them down for ten minutes and get them to work for you, and then fire them after those ten minutes. But with technology, you can actually find them, pay them the tiny amount of money, and then get rid of them when you don’t need them anymore.”

*CEO of CrowdFlower, quoted by Moshe Z. Marvit,
How Crowdworkers Became the Ghosts in the
Digital Machine, NATION, Feb. 5, 2014*

Under capitalism every worker is manipulated and exploited and his or her relation to capital is totally mystified. The wage gives you the impression of the fair deal: you work and you get paid, hence you and your boss each get what's owed; while in reality the wage, rather than paying for the work you do, hides all the unpaid work that goes into profit.

silvia federici, wages against housework

so let's talk twitch

- Owned by Amazon.com, noted for their great and super humane working conditions
- 2,000,000+ monthly broadcasts
- 2,000 “partnered streamers”



How to Get Rich Playing Video Games, The New Yorker

Dashboard[Live](#)[Editing](#)[Activity](#)**Achievements**[Stats](#)[Revenue](#)[Partner Settings](#)[Settings](#)[Streaming Apps](#)[Event Manager](#)[Moderation](#)**Video Manager**[Past Broadcasts](#)[Past Highlights](#)[Uploads](#)[Collections](#)[Clips](#)[Video Stats](#)**It Begins!**

2 of 5

**Know your stuff**

Explore your dashboard

09/10/17

**Name of the game**

Update your stream title

09/10/17

**We Belong**

Set a Game/Category and Community for your stream

**It's happening!**

Start your first stream

**Message in a bottle**

Send a chat message on your own channel

[Learn about Broadcasting on Twitch](#)**Path to Affiliate**

0 of 4

Path to Partnership

0 of 3

**Know your stuff**

Explore your dashboard

09/10/17

**Name of the game**

Update your stream title

09/10/17

**Like clockwork**

Stream for n unique days in the last 30 days

90%

**Mr. Roboto**

Add 5 channels to your host list

86%

**It's happening!**

Start your first stream

65%

**We Belong**

Set a Game/Category and Community for your stream

42%

**Who watches the watchers**

Reach an average of 3 concurrent viewers in 30 days

25%

**Who watches the watchers**

Reach an average of 25 concurrent viewers in 30 days

5%

**Who watches the watchers**

Reach an average of 100 concurrent viewers in 30 days

1%

**Same time next week**

Start a stream on the same day and time for n weeks in a row

**Kind of a big deal**

Viewers have watched your channel for n hours

**The Horde descends**

Reach at least n viewers over five streams.

**The Horde descends**

Reach at least n viewers over five streams.

a system of
“achievements,”
which makes
partnership
look attainable

so let's talk "*success*" Twitch

- Often requires: secretarial skills, moderating fans/fan relations, tech-savyness, a level of disposable income
- Navigation of microtransaction currencies; "bits" and "cheers", as well as an opaque system of ad revenue/subscription sales/affiliate links/donations/merchandise sales/Patreon pledges (oh my)
 - All reliant on a relationship between viewers and streamers – viewers/fans must feel compelled to either pay to subscribe *or* donate in order to supply a streamer's income

Medium

Get started

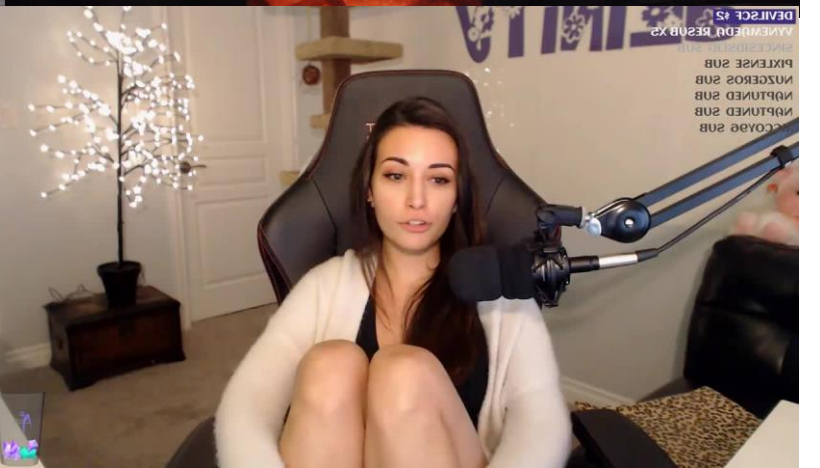
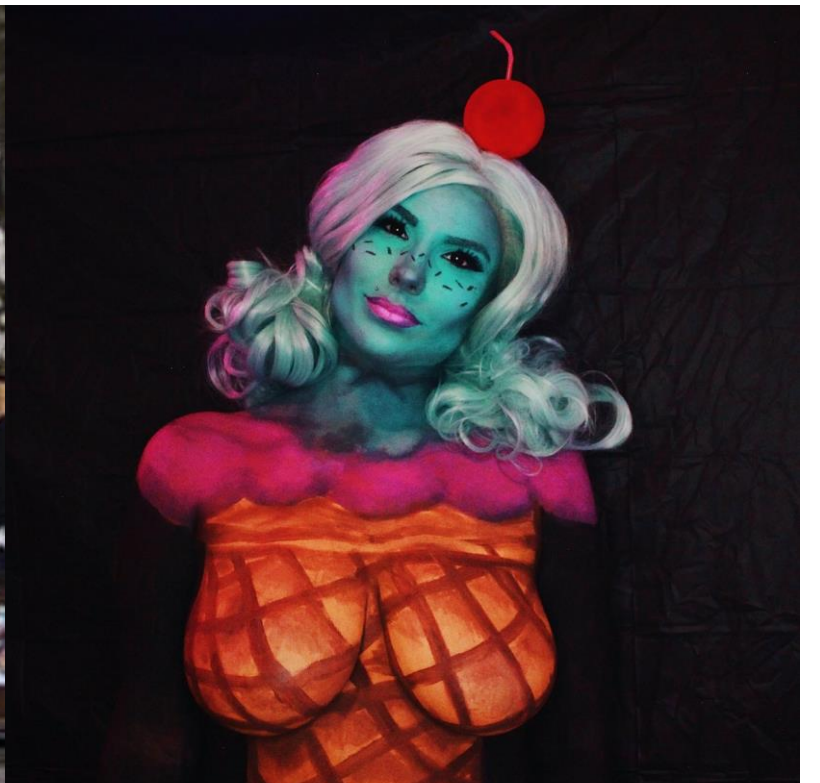
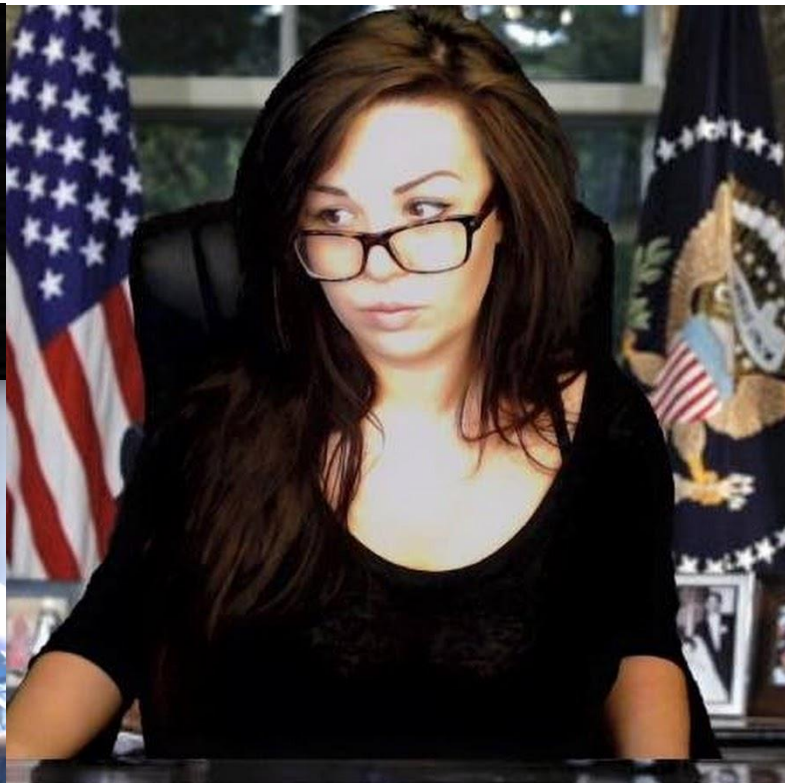


Adريان King
Jan 21 · 8 min read

Get Rich with Twitch: Tips on How to Make Money Streaming

by ALICE







Community Guidelines

LAST UPDATED: SEP 26, 2018 09:01AM PDT



Community Guidelines

These are the Community Guidelines that Twitch users are asked to follow in order to promote a positive experience for all. **Last modified on 09/26/2018**

Notice an error or have feedback for this article? **Let us know!**

At Twitch, our mission is to provide the best shared social video experience created by our growing community where creators and communities can interact safely. To achieve this goal, we ask that all users participate in such a way that promotes a friendly, positive experience for our global community.

To protect the integrity of our community, as the provider of the service, we at Twitch reserve the right to suspend any account at any time for any conduct that we determine to be inappropriate or harmful. You are free to appeal your suspension, but we are not required to provide a reason for our decision.

To our Twitch community,

Today, we're sharing an update to our Community Guidelines. This is just the first of many improvements coming to the policies, moderation processes, and safety features on Twitch.

We use our [Community Guidelines](#) to keep the community strong and safe. These guidelines detail the content supported on Twitch, rules for streamers and viewers, and much more. Our goal is to ensure Twitch is a place where everyone feels welcome and we will continue to listen to you as we grow and adapt these policies as needed.

The story so far

Twitch began with a single core idea: stream video games online. That simple hook attracted viewers, but they stuck around because you, the streamers, built communities. You built a place viewers felt welcome, a place they could turn to for laughter, gameplay, or friendship. And, as you began to inject more of your personality and interests, you told us you wanted the freedom to create content when you weren't gaming. So, last year, we loosened our restrictions on non-gaming content.

This let you bring as much of your life to Twitch as you wanted. It let you broaden your community or build new communities in areas like board gaming, talk shows, Creative, music, fitness, and IRL (to name just a few). By sharing yourself on Twitch, you let Twitch become part of your life, and we're grateful for that privilege.

Over the past several months, you've told us certain sections of our Community Guidelines were not clear enough, or, in some cases, not strong enough to govern this ever-changing landscape. And we were too slow to act. To begin addressing this, we're rolling out a series of updates to the policies, moderation processes, and products that guide interpersonal interaction on Twitch.

Today's update focuses on our anti-harassment and sexual content policies. Our goal is to increase clarity, strength, and consistency across our entire moderation framework, as well as the frequency and level of detail of our moderation communications.

You helped us build Twitch—you ARE Twitch—and it's our job to make you proud of the Twitch community.

You helped us build Twitch—you ARE Twitch—and it's our job to make you proud of the Twitch community.

Nudity, Pornography, and Other Sexual Content

We restrict content that involves nudity or is sexual in nature, and are committed to ensuring that Twitch is not used for sexual exploitation or violence. To provide more clarity around these policies and how we review reports of such content or activity, we've provided additional details to complement our Community Guidelines in the sections below.

While we understand that some nudity or sexual content might be intended for educational, scientific, artistic, newsworthy, or academic purposes, we restrict this content due to the diversity in age and cultural backgrounds of our global community. We may, in limited educational and artistic contexts, make pre-approved exceptions to these policies. Going forward, Twitch will continue working on ways to safely support nudity and sexual content in these particular contexts.

- [Sexual Violence and Exploitation](#)
- [Sexually Explicit Content](#)
- [Sexually Suggestive Content](#)
- [Nudity and Attire](#)
- [Nudity and Sexual Content in Games](#)
- [Additional Restrictions](#)
- [Reporting Sexual Content Violations](#)
- [FAQ](#)

Nudity and Attire

Streaming is a public activity, therefore we recommend creators wear attire that is appropriate public attire for a given context, intent, or activity. For game streams, most at home streams, and profile/channel imagery, we recommend attire appropriate for public settings, such as what you would wear on a public street, or to a mall or restaurant. For example, for a fitness stream, or an IRL stream from a location such as a public beach, attire appropriate to those public contexts is recommended, such as workout clothes or a swimsuit, respectively. As noted in the section above, attire is just one factor of many that we consider when evaluating reports for potential sexual conduct.

Attire intended to be sexually suggestive and nudity are prohibited. Attire (or lack of attire) intended to be sexually suggestive includes undergarments, intimate apparel, or exposing/focusing on male or female genitals, buttocks, or nipples.

What clothing is appropriate for my stream?

Given the variety of content and activities creators engage in, an explicit dress code would be unreasonably restrictive. Streaming is a public activity that reaches a global audience of many ages and cultures, and as such we prohibit nudity and sexual conduct. When evaluating reports for sexual conduct, attire is just one factor we will use in making a determination on whether conduct is acceptable.

We recommend creators wear attire that would be publicly appropriate for the context, location, and activity they are broadcasting. For example, workout clothes would be appropriate for a fitness stream and a swimsuit would be appropriate for a stream from a public beach.

Why aren't there specific rules about what clothing is and isn't allowed on Twitch?

As Twitch continues to expand the variety of content we feature, so comes the need for updating the range of attire that is acceptable. For example, something that is acceptable for a broadcast at the beach or the gym may not be acceptable for a cooking or gameplay broadcast. In an effort to help creators abide by our Community Guidelines in the same way they would expectations of behavior in the real world, we've updated our policies to reflect that we will consider not just the attire itself, but also the contextual setting in which it is worn and the intent of the person wearing it, when moderating content. Please remember that sexually explicit or suggestive content, such as nudity exposing or focusing on genitals, buttocks, or nipples, and attire intended to be sexually suggestive are prohibited.



[–] **Hammertoss** • 83 points 7 months ago

It's important to note that the new guidelines also prohibit cameras angled down cleavage, intentionally sexual actions, etc., so soon there' shouldn't be any camgirls on Twitch to call camgirls. This presumably means that calling anyone on Twitch a camgirl would be a false accusation and harassment.

They're tackling both sides of the issue.

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [give gold](#)



[–] **MajorSquiggles** twitch.tv/major_squiggles • 22 points 7 months ago

Namecalling is not harassment. Also camgirls are already in violation of twitch rules. Twitch does not enforce its own rules. The rules are there as a weapon only brought out when they come across a "problem". Whether you are considered a problem is up to their own whims at any given moment.

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [give gold](#)



[–] **cscolley**  twitch.tv/cscolley • 5 points 7 months ago

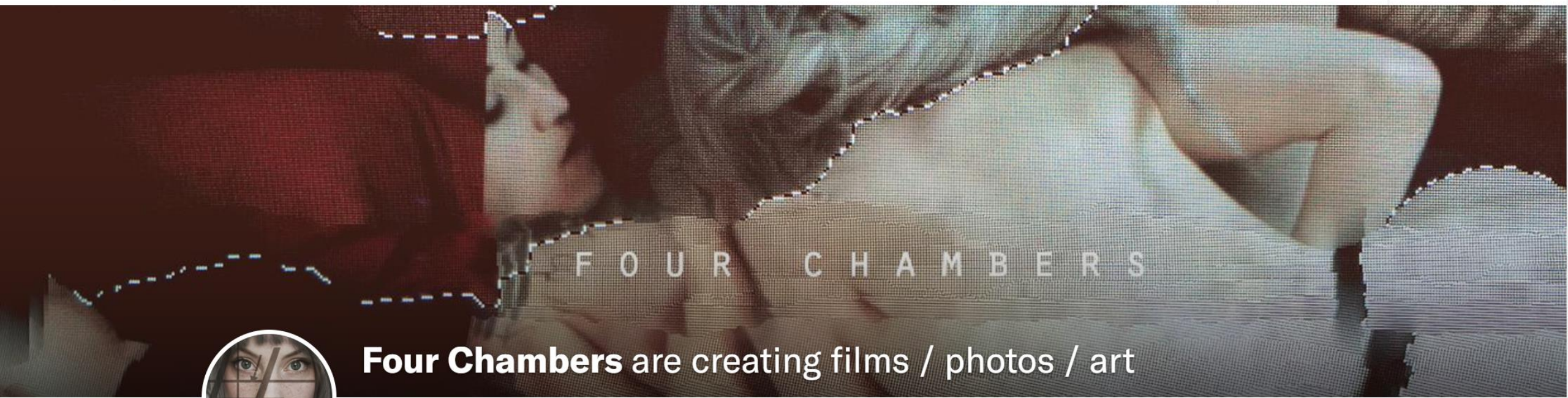
This... hopefully.

[permalink](#) [embed](#) [save](#) [parent](#) [give gold](#)

let's talk sex work

PATREON |

Search



Four Chambers are creating films / photos / art

Overview **Posts** Community

You must be 18+ to view this content

YES, I AM 18 OR OLDER

Patreon's Attack On Four Chambers

Creator: Vex Ashley



Image courtesy of Vex Ashley on Instagram — <https://www.instagram.com/fourchambers/>

So... just as I'm getting my Patreon page up and going the FOSTA-SESTA law rears its ugly head (again).



Four Chambers

@fourchambered

Following



The lord giveth and the lord taketh away,
most he just taketh to be honest.

Heads up! Instagram has new language
when it deletes your account. "No
sexually suggestive photos. No sexually
explicit language"
stay safe out there.



Learn More About Your Account

Your account has been disabled for not following our [Community Guidelines](#). You won't be able to log into this account and no one else will be able to see it. Sexually suggestive content isn't allowed on Instagram. This includes:

- Posting sexually suggestive photos or other content
- Soliciting sexual services
- Using sexually explicit language

If you think this was a mistake, [please let us know](#).

12:32 AM - 20 Sep 2018

251 Retweets 336 Likes



46

251

336



Four Chambers

@fourchambered

Following



Lots of people've pointed out that this
language isn't even in Instagram's
community guidelines page. No mention
of "sexually explicit language" "sexually
suggestive" here

help.instagram.com/477434105621119

How can everyone be expected to keep
rules that we haven't even been
informed of?

1:08 PM - 23 Sep 2018

4 Retweets 30 Likes



4



30



FOSTA/SESTA

SESTA/FOSTA

On February 27, **the House of Representatives passed a bill** that combined the Senate's Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act (SESTA) and the House's Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act (FOSTA). This new version of FOSTA would:

- Expand existing federal criminal sex trafficking law to target online platforms where sex trafficking content appears. Platform owners could be prosecuted under the expanded law even if they didn't know that people were using those platforms for sex trafficking purposes.
- Open online platforms to new criminal and civil liability for sex trafficking at both the federal and state levels.
- Expand federal criminal prostitution law to cover those who use the Internet to "promote or facilitate prostitution." Many platforms would feel pressured to become more restrictive in their treatment of sexual speech.
- Change the law *retroactively*: an online platform could be prosecuted under state law or held civilly liable for sex trafficking for failing to comply with the law before it passed.

what is it and what does it do?

- Encourages platforms to eradicate purportedly sexual content – especially when money changes hands.

<https://stopsesta.org/#facts>

questions to consider going forward

- what *is* sexual content?
- what *is* the wage which encourages it?
- who deems what behaviour is sexual, especially in affectively charged environments?
- how can the rights of sex workers be protected online, when the future of digital work rests in their treatment by the law?

we have allowed sex workers
to be the canary in the coal mine.
we cannot allow sex workers
to be the canary in the coal mine.