

September 14, 2010  
*Sent via facsimile*

Jim Buckmaster, CEO  
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Craigslist, Inc.  
1381 9th Avenue  
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Dear Craig Newmark & Jim Buckmaster,

The experts in the anti-trafficking field who have signed this letter stand together asking you to shut down all the Adult and Erotic Services sections of your website around the world.

We all know that plenty of activity has preceded this letter. There have been meetings, news articles, research studies, protests, letters from survivors, blogs, boycotts, earnings estimates, lawsuits, subpoenas, and plenty of other actions. The voices of survivors, advocates, service providers, local law enforcement, members of Congress, and State Attorneys General have all implored you to do more to fight the sex trafficking of women and girls that occurs on your site.

We thank you for voluntarily closing the Adult Services section of Craigslist in the United States. While this is a positive step, Craigslist is a global company, and it has a global responsibility. More than 250 Craigslist sites exist around the world that still feature “Erotic” sections where trafficked children and women are being sold for sex through your website.

Of particular concern is your repeated statement that anti-trafficking “experts” are supportive of your approach. For example, in one of Jim Buckmaster’s online responses on the Huffington Post, he states, “To the contrary, we are convinced Craigslist is a vital part of the solution to this age-old scourge. We’ve been told as much by experts on the front lines of this fight...”<sup>1</sup>

There are some who may want you to keep the Erotic Services sections going outside the United States for various reasons. Sex traffickers surely want you to keep the sections going because it helps them make high profits by advertising women and children to large audiences of paying customers. “Johns” who pay for commercial sex want you to keep the section because your site makes it easy and less risky for them to buy women and girls simply by surfing the Internet and perusing the photos on various ads. There may even be some law enforcement officials who see some value in placing decoy ads on your site, or using Craigslist ads as evidence in an investigation. However, we highly doubt that on balance, law enforcement would condone a venue that is a platform for the sex trafficking of women and children. The recent letter signed by 17 State Attorneys General strongly suggests that many law enforcement officials believe the best solution is to close the section, as you have done in the United States.

The signers of this letter are the experts on the issue of human trafficking. Many of us work on the front lines, directly with victims on a daily basis. Some of us are survivors of human trafficking.

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<sup>1</sup> Buckmaster, Jim. "An Open Invitation to Rachel Lloyd." *Craigslist Blog*. 11 May 2010. Available at <http://blog.craigslist.org/2010/05/> (visited September 13, 2010).

With this letter, we are telling you that on the whole, Craigslist's Adult and Erotic Services sections continue to be more part of the problem than part of the solution.

On the day that Craigslist shut down its Adult Services section in the United States, were the pimps and johns who depend on the site to advance the sex trade happy or upset? The answer to this question should help guide your path forward as you address the remaining "Erotic" sections around the world.

We acknowledge that there are *some* things that Craigslist has done that are part of the solution. Offering to meet with law enforcement and non-profits is a good thing. The decision to start screening the Adults Services ads was a step forward. Eliminating the blatant nudity that persisted in past years in the United States' Erotic section was also a step forward. Posting national hotlines, and cooperating with law enforcement when cases are found is useful and laudable. As stated above, voluntarily shutting down the Adult Services section in the United States is also a step in the right direction. Despite such steps forward, these efforts are not enough.

We are deeply concerned that you have not yet taken down the Erotic Services sections across the globe. We are also concerned that it seems that you are not applying the screening techniques that were used in the United States to all the other Erotic Services sections worldwide. In changing the name of the Adult Services section from "Erotic" to "Adult" in the United States, why did you not implement this change globally across your entire site? Furthermore, for the "Adult Services" pages in the United States, there was a "Warning & Disclaimer" page that discusses human trafficking and sexual exploitation. This disclaimer page is also present for the "Erotic" sections in Canada. Yet, as of the date of this letter, there is no "Warning & Disclaimer" page for the other international "Erotic" pages. Nudity is also still present in the photos associated with some "Erotic" ads in the international pages. The reality that you have not made the same improvements globally across your site reveals a disingenuous and inconsistent response on your part. Moreover, the few helpful actions you have taken do not measure up to the amount of daily harm being facilitated by Craigslist through the thousands of Erotic Services ads around the world each day.

In a recent letter, Jim Buckmaster stated that human trafficking ads are "quite rare" on Craigslist.<sup>2</sup> Based on our experience and collective knowledge, we know that the presence of human traffickers on your site is more frequent than you realize. Traffickers have figured out ways to post pictures of clothed women and children that can get past your screeners. The anti-trafficking field has yet to be presented with a meaningful solution of how you intend to guarantee that no children are being sexually exploited on your site. As a result, we ask that you take down the Adult or Erotic sections, wherever they appear on Craigslist.

Another important reality for you to realize is that law enforcement does not currently have the resources to review and conduct an investigation of every single Adult or Erotic Services ad on your site. The sheer volume of ads outpaces law enforcement's ability to respond to each one. Consequently, maintaining the Erotic Services sections in other countries enables the majority of Erotic ads to thrive without a law enforcement deterrent. Cooperating with law enforcement when a rare case is brought is a short-term solution, not reflective of an overall systemic analysis of the crime problem that you are enabling.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

You have asserted that removing the Adult or Erotic Services sections will not entirely eliminate the presence of sex ads on your site. This may be true, but eliminating the centralized thoroughfares of each designated "Erotic Services" section seriously disrupts pimps and johns who buy and sell women and children on Craigslist. Closing this section of Craigslist across the globe will send a clear signal to sexual predators that you will not stand for them using the site to sexually exploit children and women.

You argue that there are other online sites that advertise sex ads. Yes, the signers of this letter are aware of other sites with adult ads, and we are working to address those sites as well. But frankly, the user volume and name recognition of those sites pales in comparison to yours. They are not a household name like Craigslist.

We collectively feel that if you are seriously committed to ending the site's use as a platform for sex trafficking of women and children, you will apply the same approach you recently took in the United States and immediately close the remaining Erotic sections around the world.

If you continue to keep the Erotic sections outside of the United States, we ask that you at least be honest and more specific about the reasons why you are keeping them. After receiving this letter, please do not claim that it is because anti-trafficking "experts" agree with you and wholly support your approach.

In closing, we note that in one of Jim Buckmaster's recent letters, he asked the question: "Would it not be a step backward to confine adult ads to venues that don't cooperate with law enforcement, that don't care what advocacy groups and nonprofits have to say?"<sup>3</sup>

This statement seems to indicate that Craigslist does care what advocacy groups and nonprofits have to say, more than other venues. If this is true, then you must care about this letter. Please hear what we have to say, read the signers of this letter, and recognize that the anti-trafficking field is standing with solidarity and unity, and collectively asking you to take down all the Adult and Erotic sections worldwide, completely and permanently.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

SIGNED:

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