

Mr. President, Why Won't Your Administration Enforce Porn Laws?

The porn industry just ended its self-imposed shutdown, but one must wonder why. The industry stopped shooting films after four porn stars tested positive for HIV in the last month. However, HIV is only one of many health problems common to the industry. Others include chlamydia, gonorrhea and herpes. And though these infections often leave permanent damage, they are but a small part of the devastation pornography brings.

Harms from pornography include increased demand for **sexual trafficking**, increased violence against women, widespread addiction, the sexual exploitation of children and a host of other debilitating problems.

Sexual trafficking has long been linked to pornography. Dr. Donna M. Hughes, a University of Delaware professor and leading **human trafficking** activist, notes that because women used in the production of commercial pornography in the U.S. are often subjected to unexpected violence and coercion during filming, their experiences often meet the criteria for **sex trafficking**. If so, it is time the U.S. Department of Justice enforced the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act against porn studios and its producers.

University of Pennsylvania psychologist Dr. Mary Anne Layton warns that frequent porn consumers are developing "permission-giving beliefs" from what they see and thus acting out the violence so commonly depicted in porn movies. Pornography makes violence sexy, she says.

Addiction to pornography is an overwhelming problem. On average, an addict will have encountered porn at a young age and begun regularly consuming it in their teens. By early

adulthood, they will have moved to edgier, more taboo material in order to maintain excitement. Psychiatrist Norman Doidge describes this slide to deviance in his best-selling book *The Brain That Changes Itself*, noting that pornography, by offering an endless harem of sexual objects, hyperactivates an appetite system in the brain that demands constant attention.

The harm to consumers ranges far beyond addiction. For example, Psychology Today Online reported a study two years ago that identified something called “porn-induced sexual dysfunction.” This so-called “Viagra problem” is a growing phenomenon for men in their 20s, the study indicated. It results from years of pornography consumption accompanied by masturbation.

There is also the growing problem of child pornography that must be considered. Law enforcement officials who work child pornography cases often note that many adult porn users eventually move to child porn to satisfy a powerful desire for harder and more deviant material. Perhaps this is a result of the brain hyperactivity described by Doidge, but the adult-to-child-porn connection should not be ignored. Child pornography is an explosive problem in society.

Children are harmed in another way too. In today’s Internet Age, they have easy access to pornography and a porn industry all too willing to feed it to them. This volatile combination leads children to seek out porn at younger ages than ever before, and it is affecting them negatively.

Pediatrics professor Dr. Sharon Cooper of the University of North Carolina warns of the damage to the pre-frontal cortex of the developing brains of children caused by regular porn consumption. The pre-frontal cortex, she notes, is the home of good judgment, common sense, impulse control and emotion.

We are beginning to see these damaging effects. A recent report from the U.K. indicates that pornography has turned

more than 4,500 British children—some of them as young as 5—into sexual offenders. That's a nation of 62 million. We have more than 300 million in the U.S. and have no reason to expect a different result here. Child-on-child sex abuse is a growing problem in the U.S., and it is tied to porn use among children.

Pornography is causing an untreated pandemic of harm, and we have hardly begun to deal with the consequences. Yet federal laws that could halt the harm remain dormant due to the attorney general of the United States, Eric Holder, who refuses to allow these laws to be used, despite demands from many in Congress and the public. Currently, it is a violation of federal law to distribute hardcore or "obscene" pornography on the Internet, on cable/satellite TV, on hotel/motel TVs, in retail shops, through the mail and by common carrier such as FedEx. Imagine what a different country we would have if these laws were vigorously enforced.

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