

Why I'm Selling My Virginit

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When I put my virginity up for auction in September, it was in part a sociological experiment -- I wanted to study the public's response. Now it seems that the tables have turned, and the public is studying me.

I'm a 22-year-old woman who recently earned her Bachelor's Degree in Women's Studies, and soon I'll be entering a Masters Degree program in Marriage and Family Therapy. During the time in between, in addition to my regular 9-to-5, I've been exploring my upcoming thesis project: the value of virginity. To be more specific, I've put my own virginity up for auction on the Moonlight Bunny Ranch website, and I recently received my highest bid so far: a cool \$3.8 million.

In addition to bids, however, I've also received an astonishing, sometimes unnerving, amount of media attention. Many of these reports have portrayed me inaccurately, however, so let me tell you what this is all about.

This all started long before September. In fact, it started in college, where my eyes were opened by my Women's Studies professors and fellow classmates. I came to understand the role of "woman" spanning culture and time. At the university level, I was given permission to think differently and form a moral code of my own design. College opened my eyes.

Like most little girls, I was raised to believe that virginity is a sacred gift a woman should reserve for just the right man. But college taught me that this concept is just a tool to keep the status quo intact. Deflowering is historically oppressive -- early European marriages began with a dowry, in which a father would sell his virginal daughter to the man whose family could offer the most agricultural wealth. Dads were basically their daughters' pimps.

When I learned this, it became apparent to me that idealized virginity is just a tool to keep women in their place. But then I realized something else: if virginity is considered that valuable, what's to stop me from benefiting from that? It is mine, after all. And the value of my chastity is one level on which men cannot compete with me. I decided to flip the equation, and turn my virginity into something that allows me to gain power and opportunity from men. I took the ancient notion that a woman's virginity is priceless and used it as a vehicle for capitalism.

Are you rolling your eyes? I knew this experiment would bring me condemnation. But I'm not saying every forward-thinking person has to agree with what I'm doing. You should develop your own personal belief system -- that's exactly my point! For me, valuing virginity as sacred is simply not a concept I could embrace. But valuing virginity monetarily -- now that's a concept I could definitely get behind. I no longer view the selling of sex as wrong or immoral -- my time at college showed me that I had too blindly accepted such arbitrary norms. And for what it's worth, the winning bid won't necessarily be the highest -- I get to choose.

So, with this value system firmly in place, I contacted the organization I felt could best provide me a safe and legal means through which to execute my idea: The

Moonlite Bunny Ranch in Reno, Nevada.

I have been to the Moonlite Bunny Ranch twice to meet with its larger-than-life owner, Dennis Hof. I would describe the environment as a comical hybrid of a sorority house crossed with a laid-back gentlemen's club.

The Ranch not only provided me with the publicity to reach bidders through a personal email address on their website, but also as a way to capture a big enough "sample" of the public so I could research their reactions.

Some of these reactions have been surprising. As expected, many people value virginity itself -- people who think it's important to save, and men who think it's valuable enough to buy. But I've discovered that others value the lucrative nature of my experiment even more. I've been congratulated for my "entrepreneurial gumption," as one CEO of a Fortune 500 company put it.

I might even be an early adopter of a future trend, if the ads that clutter Craigslist are any indication of the direction we're headed in. These days, more and more women my age are profiting directly from their sex appeal, but I'm not sure other women should follow my lead. One conclusion my experiment has already borne out is that society isn't ready for public auctions like mine -- yet.

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