

**PROJECT DAWN by Karen Hartman**

<https://www.concordtheatricals.com/p/64336/project-dawn>

*In Project Dawn, women with three or more prostitution convictions--and no other criminal convictions--accept a final chance to rehabilitate themselves through the imperfect but stalwart Project Dawn Court's intensive program. Shondell addresses the court on the happy occasion of her graduation. She wears an eye patch (not necessary for the monologue).*

SHONDELL

I suppose I do have some words.

I was a princess. I never played outside with nobody. Everyone came to me. Everyone bought me presents. I didn't have no problem with drugs, I had all the drugs I wanted, I was popular cause I could give out the free drugs, my uncle let me take all I wanted never said no to me. Everything I wanted, I got, from little girl things through big girl things. It was a blessed childhood.

I never had no problem because I had my demand and I had my supply. I never worked anywhere; my uncle said that was slavery. He paid my fees to Temple, I flunked out, he paid for beauty school which I didn't flunk – obviously – but I never wanted to touch someone else's head.

I was spoiled. Then I was busy with my son. Then my uncle died and I had my demand without my supply. And I had some so-called friends, we started out just partying a little you know, you have something I want, I have something you want, and to be honest with you I didn't mind. Best times of my life were young and high. There is no feeling on this earth beats young and high. Speaking from old and sober, I'm telling you facts.

(Her eye)

My attack only happened last year. What's a grandma doing fighting off a bad trick trying to carve up my face?

I see the life. I see it at the Comfort Suites. I don't feel too bad for them mostly, they are indoors. A hot shower after, me to clean the sheets.

The boys are the worst. I don't know if they're all hustling or if that's just how they play. You can't pay me enough to clean those rooms, but I guess you can because I do it. And they tip. Jesus lord they make a gruesome mess but they tip.

At May's Place we had some foreign girls. Three beautiful girls from Indonesia I believe. They spoke no English, they didn't know where they were, no phones, no maps. These pimps from their own country were pulling them city to city every couple days. That is trafficking straight up.

I speak English. I knew where I was. I had my free will I suppose. Ruth helped me to identify some of the forces that led to my vulnerability, once my uncle died. Like why was I raised in illegal wealth rather than legal wealth? Why in the white culture the illegal wealth might lead to legal wealth for future generations, like the mafia, or killing Indians, or the steel men? The Steal men Stole. Whereas in the black culture the illegal wealth leads to butts locked up, one generation after the next. We never hold our ill got gains.

That's a structure. It ain't an excuse but it's a structure.

No one forced me, coerced me, tricked me which is the legal definition of trafficking. But no one set me up with legal means, neither. No one provided my people with no thirty year loans, and my ancestors didn't bequeath me no home.

Now I make my way by daylight. By my light. I have a friend. He is sometimes a friend with benefits but that is a different matter. A very different matter.

Men are not changing their ways anytime soon.

There's good men like my uncle.

There's men want to cut out your eye and pour in bleach.

Most are in between.

Me and Bonnie always said men are going to be men and no program can teach you to change men not even Project Dawn to Dark to Dawn again.

I tell you what. I made a friend in Bonnie Mason. I don't think I ever had a friend before who wasn't a transaction. My way of life did not support that liberty. But when Bonnie lost her girl I could help, and it was not a swap. I wanted her here today, to say Bonnie more than I saved you, you saved me. You made me a person who could be a friend.

Bonnie and Gwen should be here right now and the man cut my eye should be gone. But no one's electing me Jesus anytime soon.

Thank you for this program. I'm not a crack whore no more and that is something.

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*You are welcome to perform this monologue for free! It would mean a lot to me if you would [buy this play](#), and it's a good idea for your performance too.*

*You may CUT but you may not CHANGE the words. Please introduce the monologue with title of play and author's name (this is a monologue from Leah's Train by Karen Hartman).*

*Feel free to send a video link to yourself performing the monologue through the Contact page, and let me know if I may share! Thanks and be well, KH*

[www.karenhartman.org](http://www.karenhartman.org)