

**Los Angeles; Minister Heeds Call to Change Prostitutes' Lives; Counseling: Ann Hayman planned a conventional life in the church. Instead, she has run a program helping women get off the streets.; [Home Edition]**

*ANNETTE KONDO. Los Angeles Times.* Los Angeles, Calif.: Jul 3, 2001. pg. B.4

**Full Text** (1043 words)

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Freshly minted from the seminary, after just one year at an El Centro church, Ann Hayman received the call. If this was God phoning, it sure seemed like a crackpot message.

Hayman had set her sights on becoming an assistant pastor at a Presbyterian church in Denver. Eventually, she might earn a doctorate and lead a seminary--maybe even Princeton if she were really ambitious.

But the call blasted Hayman's pragmatic dream out the window.

"Would you like to head up a new program to get prostitutes off the street?" asked a friend from the San Francisco Theological Seminary who was recruiting staff.

"I was offended," Hayman said with a hearty laugh. "I mean, what did they think of me to do this?"

Yet Hayman was curious enough to do some research. She found one academic book on prostitution in the El Centro public library incorrectly shelved in the leprosy section.

It offered little guidance. She got the job anyway.

Twenty-one years later, Hayman, 52, is still program director of the Mary Magdalene Project, a privately funded program begun in 1980 by the minister of West Hollywood Presbyterian Church to help women leave prostitution.

The project, which celebrated its 20th anniversary last month, operates one house in Reseda for up to six prostitutes and a Van Nuys apartment building for "graduates" and their families.

Many women have worked hard under Hayman's guidance to redirect their lives. Others succumbed to the streets or drugs. Since its inception in 1980, Hayman estimates the Mary Magdalene Project has helped 120 women, of

whom about 60% completed the program.

### Few Residential Programs Exist

Residential reform projects for prostitutes are still uncommon. The Genesis House in Chicago operates a similar training project.

Los Angeles Police Sgt. Alan Hamilton, who helps supervise the Hollywood Division vice unit, said Mary Magdalene offers a powerful but simple tool: encouragement.

"It helps them know that they can get out of 'the life,' or 'the game,' " he said, referring to the street names for prostitution.

Carol Leigh, a member of COYOTE, a sex-worker rights group, said, "There are very few prostitutes that don't want to get out of the business."

Much of the program's success must be credited to Hayman's dedication, according to former clients and colleagues. She once lived at the Mary Magdalene House seven days a week. Now, Hayman, who is single, takes her springer spaniel Romeo home to her Santa Monica condo on weekends.

During the week, she lives in a cramped bedroom that offers all the privacy of a college dorm. Residents ask her for rides to class. Prostitutes' kids want to know about the next meal or activity. The phone always rings.

Though she calls everyone "sweetie," Hayman is firm, and residents in the two-story Reseda house know who is boss when they play too loudly on the piano or fail to wipe crumbs off the table.

Her day typically begins at 5:30 a.m., when she takes Romeo for a walk. If she is lucky, she will be in bed before midnight. The job pays about \$45,000 a year.

On a recent day, Hayman took some of her clients, staff members and their children to a pool at the home of a Mary Magdalene board member in North Hills. They traveled in her silver 1991 van with more than 300,000 miles on it. Hayman was barefoot and wore a T-shirt over her swimsuit, her curly, reddish-brown hair pulled back with a headband. Though her title is the Rev. Ann Hayman, not a soul ever defers to her as a woman of the cloth. For one thing, you'll never find her in a minister's robe or collar.

The pool party was as much a part of Mary Magdalene as vocational classes, counseling and medical care. For many prostitutes, the program offers their first experience with a stable domestic life, including regular meals, chores, movie nights at home and a list of challenges tailored to each woman, Hayman said.

Ellen, a former prostitute who did not want her real name used, said Hayman saved her life. As a teenager, Ellen witnessed the painful divorce of her upper-middle-class parents and followed one pimp, then another.

Hayman helped her get off the streets, and Ellen eventually found work as a hairdresser. Now 42, Ellen is married to a minister and has two children. Ellen said Hayman taught her a life-altering lesson: "I didn't need to be out there searching for what I didn't have."

A native of Caldwell, Idaho, Hayman is the oldest of five children. In the farming town of 18,400, her mother stayed home to raise Ann and her four brothers while her father worked as a hospital administrator. Both parents were church deacons and one grandfather was a Presbyterian minister.

Hayman dreams of one day returning to the seminary to earn a doctorate in theology. In the meantime, she manages to squeeze in about two sermons a month at Los Angeles-area churches.

#### Decriminalization, Not Legalization

She always had a passion for justice, she said, and it rankles her that prostitutes, but not their clients, usually end up in jail. For that reason, she supports the decriminalization of prostitution and does not believe streetwalkers should be arrested. But she stops short of supporting the legalization of prostitution.

Legalizing it would force street prostitutes to "go underground" and continue to be pursued as criminals working outside any legitimate brothel system, she said.

"It will be zoned, sanctioned and behind barbed wires, like the brothels in Nevada," Hayman said.

San Francisco psychologist Melissa Farley, a researcher with Prostitution Research & Education, said the profession is plagued by "high rates of rape and battering, so why would we want to decriminalize it?"

While the debate continues, Hayman must focus on the demands at hand.

"Our pledge is one life at a time," she said.

#### **[Illustration]**

Caption: PHOTO: The Rev. Ann Hayman of the Mary Magdalene Project enjoys a pool day in North Hills with her dog, Romeo, and the organization's staff

members and clients and their children.; PHOTOGRAPHER: JOEL P. LUGAVERE / Los Angeles Times; PHOTO: Hayman originally planned to be an assistant pastor. 'Our pledge is one life at a time.'; PHOTOGRAPHER: JOEL P. LUGAVERE / Los Angeles Times

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