

GO MAGAZINE

Women At The Helm

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by Kat Long and Shannon Leigh O'Neil



photo by Kat Long

Sienna Baskin: Co-director, Sex Workers Project at the Urban Justice Center
Sienna Baskin, Esq. became Co-director of the Sex Workers Project in 2009, tasked with serving the legal needs of some of the most vulnerable and maligned members of society—those that trade sex for money or survival. In addition to advocating for law reform and human rights, Baskin trains and supervises staff in providing legal representation, public education and outreach to sex workers and survivors of trafficking. Last June, the SWP celebrated the passage of a bill that allows sex workers who were forced or coerced into prostitution to clear their criminal records, making it easier to get mainstream jobs—a law co-authored by Baskin and the first of its kind in the nation. Though the work is never easy, “my clients are a daily inspiration as they meet their challenges with humor and a fighting spirit,” Baskin says; she hopes to inspire the LGBT community to stand behind its most marginalized members, including sex workers. “As a queer woman I never forget how others fought and died for my right to a safe and fulfilling life – but that battle is still raging on the margins of society. Sex workers, transgender women, gays and queers in conservative states and countries are still living at risk every day for being themselves.”