



The International League of Peoples' Struggles

Symposium on the Struggles of Homeless, Urban Poor and Internally Displaced People

Saturday, May 19, 2018

Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Surrey, BC, Canada

@llpsCanada

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Acknowledgements

The Symposium on the struggles of homeless, urban poor and internally displaced people took place in May, 2018, on the unceded and never-surrendered shared traditional territories of the Kwantlen, Musqueam, Katzie, Stó:lō, Semiahmoo, and Tsawwassen First Nations.

Participating organizations in the ILPS in Canada are comprised of Indigenous people, migrants, and settlers working together to expose and oppose imperialism. Through this work, we commit ourselves to the struggle for Indigenous national liberation and self-determination. One enemy, one struggle!

The organizers of this Symposium would like to acknowledge the many comrades who donated time, money, vehicles, and labour to organizing this Symposium, as well as those who opened their homes to host the many comrades who travelled from far and wide to attend.

Finally, we acknowledge all those loved ones, friends, and comrades lost to the War on Drugs and the War on the Poor. It is in their memory that we continue to fight for justice and liberation!



Christian Paco speaking at the Poor People Fight Back! Rally

Executive Summary

As wealth and capital are increasingly concentrated in the hands of the few monopoly bourgeoisie, the crisis of destitution and debt continue to plague the worlds exploited and super-exploited proletariat. Even liberal economists estimate that the worlds 1% richest will have control over two-thirds of the world's wealth by 2030. As the drive for profits and the crisis of capitalism intensify, so do outright wars of aggression, imperialist occupation and militarization, increasing plunder of the world's natural resources through ecologically violent mining and extraction, increasing landlessness, hunger, and a rising tide of forced migration.

On any given day, the news is filled with such stories of human suffering. As the monopoly bourgeoisie battle to maintain and increase their profit levels, the people bear the consequences. The only reliable way to increase profits is to get more labour for less money from the global proletariat and violently extract more from the lands of the Earth.

In order to effectively resist, we must understand how our experiences, while differing depending on context, are connected through the major imperialist strategies for expanding super-profits in the global context.

Land-grabbing, land conversion & gentrification = displacement

In poor rural peasant communities within the exploited countries, displacement happens through land grabbing. Land grabbing can be the outcome of a violent imperialist war of aggression or colonial occupation. But more often, land grabbing is the consolidation of vast tracts of land for agribusiness largely for export. Land grabbing is facilitated through government or corporate legal or quasi-legal seizure of lands for mining and resource extraction. Land conversion for tourism or development is another form of land grabbing which displaces masses or rural poor peasant families.

Land grabbing also occurs within the imperialist countries. In fact, the colonization of Turtle Island is an ongoing massive land grab tied to the genocide of Indigenous peoples. The capital accumulation necessary to advance capitalism to this highest stage, known as imperialism, was reaped through colonial land theft, the enslaving of millions of African and Indigenous peoples, and the continual process of proletarianization of previously self-sufficient peoples. Land grabbing in the imperialist countries continues to this day, for example as evidenced the growing waves of resistance to pipeline expansions and fracking.

When rural communities are displaced through land grabbing and development aggression, often poor people wind up living in urban poor ghettos, extremely vulnerable to further displacement, containment, super-exploitation, mounting financial debts, and criminalization of the day-to-day hustle to survive.

Land grabbing in urban communities happens through real estate speculation and development aggression against low income renters and urban poor squatters. Whether in the exploited countries or in the imperialist countries, the pattern is similar even as the rate and degree of displacement is far greater within the urban poor communities situated in the exploited countries. Poor squatters or renters are displaced with passive or active involvement from local governments and their enforcement agents

as urban property values skyrocket and government bureaucrats seek to use their positions to elevate themselves into the position of the capitalist.

Lower wages disproportionate to the cost of living = super-exploitation

For the poor, displacement to global urban centres is usually accompanied by conditions that force people to work for below their own cost of reproduction – set at the minimum wage by the capitalist state. Super-exploitation is the new frontier of global wealth acquisition. Super-exploitation of workers creates super-profits for imperialists and is the backbone of capital accumulation within the imperialist countries.

Racism, colonization, and settler society drive super-exploitation on Turtle Island, and we know Indigenous women are concentrated in super-exploitative conditions. Super-exploited workers are bound to employers or workplaces, whether in legal (such as temporary foreign worker programs) or criminalized industries (the sex and illicit drug industries), through contractual obligations or debt bondage that deny certain freedoms available to the rest of the proletariat.

Maximizing profits from survival strategies = debt

One marker of class status in the imperialist countries is access to credit. As economic conditions worsen, debt levels increase. For the proletariat, that debt can take common forms, such as overspending on credit, large student loans, and other forms of regulated debt. Those who are not eligible for lines of credit from banks or credit unions are forced to turn to money lenders such as Cash-Money or Money Mart, who give payday or remittance loans at extremely high interest rates. In this way, the cycle of bondage to super-exploitative working conditions is reinforced.

Yet, more heinous forms of debt are often the only economic recourse available to proletarian communities. This can include debt to human traffickers, borrowing on goods for sale (i.e. illicit drugs), or borrowing cash from modern-day underground urban usurers within criminalized industries. This type of debt comes at a very high price and can lead to extreme violence. Those ultimately responsible for structural violence, the big bourgeoisie, can wash their hands of any involvement and stir up public disdain for urban poor communities through stereotypical propaganda about urban poor neighbourhoods as dangerous and undesirable.

Increasing state surveillance and control = criminalization

As the exploited and super-exploited proletariat struggle to survive under ever-worsening conditions, increasing numbers turn to un-regulated, quasi-legal, or outright criminalized work to survive. This is commonly known as the informal and/or the underground economy. The informal economy includes workers who work under-the-table in precarious temporary jobs as well as those who participate in peripheral economic activities such as informal sales positions, small home-based production activities, and scavenging, binners, and can collectors.

However, much of the informal work is also criminalized by the state. Criminalized work includes but is not limited to sex work, drug dealing, theft, and the associated organizational tasks. Many who work in the criminalized industries are just that, *workers* with no capital investment and very little job security

working at very high rates of exploitation and extremely vulnerable to violent methods of collection and control.

Containment = the neoliberal agenda

Neoliberal states are increasingly using containment as the policy arm of capital accumulation. While the policies of containment are most visible and stark in such institutions and practices as migrant detention centres and the rapid expansion of prisons and the practices of mass incarceration, in fact, policies of containment occur at all levels of government across the imperialist states.

Containment includes the physical control and intimidation of the exploited and super-exploited proletariat through the coercive arms of the state which extend beyond the justice system and the police. The Indian Reserve system on Turtle Island is a containment strategy – in fact, the original containment strategy. Welfare regulations are a practice of containment as welfare payments are accompanied by very high levels of state control. And there are countless more examples of containment as a shared experience among the poor.

Economic and political tensions within the imperialist countries continue to intensify, as does the people's resistance. It is through the International League of Peoples' Struggles that we find connection and draw inspiration from the most advanced and militant examples of urban poor struggles!

The Resolution

To establish a study commission on the rights and welfare of urban poor communities against imperialist displacement, containment, criminalization and exploitation.

The existing ILPS Commission 15 reads: The "rights and welfare of homeless persons, refugees and migrant workers displaced by imperialism and local reactionaries".

This Commission has been focused on the concerns of migrants and is now expanding to investigate and wage campaigns on the concerns of refugees but has not been able to integrate the concerns of homeless, internal migrants, urban poor people and communities displaced by real estate speculation and gentrification, development aggression, militarization and criminalization and police harassment of survival activities and other forces of imperialism and local reaction.

The numbers of homeless, urban poor and other people displaced by imperialism and local reaction is increasing rapidly in the current context of crisis and war both in the imperialist countries and in the oppressed countries. Many of these organizations of the homeless, internal migrants, urban poor people and other displaced people are resisting imperialism and local reaction and can be brought into the anti-imperialist united front.

VANDU (Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users) attended 5th International ILPS Assembly. Participated in Commission 15 on rights and welfare of urban poor, homeless, and migrant/displaced; there was a lot of great content from the well-organized/represented migrant justice organizations, and not a lot on urban poor (who were not as represented as organizational participants). We decided to propose a new Commission specifically for Urban Poor organizing.

There is a need to give enough attention to organizations engaged in these struggles, both those currently in the ILPS and the many groups that can be brought into the orbit of ILPS.

Therefore, we put forward and adopt the following plan of action:

- Convene a study commission to share experiences, develop analysis and reach out to groups both inside and outside the ILPS – the first task of the study commission is to ensure the representation of organizations from all the global regions.
- Plan exchanges, regional meetings and other activities in the lead up to the next International Assembly of the ILPS.
- Organize new and existing ILPS organizations working in this area to attend and participate in the ILPS 6th International Assembly.
- Launch a new commission at a future International Assembly on the rights and welfare of urban poor communities against imperialist displacement, containment, criminalization and exploitation.

Organizational leads: KADAMAY-Philippines, Migrante International, and VANDU.

The Symposium



Approximately 70 attendees including representation from over 35 different mass organizations from different cities and regions including approximately 25 ILPS member organizations participated in Symposium activities over the course of several days.

Here we have published the results of the Saturday Symposium.

As well as the Saturday meeting at Kwantlen, the events included a panel presentation and a rally organized and led by the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users.

Next Steps

In the late spring of 2019, there will be a follow up meeting and events in Vancouver in preparation for the Sixth International Assembly of the International League of Peoples Struggles in Hong Kong in June 2019, where further steps will be jointly strategized by all participating organizations and their member delegations as well as invited observers.



Program of the ILPS Symposium on the struggles of homeless, urban poor and internally displaced people - Saturday, May 19 @ Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Surrey, BC

9:30am - 10:00

- Kevin Yake, Welcome and Acknowledgement of the Territory
- Acknowledgement of organizations & introduction of the Secretariat & logistics
- Malcolm Guy, ILPS Secretary General, Solidarity Message
- Gloria 'Ka Bea' Arellano, "Imperialism, poverty, and poor people's struggle in the Philippines" (Video)
- Aiyanas, "Steps to uniting poor people in struggle against imperialism under the banner of the ILPS"

10:00am - 11:00pm: Roundtable & Discussion 1: Sharing our experiences of Informal, unpaid and precarious and criminalized work (live in caregivers, temp agency work, unpaid reproductive labour, volunteer health workers, criminalized industry workers). *What are our everyday hustles to survive as poor people? What are the underlying conditions that allow for the super-exploitation of our labour? By who? How are we organizing to resist super-exploitation?*

Speakers: Hessed (Migrante), Lorna Bird (VANDU), Neil La Dode (IWC), Martin Steward (VANDU)

11 - 12:30: Panel 1: Developing anti-imperialist positions on criminalized industries

- Lakhbir Khunkhun (East Indian Defense Committee), "Menace of Drugs" is it really that simple?
- Hugh Lampkin (Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users) & Aiyanas Ormond (ILPS), Imperialism and Drug War: Advancing an anti-imperialist position
- Martha Roberts (Surrey People Power), Toward a class analysis of the sex industry
- Jenn Allen (Jenn's Kitchen) Indigenous Women Resist State sanctioned violence

1:30 – 3:00: Panel 2: Resisting the fascist containment state

- Jeff Shantz (KPU & Critical Criminology Working Group), Police recruitment, surveillance and infiltration of poor and working-class communities
- Robert Gavino, BAYAN Pacific Northwest, ILPS Seattle, Block the Bunker, Youth Undoing Institutional Racism (YUIR)
- Julian Ichim (Anti Colonialist Working Group), Resisting the Fascist Containment State: Lessons from Ireland and Kitchener

3 - 4:30pm: Roundtable and Discussion 2: Poor people resist gentrification and displacement

Displacement because of parasitic real-estate speculation and development aggression is a common experience of urban poor communities across the globe. How are communities organizing around gentrification and displacement? What strategies and tactics are effective? What are anti-imperialist calls that can unite us across jurisdictions and borders?

Input: Our Homes Can't Wait (Flora & Vince), Jannie Leung (Chinatown Action Group), Kevin Yake (VANDU), Kym Hines (THAW - Victoria), Julian Ichim (Anti-Colonialist Working Group - Kitchener), Cheuk-Ning Li (Chinatown-International District Coalition)

Roundtable One: Experiences of Informal, Unpaid, Precarious, and Criminalized Work

What are our everyday hustles to survive as poor people? What are the underlying conditions that allow for the super-exploitation of our labour? By who? How are we organizing to resist super-exploitation?

Hessed Torres (Migrante BC)

I am a community member of Migrante BC and a nanny in BC who arrived under the Live-In Care Giver program in 2014. My original contract was to care for someone who was sick, but upon arrival, worked more than 8-hour days starting at 7:30am and going to bed at 9pm.

3-4 months into the job, I recognized something wrong, but couldn't explain it. I did caregiving for an MS patient AND took care of the whole house and the dog, which wasn't what I signed up for. I wasn't paid overtime and when I brought this up with employer, they terminated me the very next day. I ended up staying with Migrante BC until could find a new employer.

The current immigration stream for caregivers has become more stringent. They're asking for Migrant Workers to spend a lot more money – we need to spend \$2000 just to apply for permanent residency via medical and English exams. This is A LOT for someone on minimum wage and it isn't an option to not send money back home to my daughter and family depending on me.



A question that is important for me to ask as a migrant worker and community member: How did I get here and why am I in this situation? I was a registered nurse in the Philippines but experienced job security issues.

The problem is imperialism - which makes us commodities. Capitalism makes us into commodities, like bananas - where migrant workers are being shipped to other countries. There are over 14 million of us shipped overseas, and 7.5 million are under-employed. The average Canadian wage is ~\$9/day. Around 5,000 Filipinos leave daily just to find employment via Labour Export Policy. The Philippines calls this sharing human resources, but it's just making their citizens into products to be bought and sold.

The injustices we face here and around the globe are tied to policies implemented by the government of the Philippines, which is just a puppet government held by the imperialist capitalist countries like USA and Canada.

Migrante calls for status on arrival and recognizes the route of arrival as part of the capitalist and imperialist system. We are also tied to what's happening at home in the Philippines. We also build bridges with other organizations to work together to make change happen.

Neil La Dode (Immigrant Workers Centre)

I am from Indonesia. I left my family to come to Canada. My first job was on a cruise ship in the US, and then continued to Montreal. I worked one year and then found my work agreement was not respected. I came as a migrant worker.

I would like to talk about the concept of poverty. It doesn't start when we arrive in Canada, but it starts when we are at home. I was forced to leave my family to find a job. My employer didn't respect my contract. At the time, I found help via Immigrant Workers Centre (IWC) 5 years ago and tried to establish myself.

IWC - now the Migrant Worker Association in Quebec. Temporary migrant previously had the opportunity to become a permanent resident – but no longer attainable for many. I am now paid staff at IWC, a non-profit organization with a small team and dedicated volunteers and board members. IWC works to fight for justice and defend migrant rights for over 20 years since founding in 2001.

Precarious conditions. We hope to have better conditions and protections! Migrant workers are exploited in every condition. Most must pay a lot of money just to come from their home country. When they arrive in work country, we are tied to our employers and what happens with the state, when our visa is tied to set number of years, when we have the legal status, we are tied also to restrictions.

When we have illegal status, we're being criminalized. For example, when we have case workers working with Guatemalan workers and Guinean contract positions. Cases: right of housing, right to improve conditions = tied to employer. In this situation, we are trying to work and accompany migrant workers and do case work. We also have a legal clinic of volunteers working with us. Also have partner service providers who can help with cases beyond our expertise.

The super exploitation and labour are because of the CLOSED PERMITS. In the case of the politics and government policy. We continue to organize and mobilize to get to level of precarious worker coalition and connect to other local community in other poor neighbourhoods/centres. We work together and have a tight connection and open our heart to work together.

Lorna Bird (VANDU)

Last year I was the President of VANDU. We work with people from the Street Market which was came out of the struggles of street vendors, where people tried to sell things they don't need, but police fined people \$250 for not having a backyard to do a "garage sale" so they were selling their things on the sidewalk. For example, one person got 8 fines, they got it thrown out, but it was a fight. The police often get involved when people tried to survive. This is our experience at VANDU. We're criminalized for trying to survive.



So, we organize ourselves at VANDU. We run our own supervised injection site and pay our volunteers \$10/hours for 4 hours shift. All our volunteers get something. Reception gets \$7 an hour; a site supervisor gets \$10 an hour – this is how we distribute money in our communities to help ourselves survive.

How do you help the community? VANDU spends a lot of time learning the problems in our community, such as fentanyl overdose or people drinking hand sanitizer. Then we work together to introduce programming in harm reduction, doing education groups where people can discuss their issues, and fighting and winning campaigns such as having speed limits brought down on Hastings Street!

Main Points from the Discussion

Migrant workers & criminalized workers are "invisible & disposable". It's "out of sight, out of mind" of the public, and we become "disposable". When you assert your right as migrant worker, you face retaliation or termination. When you assert your right in the street market, you get ticketed/criminalized. Structural barriers including unrealistic expectations of migrants with unreasonably short time frames to become fluent in multiple languages: ex. need to speak both French and English in Quebec within three years and pass French language exams to continue to work or apply for Permanent Residency. It's hard enough to pass the exams to be treated as equals to other job applicants, let alone get offered jobs.

We need to explore how professionalism affects the movement! It's capitalist bullshit when professionals get all the money even though a degree is irrelevant to whether one can do the work well. There is reverse professionalism, taking professionals from other countries and handing them a broom. Used to de-class and divide us as humans into competing categories. There is no replacing lived experience. You can go to school for 10 years to become a doctor, and you can also know more than a doctor knows from living in the DTES and being in the safe injection rooms.

There are clear intersections here across migrant and urban poor life where both are heavily over-policed, heavily regulated, and put in situations that structurally push people towards breaking the law and then being criminalized for it. Migrant workers tend to be highly regulated. It's bizarre that people get criminalized for this when it takes so much time to get a new permit that you MUST work illegally. It's ridiculous.

We cannot resist if we do not know what we are fighting against. We need to recognize the history & the root problem, teach next generation on what happened & the need to organize. If the government is not going to do it, we as a community need to organize and do it ourselves.

Round-Table Summary

Experiences: People are turned into commodities under imperialism and exploited in highly regulated and highly policed ways: migrants are deskilled and sent abroad where injustices by our employers are reinforced by policies and practices of governments abroad and at home who work in the interest of imperialist states rather than in the interest of every day ordinary people.

Analysis: These injustices start at home and continue, where people are forced abroad for economic survival, and then super-exploited abroad/at work places that are made worse by lack of government

protection and government sanctioned harm including: closed permits, tied visas, no status/rights on arrival, housing and working conditions set by an employer who has all the power, employment contracts limiting employee rights, debt as a form of control, etc. This highly regulated situation is echoed in local poor people's experiences of being over-policed and under-protected as well.

Action: We resist through collective organizing (Migrante, Migrant Workers Centre, VANDU) and fighting for the rights of peers to challenge unjust laws/practices by the state and state forces like the police. We build community organizations to investigate and better understand the problems their peers face and use that as a starting point to launch collective action to fight back against shared problems. Sometimes we do use the law/courts as a tactic to use collective power to force changes/improvements to laws that were applied unjustly against certain community members.

Participating Organizations

2SPfn

32 County Sovereignty Movement

Alliance for People's Health

Anakbayan Ottawa

Anakbayan PDX

Anti-Colonial Working Group

BC Association of People on Methadone

Canada Philippines Solidarity for Human Rights

CDDT Montreal

Chinatown Action Group

Chinatown/International District Coalition

CUPW

East Indian Defence Committee

Gabriella Seattle

Grassroots Women

Hurriya Collective

ILPS Seattle Regional Coordinating Committee

Imigrante Women's Group

Immigrant Workers Centre

International Action Centre/Workers World

Party

Just Peace Committee

Migrant Women's Organizing Committee

Migrante BC

Migrante Ottawa

Ontario Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines

Our Homes Can't Wait Coalition

Parisol

PHMC Ottawa

Portland Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines

Seattle Democratic Socialists of America

Standing Against Foreclosure and Eviction

Surrey People Power

Temporary Agency Workers Association

THAW Victoria

The Mainlander

VANDU

Western Aboriginal Harm Reduction Society

Youth Undoing Institutional Racism

The Menace of Drugs: Is it Really that Simple?

By Lakhbir Khunkhun, East Indian Defense Committee

I recently watched a motion picture titled 'GOOD KILL'. It is about a war crime. It is about the 'DRONE WAR' unleashed by the US imperialism on various sovereign Nations' people in the world, western Pakistan (Waziristan) and Afghanistan are worth mentioning along with Yemen and others. In the movie a U.S air force major (a drone operator) is asked by a cop, 'how was his war on terrorism going' and in reply he says: 'same as your war on drugs'. I pondered if there was a relation. The relation is very much there. Same as the war on terror has no clear-cut enemies but a purpose to extend the imperial agenda, the war on drugs has hardly anything to do with human suffering caused in process but a purpose to control the illicit money involved. And through criminalising some substances, controlling the population.

There is no doubt that a lot of the covert imperialist wars and religious/fundamentalist reaction to them



in form of asymmetrical war (terrorism if you may) are funded by money coming from the vast underground drug economy. Whether it was the flooding of black ghettos in USA to undermine and defeat black panther's movement or funding the contras in Latin America to defeat the growing anti-imperialist socialist movement. The agenda of a minority class ruling over majority people has been always same. Keep people divided, they are easier to control. Creating more and more legal scenarios like

criminalising dissent by making words like 'radical' sound ominous or creating laws on drugs just to promote horizontal violence among people and facilitating easier incarceration of enemies. As you will see in the following text that it is not any otherwise.

Before we go any further, let's look at how drugs work at the most fundamental level i.e., the human brain. Almost all drugs, including alcohol & religion (if you may), have the effect of producing endorphins which according to medicine experts are also produced naturally in brains from various humanly satisfying activities such as fulfillment of desires, self respect, love, watching a sun-rise, meeting an old friend, kissing or being kissed by your child etc. Following is the excerpt from a paper: "Endorphins are among the brain chemicals known as neurotransmitters, which function to transmit electrical signals within the nervous system. At least 20 types of endorphins have been demonstrated in humans. Endorphins can be found in the pituitary gland, in other parts of the brain, or distributed throughout the nervous system. Stress and pain are the two most common factors leading to the release of endorphins. Endorphins interact with the opiate receptors in the brain to reduce our perception of pain and act similarly to drugs such as morphine and codeine. In contrast to the opiate drugs, however, activation of the opiate receptors by the body's endorphins does not lead to addiction or dependence."

The question we must ask here is that, in a class society what the likelihood of a life where people can live humanly satisfying and respectful lives? Where they also have equal opportunities to fulfill their desires? If we can answer this question wisely, we might be on right track.

Now getting to the beneficiaries in the drug trade, who also make it impossible for the good Samaritans to understand the real phenomenon. I will extensively quote Wendy Kaminer: "A sensible person ... might wonder why we criminalize the use of cocaine and heroin, not to mention marijuana, while we tolerate and even celebrate alcohol consumption. Of course, we learned long ago that prohibition of alcohol was bound to fail. So, a sensible person might propose that we consider ending prohibition of drugs like marijuana, cocaine, and heroin, which pose much less threat to the public safety than alcohol, or at least reduce harsh penalties for their use. But sensible people have had little influence over the nation's drug policies."

All of this has led many to declare the government's anti-drug crusade a failure. But one man's failed government program is another's success. The war on drugs has transferred a vast amount of wealth and power to those who would otherwise have to find honest work. One doesn't have to be a public-choice scholar to recognize that the drug war, like any war, is merely "politics by other means," and that those who benefit from it have no desire to see it ended anytime soon.

Who are the beneficiaries of the war on drugs?

A major beneficiary, of course, is the U.S. government, which has used the drug war as a pretext to shred the Bill of Rights and claim vast new powers over the American people. That the drug war would lead to the depredation of civil liberties and the erosion of the rule of law was inevitable, given that there is simply no way for the government to effectively enforce its drug laws while abiding by the Constitution.

And as libertarians and many other constitutionalists have tirelessly pointed out, Washington's drug war is illegal because the power to prohibit drugs has never been given to the federal government. Just as with alcohol prohibition, any federal law prohibiting or restricting the production, sale, and use of drugs (marijuana, cocaine, heroin, etc.) would require a constitutional amendment.

The war on drugs generates huge profits that enrich drug dealers and drug warriors alike. The dealers get very wealthy shipping and selling their contraband. The drug warriors, for their part, receive billions of dollars a year from the taxpayers and bank a sizeable portion of the war booty their raiding parties routinely snatch up. And this plunder includes more than just "drug money" but any property they suspect might be involved in narcotics trafficking. As the economist Robert Higgs writes: "The drug war has been a bonanza even to law-abiding cops, as the altered forfeiture laws have given the police free rein to seize private property at will. ... If in the process of padding their budgets the police arrest a throng of street-corner entrepreneurs who subsequently land in prison. Largess from asset forfeitures and federal grants allows local police departments to augment their salaries, expand payrolls, and purchase sophisticated surveillance equipment, high-powered weaponry, and other menacing-looking paramilitary gear. Indeed, the militarization of America's police departments over the last 35 years has largely been a function of the drug war.

And behind the frontlines of this war is a vast legal-industrial-imprisonment complex employing thousands of judges, prosecutors, criminal-defense attorneys, bail bondsmen, prison guards, and vendors. For the corporations operating privatized "correctional facilities," the drug war provides a steady supply of warm bodies to fill their prison cells.

Another major beneficiary of the drug war is the banking system, which takes in hundreds of billions of dollars annually from narcotics traffickers. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

describes money laundering as “the method by which criminals disguise the illegal origins of their wealth and protect their asset bases in order to avoid suspicion of law enforcement agencies and to prevent leaving a trail of incriminating evidence.”

Money laundering is more than just an opportunity for greedy bankers to collect fat commissions. The huge amount of cash churned up by the illegal drug trade has become a vital source of liquidity for the rickety fractional-reserve banking system. UNODC’s director, Antonio Maria Costa, told the British newspaper the Observer in late 2009 that proceeds from the illicit drug trade were “the only liquid investment capital” available to many banks on the brink of collapse. In fact, “a majority of the \$352 billion of drugs profits was absorbed into the economic system as a result.”

According to Costa, “Inter-bank loans were funded by money that originated from the drugs trade and other illegal activities. ... There were signs that some banks were rescued that way.”

The CIA has long been involved in drug trafficking. This conflux of the intelligence netherworld and the narcotics-trafficking underworld has been written about by a variety of credible journalists and scholars. The reports usually involve the CIA working with drug traffickers, providing them assistance in return for intelligence and material support. Alfred C. McCoy, author of *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*, writes, “In most cases, the CIA’s role involved various forms of complicity, tolerance or studied ignorance about the trade, not any direct culpability in the actual trafficking ... the CIA did not handle heroin, but it did provide its drug lord allies with transport, arms, and political protection. In sum, the CIA’s role in the Southeast Asian heroin trade involved indirect complicity rather than direct culpability.”

Peter Dale Scott, a retired professor and the author of many books including *Cocaine Politics: Drugs, Armies, and the CIA in Central America*, and *Drugs, Oil, and War: The United States in Afghanistan, Colombia, and Indochina*, believes McCoy understates the extent of CIA involvement. Scott believes rather than being passively drawn into “drug alliances,” the CIA actively engages in narcotics trafficking in pursuit of certain “national-security” objectives and to finance “off-the-books” operations. Scott writes, “Far from considering drug networks their enemy, U.S. intelligence organizations have made them an essential ally in the covert expansion of American influence abroad.”

Robert Parry’s *Lost History: Contras, Cocaine, the Press, & “Project Truth”* and Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair’s *Whiteout: The CIA, Drugs, and the Press* are two well-researched books supporting Scott’s contention. And perhaps most notable is the reporting of the late Gary Webb. His “Dark Alliance” series published in the San Jose

Mercury News in 1996 sparked a firestorm of controversy by asserting the CIA had engaged in cocaine smuggling as part of its covert operations supporting the Nicaraguan Contras. Though Webb was criticized at the time and driven out of the mainstream press for his investigative journalism, much of what he reported in the series was validated later by an inspector general’s investigation of the CIA.



The war on drugs has created shared interests for the world's largest banks, drug cartels, and the U.S. intelligence apparatus. As the economist Michel Chossudovsky writes, "This trade can only prosper if the main actors involved in narcotics have "political friends in high places." Legal and illegal undertakings are increasingly intertwined, the dividing line between "businesspeople" and criminals is blurred. In turn, the relationship among criminals, politicians and members of the intelligence establishment has tainted the structures of the state and the role of its institutions.

The drug war is not about squashing narcotics trafficking, nor is it about protecting Americans from the ravages of drug addiction. The ugly truth is the war on drugs is one of America's most lucrative industries, funding police salaries and supporting the country's vast prison system. It is apparently also propping up a bankrupt financial system and reportedly providing the spooks at Langley with cash to finance their black ops.

Ending the drug war would require fundamentally rethinking decades of official policy, closing multiple government agencies, as well as undermining the powerful, entrenched corporate interests that have developed over the last 40 years. Perhaps therefore U.S. government will make sure the war on drugs never ends. Meanwhile, civil liberties are violated, the Constitution is trashed, lives are ruined, and the death toll mounts."

Today, if you ask a member of public what they think of drugs you will often find that those who deal and consume drugs are often viewed in a criminal way, as a blight on an otherwise good society and that every ill in society would solve itself if it wasn't for the drugs trade. It is also the view that the agents of law enforcement benevolently try their best, in vain, against what is perceived to be the "social scourge" that individuals who usually trade these narcotic consumer goods are portrayed to be. This view is so universal that it is hard to dislodge, since every institution from the corporate media to the church denounces the drugs trade and urge the keeping of the prohibition.

Therefore, we need to see drugs in a different way. As S. Taylor-Wickenden writes (from an Imperialist Nations citizen's perspective) Why we need to see drugs in a different way. Here I quote: "This is where a sober analysis of drug trade becomes crucial. What is missing is an analysis which looks for much larger, intractable problems than the simple Hollywood inspired 'good cop vs. bad dealer' and this is what a Marxist analysis does. It aims to show the real effects the war on drugs has and how the drugs prohibition helps to keep the profits flowing for the mega rich and how it keeps the powerful in power.

Since the United States is the chief superpower in this era, we shall concentrate largely upon the drugs trade there, since it has the biggest involvement and reaps the biggest benefit from this trade. It is also useful to point out that economists tend to avoid the topic of drugs as a commodity, simply because of the negative universal portrayal of this commodity. Our analysis treats drugs as a commodity like any other and contextualises it with a class analysis to show the inherent abuses of power because of the existence of the drugs trade. It is my hope that drugs can be seen in a different light altogether, as a break from the simple and misguided dichotomy which we find as the prevailing opinion of the day.

Historical Application

The first major war involving drugs as a commodity were the Opium Wars in the 19th Century. The aim of the war was to open the isolationist Chinese economy to exploitation, global trade, and partial colonial take-over. The Opium wars were a series of conflicts involving the European imperialist powers represented chiefly by the United Kingdom. France was a secondary player in the region to Britain. The

wars were fought from 1839 to 1842 and 1856 to 1860. These were chiefly fought over trade of the narcotic called opium, which the British used to extend their imperial influence and profits at the expense of the Chinese Empire. During the Treaty of Nanjing and Tientsin, China had to cede Hong Kong Island and Southern Kowloon as a territorial concession. The Chinese peasantry were subjected to massive poverty and decline in their living standards, while the Chinese bourgeoisie benefited from the trade, got rich, and later dominated the state with such drug merchants such as Chiang Kai Shek, head of state in the interwar period.

It was the British East India Company's operations in Bengal, by then occupied by Britain, which produced the opium in their factories undoubtedly putting the workers under starvation wages to feed the profits of men such as John Napier and Charles Elliot. The goods were then shipped to the coast of China and then sold for a good profit. China began to lose control of its finances and, with the growing number of addicts in China rising, the Emperor Daoguang demanded action to stop this addiction from afflicting the Chinese people. Instead of legalisation, the supporters of suppression won the day and the Chinese then arrested Chinese opium dealers. They laid siege to the firms and demanded that their stock be destroyed. In response, the British brought their gunboats and ravaged the coast of the Chinese mainland leading to further land incursions by other European powers during the Second Opium War which, led to land concessions and pro "free-trade" concessions.

The consequences of this were China's "century of humiliation", opening to Christian religious missionaries, destitution for its people, land concessions and control of swathes of territory for the benefit of European empires. For Britain, this meant an expansion of trade in East Asia for well over a century. For us, this shows the first example of how government complicity in the production, exchange, and distribution of the drugs trade emerged from Victorian Britain and how it was openly used in an imperial way to subjugate and pacify the country for exploitation. On a more general level it shows us that "free markets", as was the norm during the Victorian Britain, have an undeniable dependence on the state, and without the state, those markets could not have opened East Asia by themselves.

In the 17th century the same effect was achieved by selling "fire water" to the Native Americans. The British and their colonies would trade their alcohol for furs and pelts and other goods which the Native Americans gave with such naïve innocence. Our current superpower, the United States of America, was founded on such trades with the Native American population, culminating in 8 million deaths and a replacement of one population by another. It is therefore not hard to see the pivotal role which drugs and narcotics play in the imperial power game of states.



Contemporary Drugs Trade

The invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001 unleashed a vast increase in the global production of opium. Opium production in Afghanistan before the invasion was 75% of the world's total in 1999; after the invasion it comprised of 90% of the world's total produced in the year 2000. The product was then

sold as heroin to the European and Russian Markets. The Taliban used the opium for 96% of its revenue. The other sources coming from Pakistan and the Bin Laden family. The BBC quoted a UN report in 2009, which stated that the opium market, worth \$65bn (£39bn), funds global terrorism, caters to 15 million addicts, and kills 100,000 people every year.

According to Global research, \$65 billion is the tip of the iceberg. The extent of the drugs trade in monetary terms amounts to between US\$300 and \$500 billion world-wide. Most of the funds are laundered by massive financial institutions, such as HSBC who, let it be known, laundered \$22 billion of drug money through their affiliate HBUS; they got lightly fined to the tune of \$1.9 billion although it is only 1/12th of their profits. The US government and the enforcement agencies ignore the financial aspect of this illegal trade and, as a result, not even one banker got prosecuted or imprisoned for breaking the US law. When we compare this to the imprisonment of the small-time domestic drug dealer and the consumer of drugs, it strikes the sober analyst of this problem as grossly negligent at the very least and premeditated at the very worst!

Catherine Austin Fitts, a former investment banker from Wall Street who was interviewed by Oliver Villar, gives us this astonishing insight into the trade: "Essentially, I would say the governments run the drug trade, but they're not the ultimate power, they're just one part, if you will, of managing the operations. Nobody can run a drug business, unless the banks will do their transactions and handle their money. If you want to understand who controls the drug trade in a place, you need to ask yourself who is it that must accept to manage the transactions and to manage the capital, and that will lead you to the answer who's in control."

Villars also corroborates this testimony that since the international drugs trade is around US\$300 billion to \$500 billion a year and that half of that, something between \$150-\$250 billion and over, goes to the United States. What does this say if you use an imperial political economic approach? It means that the imperial center, the financial center, is getting the most, and so it is in no interest for any great power (or state) to stop this if great amounts of the profits are flowing to the imperial center. It is also wise to note the criminalized status of drugs. It is criminalized in society, but when it comes to the economic and financial sector, it is decriminalized. So we have some kind of contradiction and paradox where it would be great if it would be criminalized, but when it comes to the financial sector, it is lax, unregulated, and as we know, the US Federal Reserve can monitor any deposit over \$10,000, so it's not that they don't know – they know what's going on. If this is the case, it is no surprise to see a vast number of money laundering banks, which include: HSBC, Western Union, Bank of America, JP Morgan Chase & Co, Citigroup, Wachovia amongst many others that have allegedly failed to comply with American and British anti-money laundering (AML) laws.

The Bush and Obama Departments of Justice spent trillions of dollars fighting the combined "war on terrorism" and "the war on drugs", while simultaneously allowing US banks to launder money for the cause that the US is supposedly at war with! This is an active demonstration of the contradictions of Capitalism in a global microcosm. The fight against global Jihad finds itself in the same contradiction because many of the terrorist cells are funded by the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia, who are in turn funded by the United States' and Europe's addiction to oil. This key contradiction is the reason why the US cannot win "the war on drugs" and "the war on terror" because it is undermined by its very own private institutions belonging to finance and oil bourgeois. Thereby, or so we think, underlining a conflict of interest of these bourgeois.

Drugs: The Great Game

Another aspect to the war on drugs is its use of foreign and domestic policy as a tool. On April 4th, 1948 Jorge Elcór Gaitán, a populist, Liberal politician who promised land reform, was murdered by the US backed ultra-conservative oligarchy which now rules Colombia; this started what is now known in Colombia as “La Violencia”. The Cold War was the justification the US needed to use state violence in which 300,000 people died from 1948 to 1958. The people most liable to be murdered were trade union members, students in associations, peasant organizations, and the same kind of what are considered subversive elements in Colombia. Undeniably, more trade unionists are killed in Colombia than in the whole world combined. It has the lowest rate of unionization in the whole continent and it has come to the point where there are not many more unionists to murder. Since 2002 onwards more than 250,000 people have lost their lives in the state-sponsored terrorism.

Due to the Chinese Communist revolution’s success in combating the drugs trade from 1949 onwards, and the victory of the Communists in Vietnam in 1975 with their success in fighting the addictions of their people, they reduced the profits of the drugs organisation and the profits of the imperial backers of these organisations. It is a historical footnote to state that Chiang Kai Shek was a drug merchant himself before he took state power and that many involved in the anti-communist reactionary counterinsurgency in Vietnam had links to the international drugs trade. The drug organisations’ production was historically based in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand due the historical importance of the Opium Wars and Britain’s global hegemony at the time. The shift of the drugs trade is mirrored in the shift of global power from one country to another (i.e. from Great Britain to the United States). The US has always sought dominion over Latin America as stated in the Monroe Doctrine. It is, therefore, not a giant leap of the imagination to state drugs are a directly imperial commodity along with oil and finance.

In aggregate, the US has spent about US\$1 trillion throughout the globe on “the war on drugs/terror”. There are a few questions we should be asking ourselves about these parallels, which are more than a coincidence. Has it failed the drug money-laundering banks? Has it failed the key Western financial centers? Has it failed the narco-bourgeoisie in Colombia – or in Afghanistan, where we can see similar patterns emerging? No. Is it a success in maintaining the political economy? Yes! It is with real irony that one must imagine the cognitive dissonance the global feral elite are going through and how “oppressed” they claim to be! This feeling of isolation they feel in their gated communities we see in Colombia and Mexico, laundering drugs and oppressing the working-class, demonstrates Marx’s idea that the narco-bourgeoisie, by oppressing the working-class, oppress themselves in many ways by their very own system! And why this shows the universal need for a Socialist revolution, which will come across with the need to abolish private property. Which will, in the end, benefit all classes.

Social Solution

The drugs trade is a global phenomenon, which is intimately linked to imperial power since the 17th century in its modern form. It stands up to logic that to end the drugs trade, there must be a global anti-imperial movement, with the right analysis identifying the link between the global drugs trade and US hegemony. The legalisation, taxation, and regulation of all drugs in the UK for example is only one piece of the puzzle. Drugs, as Russel Brand and Matthew Perry have said in recent interviews, should be viewed as an illness; treating drugs users with clean needles for their own use to stop, for example, the spread of the HIV virus.

Treatments could include centres where abstinence-based recovery is the norm and that these young men and women are found jobs, a good education, a good home, and plenty of social contact and emotional support to help them recover and lead a better life. To me, this means following a Socialist plan for the economy. Simultaneously, this should be in conjunction with a fully public National Health Service, renationalised, which is paid for by National Insurance and is free at the point of use. The corporations behind the NHS should be put under democratic workers' ownership with a national plan to put their monopoly on pharmaceuticals firmly in the people's hands.

Our foreign policy should keep this in mind for its agenda: Helping improve people's lives all across the world and decreasing the death toll in countries like Colombia, Afghanistan and Somalia by dismantling the international structures of the trade and by reducing the demand for those drugs, and destroying the need to produce many of the world's most addictive narcotics, the profits of which go into the hands of reactionary global terrorist organisations. If this model can be adopted by Socialist governments, it stands to reason that the world could, with a lot of hard work, become a more peaceful and enlightened place to live in."

To conclude, I would just like to raise a few points which might be seriously considered when talking about 'menace of drugs' or such topics.

1. Why is it that the US war on drugs ends up making billionaires on one hand and a whole population of black youth in jails?
2. What right any state must declare one substance illegal and celebrate the other much worse one?
3. Who gives rights to the pharmaceutical companies (the legal drug dealers) to make addicts of whole generations of school going children (as in US 20% are diagnosed with psychological disorders and must take medicine) and dehumanized work force (addicted of Zoloft a depression medicine)?
4. Which addiction category would suffice for the Gambling and sex addicts?
5. What future holds for all of us in terms of a respectful and free life?



7 Theses on Imperialism and Drug War

By Aiyanas Ormond, VANDU

1. The criminalized drug industry is fully integrated into the global monopoly capitalist political economy (imperialism).

Profits from the illicit drug trade are stashed in big banks and financial institutions. It is an open secret that this money is laundered through the big banks. U.S. bank Wachovia, now a part of Wells Fargo, recently paid authorities \$160 million for its role in laundering money from the criminalized drug industry. In 2012 U.K. bank HSBC paid almost \$2 billion in fines for stashing drug money. The head of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime has stated that during the 2008-9 financial crisis drug profits constituted a key source of liquidity (cash available for investment) for the big banks and that as a result \$352 billion in drug profits were “absorbed” into the economy.

While the illicit nature of the criminalized drug industry creates particularities in how the industry works (such as the use of crass physical violence as the main mechanism for disciplining workers, collecting debts and resolving intra industry conflicts), it is nonetheless subject to the basic economic logic of capitalism in its imperialist stage just like its non-criminalized counterparts. Thus, there is a high degree of concentration and monopolization in the industry, especially at the level of transportation and distribution where the profits are greatest. The biggest organizations in the illicit drug industry have billions of dollars in annual revenues and highly defined organizational structures. An analysis of the internal economic structure of illicit drug organizations in Mexico revealed well defined city or region-based units, regular rates of compensation for employees, and systems for centralization of profit and capital investments.

As an industry subject to the basic rules of monopoly capitalism we can see the same type of class stratification and dynamics of exploitation that we see in non-criminalized monopoly capitalist enterprises.

In the production of plant-based drugs peasant and small farmer cultivators in the Third World produce cocaine and poppy plants to sell to monopoly or oligopoly buyers who are the price setters like other cash crops (think coffee!). Small producers make a rational economic decision to grow the criminalized plants as a cash crop in response to pressures from rents, interest rates and the other economic forces that shape their conditions of survival. In plantation production, farm workers can make somewhat higher wages than in other crop cultivation, keeping in mind that ‘regular’ wages for agricultural workers in the Third World are frequently below the cost of subsistence and reproduction, but the ‘value added’ in cocaine production comes mainly when it is moved across borders and this profit accrues overwhelmingly to the criminalized drug bourgeoisie.

The massive and rapid increase in availability of synthetic drugs like fentanyl and methamphetamine are indicative of a rapid transition to industrial production of these substances. While there may be some cottage production of crystal meth, especially where production is based in the mass market countries like Canada, monopolistic and oligopolistic control of the distribution markets means price setting by the big criminalized drug enterprises in the long term. So, the drugs that are increasingly dominating the illegal mass market are produced in industrial type facilities with normal capitalist relations of

production. Workers in these production facilities, mostly in the Third World, are most assuredly not getting a share of the high profit margin that the criminalization of the industry creates.

On the streets, and in our communities the illicit drug trade is organized much like any other industry, with poorly paid employees doing the transactions, holding small amounts of product and cash, and providing 'security services', while better remunerated low-level managers watch and direct the business, and mid level managers organize the cutting, storage and distribution of larger amounts and so on up the chain. As with all capitalist enterprises, the profits are centralized with the top-level managers and owners. A pop-culture fixation on the trappings of gang life obfuscates the fact that the criminalized drug industry bourgeoisie has much more similarity than difference with their non-criminalized counterparts. This drug industry bourgeoisie makes its money exploiting workers, the same as the non-criminalized bourgeoisie, and, being part of the same class, moves in the same social circles, has membership in the same country clubs, goes to the same parties, charity galas and political party fundraisers, sends their kids to the same private schools.

2. In our urban poor communities the war on drugs is a strategy for the regulation of labour, social control and containment.

As we can see from the class analysis above, poor and working class communities are already exploited by the criminalized drug industry the same way that we are by other capitalists that operate in our communities 'providing' low paying jobs and products that are frequently sub-standard and or harmful (think the junk food industry, payday loan and cheque cashing places, or alcohol and tobacco). But then poor and working-class communities are additionally oppressed by the police, social workers and health professionals who police, surveil, label, criminalize and otherwise control and harass people under the cover of the war on drugs.

The war on drugs has been central to the policing of poor, Indigenous and racialized communities for more than a century. In fact, looking at the drug war through a historical lens makes it abundantly clear that the main function of drug prohibition and the drug war is as a justification for surveillance, policing and social control of groups and communities that are viewed as presenting a threat to the existing imperialist order (both domestically and internationally).

As Susan Boyd explains, the first real drug prohibition in Canada was the prohibition on drinking alcohol imposed on Indigenous people by the first iteration of the Indian Act. It was a "punitive and racialized social control mechanism used by Indian Agents and the police" and thousands of Indigenous people were arrested and incarcerated under the law.



The next round of drug laws was aimed at Chinese immigrants who had been brought in as a source of cheap labour for the construction of the transnational railroad but were subsequently viewed as a problem: a threat to the project of a 'white' Canada for politicians and 'nation builders' and labour competition for white workers. Criminalizing, controlling and excluding Chinese workers was a strategy for regulating labour supply, something that both the dominant forces in the white labour movement and the capitalists were trying to do.

Laws criminalizing the use of opium were enacted in 1908. Between 1908 and 1922 three quarters of those convicted under these drug laws were Chinese. Between 1923 and 1932, 761 Chinese Canadians (2% of the Chinese immigrant population of Canada at the time) were deported, and many others spent time in prison for drug offenses. Along with the racist Chinese Exclusion Act, deportation of Chinese Canadians for drug offenses became a means of controlling the supply of labour to stabilize Canadian capitalism during the period of extremely high unemployment after 1929.

In the U.S. prohibition and criminalization of drugs was explicitly linked to the 'danger' posed by specific racialized groups: Chinese immigrants (opium), Black folks (cocaine), Mexican workers (marijuana), and urban Black communities (crack). While the public justification for these policies has been made in the name (explicitly or implicitly) of protecting white people and communities from people of colour, their material impact is regulation of the labour market and greater social control over working class people of colour to facilitate their super exploitation by bosses.

In each of the instances the functionality of the drug war was to build a cross-class white supremacist base for a carceral and militarized social control of racialized populations who can be at turns, either super exploited or completely marginalized from the capitalist economy, depending on the labour needs of the system. The super-profits accruing from the condition of limited labour mobility for racialized workers then flows mainly to the ruling class with some benefits trickling down to the white middle and working classes.

In addition to this basic economic instrumentality of the drug war, it fulfills a broader ideological and propaganda function useful for controlling the working class. Aside from bolstering white supremacist ideas and loyalties within the white working class the war on drugs and its propaganda about the 'menace of drugs' and drug users, serves to divide the working class more broadly, including dividing working class communities of colour and Indigenous communities, and even dividing militant and revolutionary working class organizations from an important potential social base - poor people who use drugs and/or participate in the criminalized drug industry. If drugs/ people who use drugs/ people who sell drugs can be scapegoated as the source of the very real problems facing poor and working-class communities - poverty, joblessness, and multiple forms of intra-class and inter-class violence - then imperialism, the economic and political system that shapes our social and economic environment, gets a pass.

3. The drug war is not, as some liberal critics declare, a failure.

For the imperialist ruling class and imperialism as a system, the drug war has been an extremely successful strategy. That's why, even despite its pseudo-scientific justifications being completely discredited, and despite a significant shift in liberal public opinion, the drug war continues to persist and even expand.

Over a century imperialism has instrumentalized the war on drugs to fulfill important ideological, economic and organizational functions within the system:

- As explained above the drug war has been used as a mechanism for social control of Indigenous, immigrant and racialized communities, and particularly the regulation and control of oppressed people's labour.
- With the emergence of permanent structural high unemployment this function has been expanded to include the containment of whole poor urban communities.
- At the international level the CIA and other security agencies have actively participated in the transportation and distribution of illicit drugs as a way of funding proxy wars and so-called counterinsurgency free of any kind of public scrutiny (especially in Southeast Asia and Latin America).
- On the flip side the war on drugs has been used as ideological cover for interventions in countries where there are strong revolutionary and social movements that represent a threat to imperialist interest - with Plan Colombia and its successor Plan Mexico (aka the Merida Initiative) as the clearest examples.
- Ideologically the drug war has been a source of division for the working class, and an opportunity for the ruling class to mobilize the middle class and parts of the working class against an 'enemy within'.
- Economically, the super profits of the drug war are a source of cash liquidity, a source that is insulated from the most unpredictable crises of capitalism by virtue of being excluded from some of its 'normal' highly speculative mechanisms (like the stock market!).

These remain vital functions to imperialism, and despite diminishing popular support for the war on drugs, and some important international examples of reform, it continues unabated, and is in fact expanding in a big way in the Third World.

In Mexico the U.S. is attempting to replicate its 'successful' strategy in Colombia, spending billions militarizing the entire country, destabilizing communities, and targeting leftist guerrilla forces and insurgent social movements, in a process that Dawn Paley calls 'Drug War Capitalism'. The death toll from drug war violence in Mexico is in the hundreds of thousands, with tens of thousands more missing. And similarly, to Colombia, where cocaine production hit an all time high in 2017, there is no real impact on the supply of illicit drugs.

The recent deployment of the drug war by various regimes in Asia follows a familiar pattern - playing to populist sentiments of middle-class voters while targeting urban poor communities. In the Philippines the drug war waged by the U.S.- Duterte regime has killed more than 12,000 people in just 18 months of its murderous drug war. The drug war targets and sows fear in poor communities. It bolsters the militarized power of the reactionary state and its ties to imperialist military and police forces who supply funding, and 'expertise' to the local forces of repression and containment. This model is now being replicated in Bangladesh and Indonesia.

4. Drugs aren't innately good or bad and drug use has two sides.

The use of substances to alter our consciousness and perceptions of the world is extremely normal (almost universal) behaviour at the historical and social level. But that doesn't mean that addiction is normal, inevitable or okay. Compulsive use of substances that becomes unhealthy, undermines other

aspects of our lives, and feels out of control has long been recognized as a real problem. And we can recognize it as a problem without pathologizing it or characterising it as an individual failure or as a condition of permanent broken-ness.

The question is why, of the many people who use drugs, only a small subset ends up with this highly problematic relationship with the drugs they consume?

Years ago, Deborah Peterson Small described drug addiction to me as “a good relationship gone bad”, and it took me years of trying to understand my own experiences and of interacting on a daily basis with habitual drug users to understand what she meant by this.

People become habitual or compulsive users of drugs to deal with the trauma, pain and alienation that are produced and reproduced daily in a sick imperialist society. This includes family and sexualized violence, workplace injury, the alienation and boredom of work, parental neglect, racism and forced migration, social exclusion and stigma and many other forms of physical, psychological and social violence meted out as a predictable consequence of a system that puts profit and power for the few ahead of the needs of the many.



In this context using drugs is a rational response to a shitty situation. In most instances people will use drugs in ways that are effective for managing their pain over the short, medium or long term, and cease using, or using habitually as the process of healing advances.

But it becomes a good relationship gone bad when the drugs are no longer salving the suffering, but become a source of suffering, and are perpetuating the pain. People frequently describe this as ‘when you stop using the drugs and the drugs start using you’. When purposeful drug use, even if its very habitual, becomes compulsive and starts to shape your behaviour and interfere with other aspects of your life it’s a good relationship gone bad. This isn’t a permanent condition, but it’s one that can be very hard to escape.

5. Addiction is a symptom, imperialism is the disease.

In the progressive debate about the roots of drug addiction, two of the most thoughtful, insightful and persuasive thinkers are Gabor Mate and Bruce Alexander. Both marshal a wealth of evidence and insight and are well worth listening to.

For Dr. Mate addiction is a normal human response to suffering, particularly trauma (including intergenerational trauma) and to pain, whether psychological, emotional and spiritual. Dr. Mate has gone on the record as saying that among his patients when he was a primary care physician in the

Downtown Eastside, 100% of his female patients, and a significant number of his male patients, had experiences of serious childhood violence and abuse, especially sexual violence. Responding to this assessment of the root causes of addiction, Dr. Mate poses the question: “not why the addiction but why the pain?” As a medical doctor Dr. Mate focuses on the individual experience of addiction and his prescription - compassion and individual healing - is also centered on relationships at the individual, as opposed to social or class, level.



Dr. Alexander analyses addiction from a social and historical perspective and views it as the product of social dislocation and social conditions - the alienation of people from their family, community, culture, identity, and social networks and the inability to effectively re-establish or create an alternative to those social relationships. This explains why the rapid increase in addiction as a mass social phenomenon maps so seamlessly to the development of

capitalism and imperialism. The disruption of

peasant agrarian society, wars and famine all generate displacement and disruption of stable social networks on a massive scale. And the alienated production process under capitalism, and the individualized consumption-oriented culture that it generates as its superstructure, perpetuates this social breakdown. Dr Alexander’s prescription is to re-connect to community and re-build rich social networks, but it’s unclear how he envisions that this could happen within a social system that is structurally and systemically hostile to non-alienated (meaning non-marketized and commodified) relationships. In his most coherent arguments, he admits that it will require “confronting capitalism.

These accounts shouldn’t be in any way contradictory, but both are incomplete by themselves. Many people who have immense suffering and pain, don’t become addicted to drugs. Many people who have faced dislocation through forces of war, colonization and forced migration do not become addicted. Ann Livingston, the co-founder with Bud Osborn of the Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users, brings them together in her description of how people become traumatized: “People aren’t traumatized because bad things happen to them,” she says. “People are traumatized when bad things happen to them and they do not have the power or control, and lack the social networks and supports, to respond in constructive and meaningful ways.”

Understanding addiction in this way imperialism be a perpetual addiction producing machine:

→ Historically the necessity of expansion and permanent growth that are the basic logic of capitalism result in forces of mass displacement, dislocation and social breakdown. In its early historical development this includes the enclosure of the commons, privatization of land and the transition to capitalist agriculture that break down peasant and subsistence economies and generates a vast pool of exploitable workers. In its mercantilist phase it means colonial occupation of vast areas of the world by the rising capitalist powers, genocide of Indigenous populations, enslavement and forced transportation of subject peoples, plunder of resources and wealth, and the establishment of settler colonial states.

And in its imperialist phase it is wars and occupation resulting from the division and re-division of the world among the imperial powers, continued plunder of resources and development aggression against the oppressed nations and peoples, gentrification and police occupation of poor communities and periodic and intensifying systemic economic crisis.

→ In its basic economic functioning capitalism (in all its stages) produces mass alienation and social breakdown. Capitalism generates a labour process in which workers become interchangeable sources of labour power and breaks down the processes of production and distribution in ways that isolate and alienate individual workers from any meaningful engagement with the overall process. On the other hand, it links citizenship and social inclusion to consumption of commodities as the main systemically useful function played by workers outside of their exploitation at work. It puts constant economic pressure on working class communities because of exploitation (both of workers and of unwaged reproductive labour, mostly of women) and the constant pressure to increase the rate of exploitation to maximize profit. And particularly in its monopoly-imperialist phase it creates a vast pool of workers who are permanently cut off from most forms of regular and meaningful work and become a kind of surplus and disposable (to the system) population.

→ At the superstructural or cultural level, imperialism promotes individualism and competition (as opposed to collectivism and cooperation) in order to keep people divided as workers and competing as consumers. It promotes sexism, racism, queer and trans antagonism and other forms of bigoted ideology in order to socially stratify and divide the working class, increase people's vulnerability to exploitation and create scapegoatable populations for the problems of the system.

Under these conditions it's no wonder that drug consumption (both illicit and legal, including alcohol), become such a mass phenomenon and that addiction becomes a serious social problem.

Being kinder and gentler to people suffering with addiction, reducing the harms of drug addiction by providing appropriate health care, and acknowledging the basic human dignity and personhood of people who are addicted to drugs are all important reforms worth fighting for. But none of them, and even all of them taken together, will address the underlying problems of imperialism and result in real liberation for people who use illicit drugs.

6. If we want to fight back effectively, we need a class analysis of the drug industry to identify who are our friends and who are our enemies.

In order to fight back in the war on drugs and the war on the poor we need to have a class analysis of the social groups involved and know who our friends are and who are our enemies.

At the top of the list of enemies is the imperialist ruling class and their states who have unleashed this murderous drug war for more than a century knowing full well that it had nothing to do with improving the lives of people. Quite the opposite, it is a targeted and purposeful attack against internally colonized people, the poor and oppressed nations. A subset of this group is those who directly profit from the misery of the drug war - the banks that launder the super-profits of the criminalized industry, the shareholders in the jails used to lock people up for drug offenses, owners of private treatment clinics and the bureaucrats and police chiefs who build bureaucratic and institutional empires on public funding allocated to the war on drugs.

Next up on the list of enemies are the big bourgeoisie of the criminalized drug industry. These are the scumbags who in their quest for maximum profits will flood our communities with an unsafe and unstable drug supply allowing hundreds of thousands to die in the 'market adjustment'. They will unleash any amount of violence to secure their interests, their turf and maximize their profits. They make millions exploiting the labour of peasants in the Third World, urban poor people who are frequently vulnerable and addicted to the drugs they are selling in the metropolises, and workers everywhere in between.

The middle forces are on the one hand the mid level managers of the criminalized drug industry (gang bosses, regularized enforcers and debt collectors, local and regional supply coordinators) and on the other hand the drug warriors who institutionally benefit from and perpetuate the drug war (cops, prosecutors, health care workers and recovery industry managers). They're not necessarily getting rich off the drug war, but it provides them with a relatively comfortable and stable 'middle class life'. A small subset of these folks might be potential allies. Particularly mid level 'dealers' who came from the streets and might have experiences of racism or exploitation that make them sympathetic to struggle. Or doctors and nurses who come to understand their patients and can no longer pretend that individual illness is the root of the problem. In the imperialist countries the cops are really paid well and have delegated class power that ties them very tightly to the imperialist ruling classes of their various countries. But in the context of the oppressed nations it might not always be like that. We shouldn't rely on these middle forces, but they can be allies campaigns, struggles or contexts.

But who are our friends?

It's the poor criminalized drug users who face the worst kind of violence and oppression both from the criminalized drug industry and from the police and the state. Who experience getting jacked up and beat up, go to jail, have their kids taken away, get surveilled in stores, patronized and mistreated by doctors, and kicked out of public spaces? This is the mass base for a serious class struggle against the imperialist drug war.



But it's also got to include the workers in the criminalized

drug industry many of whom

dope with no hope of ever getting rich

They are attacked and vilified by the state who wants to use them as a propaganda prop and as fodder for police department budgets, prisons, and the rest of the bloated criminal justice system. And they

face beat downs, getting shaved and publicly humiliated and getting thrown out of windows as a form of

are slinging a lot of

off it. These folks again are assailed on two side.

'labour discipline' by the criminalized organizations they work for. They have a stake in a struggle that is not focused solely on ending the drug war (which would mean putting them out of a job), but which has a broader framework of economic justice and liberation.

And of course, the broader poor, Indigenous, racialized and working-class communities that these two groups are embedded in. Because of all the propaganda and success of the drug war in dividing our communities against each other, it's going to take some time to win people over to an anti-imperialist understanding of the drug war, but once we do, our ability to resist and fight back will be so much stronger.

7. People who use drugs and criminalized drug industry workers can be organized into an anti-imperialist united front for social transformation.

At its best drug use is a way of experiencing the world in new ways and of achieving physical, social and spiritual experiences that can enrich our lives. But for many working class and oppressed people, drug use has become a way of surviving a system that is designed to grind us up, suck us dry and destroy us. As revolutionaries we can argue that the best antidote to the horrors of imperialism is to get organized, struggle and fight back. Legit - there is ample evidence that participation in social movements and struggles is powerfully healing and health supporting. This is an argument we should be making loud and clear, whenever and wherever we can. But it shouldn't be an excuse for moralizing about drug use, or parroting bourgeois propaganda about drugs or drug users, or excluding people who use drugs or who work in the criminalized drug industry from our movements.

People who use drugs, people who work in the criminalized drug industry and even people who struggle seriously with addiction can and should be organized into the united front against imperialism, its reactionary war on drugs, and all its other horrible wars. The Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU) is a great example of a mass based, grassroots and democratic organization of people who use drugs that is a leading force in struggle against gentrification and displacement, against the drug war and criminalization of the poor, and is consciously making links with other organizations of poor people locally, across Canada and internationally.

Struggles to reform the drug laws, mitigate the most harmful effects of the war on drugs and problematic drug use in our communities, and to dismantle the destructive institutions of the drug war are all useful and worthwhile. But we should be clear that the drug war is such an entrenched part of imperialist strategy for managing class conflict and projecting imperialist power (certainly in the North American belly of the beast), and has so many vested interests, that it is unlikely we will see a fundamental shift without a broader strike against imperialism as a system. And really if we are talking about a liberation movement of people who use drugs, we can't separate the war on drugs from the broader war on the poor - certainly not from colonization, racism, forced migration and the plunder of the Third World. Poor and criminalized drug users and workers in the criminalized drug industry need an anti-imperialist movement for fight for meaningful liberation.

And anti-imperialist and revolutionary movements also need drug users and criminalized drug industry workers. Especially in the centres of imperialism where permanent high rates of unemployment coupled with an abundant and cheap supply of powerful criminalized drugs make criminalized drug use and addiction truly a mass phenomenon. In this context serving the people means understanding criminalized drugs, addiction and the drug war and having a response that goes beyond "just say no and join the revolution".

Propaganda, the War on Drugs, and the State

By Hugh Lamkin, VANDU

The drug industry is so pervasive right now. The state has used drugs as a form of control for a long time, and it's using it as a form of control right now.

What I want to talk about is the propaganda and how people perceive drug users. People say we need drug users to drop all that stuff. But before the 1900's, when people used drugs, they weren't considered any kind of deviants; it wasn't a thought. Since the 1900's, we've had the industry of psychiatry and big pharma, all these things where drugs are just poured on us.

Ever since I was a kid, I remember my mom telling me not to do drugs, if you ever do drugs, I don't want you in my house and so on...

but in our movies, in our media, in our news, we are inundated with it every day. How bad a person like me, who uses drugs or has done drugs or whatever, you must watch out for me because I'll be in the bush and when you come by, I'll jump out and grab your purse. This propaganda is done to separate the people so far that I don't know if we can ever get back. I'm a pretty positive person but it's so ingrained in our society about how bad people



do drugs, but we don't talk about how bad people are who beat the shit out of their family, or who get in their car, drink, and then kill somebody, or those who send weapons around the world. The state uses drugs to fight wars in other countries where they want to control the people and resources. I mean, this is all hypocrisy and I get so fucking pissed off with it.

We gotta look at people as people. We gotta ask the reason why people use drugs. I remember when I was a kid, when I watched Neil Armstrong step out of the spaceship onto the moon, that's who I wanted to be. I didn't realize how big everything was, but that's what I wanted to be; I wanted to go to the moon and go to space. Unfortunately, life got in the way and something happened, and here I am... but I don't hold any bad thoughts towards it or anything. I think it made me a better and stronger person for what I went through. But that doesn't mean I'm a bad person. I still have my morals and my ethics and my morality. I use drugs as a way of being able to deal with myself because I couldn't deal with what happened, and to deal with other people. And that's what most people who use drugs, use drugs for. It's

a way to cope with yourself and to cope with life. And you have the state on the other side telling everybody else and your parents that we're deviants that are going to be stealing and rape women and do all kinds of things... We must really use our own brains and ask questions.

One thing I'm really grateful to my mom; they told me, 'Never be satisfied with anything. Always ask questions and always do your own research'. It's coming to a head now with drugs and people are starting to ask questions. And unfortunately, it's taken the death of several thousand people in the last few years for people to finally start coming around and ask questions about what's going on with this. If people who are criminals are using drugs, then who's bringing it in and where's it coming from and how's it being done? Because I'll tell you one thing, it ain't coming in from the east side. Because people in the east side don't have the money or connections to bring in this shit. Right? So, who's bringing it in? Not the poor people! We don't have the connections; we don't have the money to bring it in. So, how's it getting in here and why is it here? This stuff has been going on for years! The last hundred years...

The state has always used drugs as a way of demonizing people, or separating people, and quite honestly, using the money to wage wars – I said that before. One of the ways they wage the war is on the poor people; our prison system, we keep hearing StatsCan say that violent crime is down. Well, if violent crime is down, then why do we have new prisons being built? In Ontario, where I'm from, they got rid of all the jails and built American style penal system where they have these super jails. So, you can house in one complex, 5000 people, 2000 people and who are in the jails? It's Poor people with possession charges and that's it. So, we've created a whole new industry: the penal system, big pharma, and then the separation of the community. You've got one set of people – most people in power, so the Europeans who have always been in power – so these old men who have nothing better to do but to play games with people's lives and demonized black people, Mexicans, Chinese, etc. I talked about on Thursday, Queen Victoria who waged a war on China because the emperor outlawed opium that the English were bringing in from India because people were getting messed up. So, here's the state waging war on another state who wants to stop the spread of drugs. You know, we have some intelligent people, but when they start using certain things, it just boggles my mind.

The medical system is another one. If you're in the [downtown] east side [a.k.a. DTES], ambulance drivers try to tell you that you have no choice but to go St. Paul's Hospital. That's a load of crap; you can go to any hospital you want. But at St. Paul's, when find out you're from the DTES, suddenly, you're not a person. I've had stories of people in our organization, who, once they found out he was from the east side, they kicked him out in the middle of the night. He ended up getting robbed and ended up right back in the hospital again that night. I don't know how many people (and I'm not a conspiracy person by any means, I think about things quite long before I say them), but since I've been in the DTES for about 13 years, I can't give you a number of the people who I think their deaths were totally due to the hospital kicking them out in the middle of the night just because they live in the east side, or they've been told to sit down in the waiting room for 15 hours while they just walk past you while they deal with other people because you're from one area. These are the sort of things that I'm trying to put it together, you have an area like the DTES. If you're from there, even if you don't do drugs, soon, you will do drugs because once people find out you're from there, they treat you totally different. Why is that? Where's that coming from? And why are we so susceptible to that?

Toward a Class Analysis of the Sex Industry

by Martha Roberts, Surrey People Power

As we develop the political positions and struggles of the urban poor, homeless, and internally displaced within the imperialist countries, including proletarian sex workers, we must situate our developing understanding of sex work within a dialectical material analysis of the industry. Currently our class unity is held back by moralism, idealism, and an over-emphasis on interpersonal rather than social relations. We must reject the liberal and petty-bourgeois individualism that focusses on the individual sex worker as the point of analysis and try to understand the class relations in the industry within the global imperialist context in which the capitalist class in this industry derives super-profits. These conversations are ongoing, and this presentation is a contribution to that discussion.

Global Context of the Sex Industry

An anti-imperialist analysis of the sex industry requires an examination of the four intertwining factors create the context for the grossly disproportionate representation of women, LGBTQ, and gender non-conforming people from exploited nations in the sex industry.

1. Dispossession, landlessness, and global chains of labour

Massive accumulation of land by monopoly corporations, the big bourgeoisie, and feudal landlords push rural farmer nationality and indigenous communities into wholesale displacement from their lands through land grabbing, mono-crop production, tourism, and environmental destruction from mining, fracking, imperialist-fuelled natural disasters, and war.

Samir Amin estimates that there are over three billion people engaged in peasant farming and that their continual movement into precarious (and super-exploited) labour is forced by the steady rise of agri-business in the Third World driven by global capital. This process of proletarianization mirrors the development of capital in the imperialist countries in Europe where the slow process of primitive land accumulation by the emerging bourgeoisie saw to the proletarianization of millions of peasants and on Turtle Island where genocide through war and disease gave way to genocide enacted through the continued appropriation of land and resources by capitalists with legal and political backing of the bourgeois state.



2. Imperialist occupation, wars of aggression, and counter-insurgency

Occupation, militarization, and imperialist wars of aggression drive displacement, migration, and super-exploitation. Accumulation is the basis of war. When economic self-sufficiency and national

development in the exploited nations has been squashed by imperialism it sets the stage for labour export as the basis of the economy. Exploited nations are controlled through state interference by forces like the IMF/WB and philanthrocapitalists like Bill Gates, and through the economy by over-reliance on the import of capital and the export of profits to the imperialist countries and their ruling elites, predominantly in Africa and South East Asia. Through these intertwining factors, entire communities become proletarianized in global chains of forced labour migration.

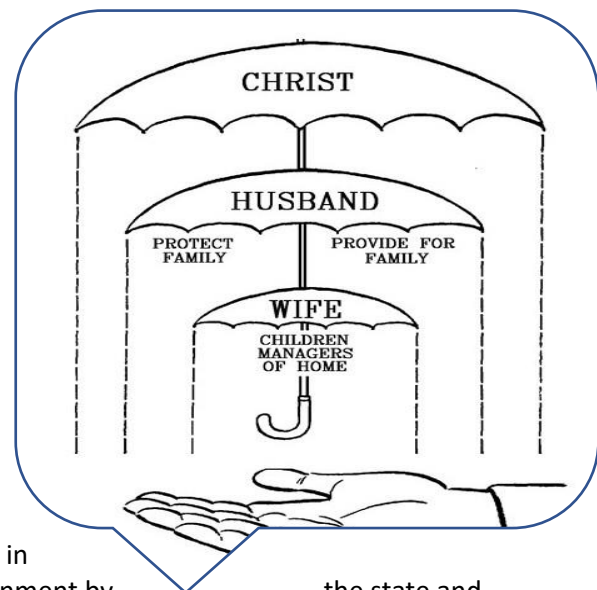
International organizations and national states cannot agree on terminology and figures, but the ILO estimates near 20 million people in forced labour across international borders, with 4.5 in the sex industry and 14.2 million in domestic work, agriculture, manufacturing, and construction. Export of human labour is a major commodity exchange and source of profits for capitalists. Where researchers and analysts do seem to agree is that, whether willing or forced, economic migrants are struggling for survival in a grossly inequitable economic system where profits and capital are increasingly centralized in the hands of the global bourgeoisie.

3. Patriarchal social and state reaction

Patriarchal power structures and gender norms enforce the exploitation of women, LGBTQ, and gender non-conforming people through a spectrum of moral, legal, and quasi-legal state policies such as limiting women's democratic and property rights, forced and unpaid reproductive labour, and state sanctioned femicide – for example: Canada's 4000 missing and murdered Indigenous women. Patriarchal control is a continuum book-ended by profiting from sexual commodification on one side and moralistic control over sexuality, sexual orientation, gender expression, reproduction and social participation on the other.

Bourgeois state laws criminalizing or regulating the sex industry are historically rooted in British common law regulating poor women in the growing urban centres and in the moral purity movement regulating the sexual activities of women. These regulations enforced upper class social expectations had the effect of confining women in the home providing the unpaid labour that is the foundation for the capitalist exploitation of the worker.

Patriarchal and religious moralism oppresses women for the benefit of the capitalist class and so proletarians regardless of their source of income have a shared stake in fighting that class. There is a downward spiral of abandonment by the state and criminalization that destroys the lives of women forced to the periphery of the proletariat.



4. Exploitation and super-exploitation

Work is gendered to the economic benefit of the capitalist class through increasing exploitation. Women earn 75% of their male counterparts and are segregated into low pay and high demand "caring professions". While research is less rigorous, one can find similar figures for trans people, pushed into more exploitative and more emotionally demanding industries. Gendered migration patterns are reinforced by state immigration programs. Women may migrate as cashiers, food service workers, or

care-givers, but this doesn't mean that sexual services are not expected of them. Sexual exchange is a norm of capitalism and represents a spectrum of activity from rape within marriage to escort work in high-end agencies; moral discussions particularizing prostitution as exceptional can disguise the purpose of patriarchal norms: the accumulation of capital.

Exploitation:

For example, within the literature on the sex industry and trafficking, exploitation is given to mean undue hardship, unfair treatment, or the use of forced child labour. If we use exploitation in this way, how can we understand where capital comes from? This definition of exploitation mystifies the economics of capital accumulation, hiding how profit is produced by the working class. Exploitation occurs upon unequal exchange of a workers' labour for a return in wages far less than the value of the commodities those workers produced. It is the proletariat, and not the "market", that pumps profits into the economy; profit is value produced by workers and expropriated by the bourgeoisie. All industries exploit workers, including the sex industry; sex workers are exploited at many sites of production, such as strip clubs and in the production of pornography as just two examples.

Super-exploitation:

To dig deeper we need a material analysis of the sectoral divisions, for super-exploitation abounds in the industry and among millions of migrant workers, including the internally displaced, under conditions of semi-slavery. Racism, colonization, and settler society drive super-exploitation on Turtle Island, and we know Indigenous women are concentrated in super-exploitative conditions. Super-exploited workers are bound to employers or work places through contractual obligations or debt bondage that deny certain freedoms available to the rest of the proletariat. This is a common facet of the sex industry, for example, someone might knowingly enter into verbal contract and migrate to work in the sex industry, but then find that the conditions of work are continually shifting in favour of the employer as debts pile up.

These types of conditions force people to work for below their own cost of reproduction – set at the minimum wage by the capitalist state. Super-exploitation is the new frontier of global wealth acquisition. Super-exploitation of third world workers creates super-profits for imperialists such as the Bill Gates (Apple), Christine Walton (Walmart), and Henry Sy (Super Mall/Shoe Mart). But super-exploitation is also the backbone of capital accumulation within the imperialist countries. At Surrey People Power we have already heard dozens of stories of super-exploited workers under conditions of unfree labour within Surrey alone.

Lumpenproletariat:

One flawed analytical trend within the Marxist tradition is to label workers in the sex industry, especially street level prostitutes, as lumpenproletariat: considered to have no stake in the class struggle since the lumpenproletariat don't engage in common labour and don't produce anything – therefore are not exploited. This is shallow class categorization. Many goods and services are produced in the sex industry and, as with all industries, there exists a class stratification including workers, managers, small business people, and monopoly bourgeoisie.

Further, criminalized industries are typically labelled as lumpen-proletariat for being "parasitical" to the working class, but capital is what is parasitical to the working class – the pharmaceutical industry and the cosmetics industry are two examples of industries that have heinous impacts on the people. What we do need to tackle is the question of class consciousness and class allegiance – we need workers to

understand they are workers and how they are exploited, and to identify and participate in the class struggle!

Points Toward a Materialist Analysis of the Sex Industry

We agree there exists in the sex industry, like all industries under imperialism, a class stratification where some profit off the exploitation of others. This includes the sex industry; we should remove moralism from our investigation, analysis, and debate on the industry and the workers within that industry. When idealism and moralism skew analysis this should be exposed and challenged.

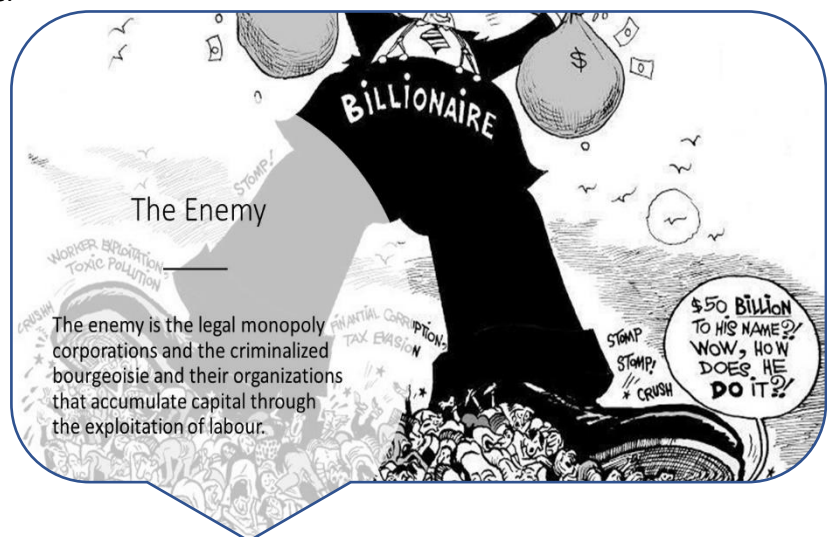
What is the sex industry? It is a grouping of commodities and sexual services including industrial-scale pornography, small-scale pornography, phone sex, internet sex, exotic dancing, adult entertainment, escort agencies, massage parlors, brothels, independent escorts, and street-level sex workers.

Effective mass line is shaped by our class analysis, and class analysis involves identifying who are the people we're trying to organize and who are the people we're trying to isolate and overthrow.

WHO IS THE ENEMY:

We must identify the correct enemy and build unity among our friends or else we've lost before we started. If we look around and see that our natural allies are right wing conservatives and neo-fascists, chances are we're on the wrong side.

A class division exists in the sex industry as with all industries of under capitalism – an exploitative social relation where the owners or shareholders profit from the economic exploitation of the workers within the industry. And criminalized industries are particularly violent. The rate of super-exploitation and slavery is much higher in the sex industry, but overall the methods of accumulation are not necessarily exceptional to the sex industry.



There is a bourgeoisie who reaps surplus value and accumulates capital from selling sex and sexuality. Who profits from the industry? The enemy is the legal monopoly corporations and the criminalized bourgeoisie and their organizations that accumulate capital through the exploitation of labour. That's who the enemy is, the bourgeoisie.

WHO ARE THE PEOPLE?

The proletariat are the people. This includes people who work for wages, by service provided, and for tips – those women that receive only a portion of their earnings; research indicates 80% of value produced in the sex industry is centralized into the hands of the bosses and owners.

There is a heated debate on the left on the questions of how agency and choice shape sex work in unique ways. Many women face conditions of literal slavery, but for many it is a job; for a proportion of workers it is a “survival job” in the context of shrinking social programs. Once working in the industry, it can be very hard to move out of the industry. At one point, 75% of street-based survival sex workers reported being in prison within the last 6 months. A criminal record is a heavy burden for survival workers. “Doors are slammed in our faces”, as my comrade Jenn Allan says, when trying to access housing and alternative work options. How does agency and choice impact our organizing work in other comparable industries? In domestic work, or in agricultural labour? Let us consider the parallels as well as the differences.

While some shy away from saying it, since anti-imperialists don’t condone the commodification of any human being, working class men who buy sex are also the people. There is some good investigation and study into the alienated social and material conditions of some of the working-class men who buy sex; if we’re to overthrow capitalism root causes of alienation need to be addressed by our movements.

Discussion on Some Proposed Anti-Imperialist Positions

POSITION #1: Practice mass line and organize the working class!

Welcome all workers into class-based organizations and build solid mass organizations that can tackle the economic demands of its members, conduct thorough social investigation and rigorous class analysis. Any limits to the rights of workers to organize should be exposed and opposed.

POSITION #2: Acknowledge that bourgeois law is not an instrument of liberation

Throughout history prostitution laws have been rooted in bourgeois morality and white supremacy. We know that bourgeois laws often don’t protect working class women. The bourgeois criminal justice system is not an instrument of liberation for working class and oppressed nationality women.



Benefits and harms within the law are a knife-edge balance: this is the dialectic of the bourgeois justice system which simultaneously has positive and negative impacts.

For example:

- Profit margins. When laws criminalizing the sex industry increase [criminalizing individual sex workers and the organized activity surrounding sex work] this has been shown in economic analysis to impact the profit margins of the bourgeoisie within the industry by increasing the costs of establishing and running a business. Yet, reducing profit margins for business owners inversely increases violence against sex workers.
- Acceptability of buying sex. There is no definitive evidence to support the claim that criminalizing men who buy sex reduces the number of women in the industry. There is evidence that criminal laws shape public opinion to delegitimize buying sex, but once again, increasing the rule of law has the inverse relationship of forcing workers into unsafe working conditions, i.e. rushing them to conduct transactions without consideration of their safety.
- Trafficking. There is evidence that harsher criminal laws decrease the volume of trafficked persons entering the country for the purposes of exploitation or slavery within the sex

industry. There is no conclusive evidence that rather than decreasing trafficking, it rather pushes it out of the sight of those who would measure it. Again, this increases violence and stigma against sex workers within the industry.

We don't want to normalize the destruction of women's lives by imperialism, but no bourgeois-sanctioned solution exists to the abhorrent commodification of women or extreme violence in the sex industry. We can't separate patriarchal sexual norms from the economic functioning of capitalism. The sexual commodification of women rests on the commodification of all workers under the private ownership of property and bourgeois control of the state.

POSITION #3: Slavery is rampant in the industry and must be exposed and opposed

While it is a moralistic assumption that there can be no true consensual participation in the sex industry, there is a high rate of slave labour within the sex industry proportional to other industries. According to the Federal Government data, Canada is a destination and a transit point for persons trafficked into the industry from China, Thailand, Cambodia, the Philippines, Russia, Korea, and Eastern Europe.

We need a class analysis of who is an exploited worker, who is a super-exploited worker, and who is a slave. Slavery needs to be exposed and opposed! Women are captured as spoils of imperialist wars or drugged and trafficked to communities where they are kept under conditions of lock and key. This is not employment and these human beings are not workers but rather prostituted in a practice of slavery that conditions the sex industry. The only way to conduct investigation and analysis as anti-imperialist mass organizations is to actively include workers in the industry within our organizations and alliances.

We need an analysis of trafficking that doesn't assume all women in the sex industry are trafficked, and that many women who migrate as labourers in other industries such as the caregiving industry are expected to provide sexual services as an unspoken aspect of their contractual obligations.

POSITION #4: Fight for wealth redistribution through social programs that alleviate poverty

Despite our critique of the bourgeois state, the state does enact useful functions such as minimal economic redistribution through economic social programs such as welfare and public health programs.

We should expose and oppose state spending priorities. We know from all our collective experience that the rich are getting richer, and the poor are getting poorer. State redistributive programs and social policies that favour the poor are better for our whole societies health and well being. Cuts to social programs have been shown to correlate with women entering the sex industry. High costs of housing and tuition leave poor people fewer options. Child apprehension breaks apart Indigenous communities, and as youth age out of state care, poverty rates are extremely high. Instead of putting money into policing we should be putting money into collective social programs that help instead of harm, that uplift instead of criminalize; let's not be duped by the rhetoric of community policing.

The ILPS is an international alliance of mass organizations who unite on the fight against imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism. The stated objective of ILPS is to "promote, support, and develop anti-imperialist and democratic struggles of the peoples of the world against imperialism and all reaction". Our member organizations span the globe and represent peasant, rural, indigenous, internally displaced, urban poor, and exploited women workers. There is great diversity in our experiences. Developing political positions based on the process of social investigation and class analysis takes time, patience, and a will for collaboration. Thank you for joining us in that process.

First Nations Women: Over-Policed and Under-Protected!

By Jennifer Allan, Founder Vancouver Cop Watch, Jen's Kitchen, and member Grassroots Women

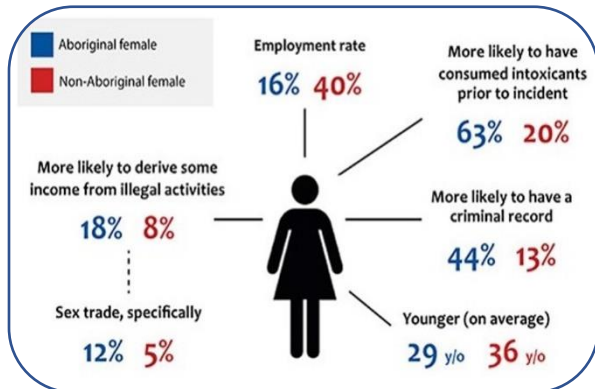
Jennifer is originally from Whitehorse, Yukon and is the oldest of three siblings. She is an advocate and activist for human rights in Canada and is an active member of Grassroots Women. Jennifer has 14 years experience working in the sex industry and 11 years experience teaching in post-secondary institutions on why survival sex workers go missing and get murdered. Jennifer has run outreach and food relief programs for survival sex workers, such as Jenn's Kitchen. In 2011, Jennifer travelled across Canada to gather data on how many street-based sex workers have gone missing or been murdered, and the police and social services responses were in different cities. Jennifer also has over 6 years experience working as an advocate against police violence and with the victims of police brutality. Today Jennifer works as an over-dose prevention worker in Vancouver's Downtown East Side, helping to battle the opioid crisis.



This is a picture that best describes the relationship between First Nations people and the RCMP. The Queen of England invented the RCMP to steal land from First Nations people. When the prairie natives refused to give over their land, the RCMP killed all the buffalo and starved them into submission. The RCMP told them if they signed over their land to the Queen of England would have them fed.

This picture was taken 2013 New Brunswick. When an American fracking company decided to go onto Micmac territory and destroy their land for profit, First Nations people from across Canada showed up and helped the people defend their land. They were greeted by over 1,400 police officers. They were assaulted, shot at, and arrested for trying to stop American corporations from destroying their land. The RCMP will show up to defend American corporations but they will not show up to help Indigenous women when they need their help. They won't show up for survival sex workers when they need their help. They won't show up for drug users when they need their help. But if you get in the way of profit you better get ready to deal with this!





This is the basic mind frame of how the RCMP view Indigenous women: they're unemployable, their drug addicts, they're all sex workers, they have criminal records, and when they go missing it's their own damn fault.

Indigenous women are overpoliced and under-protected. If an Indigenous woman is missing the police won't look for her – the only time they'll look for her is if there is a warrant for her arrest.

We know in the Angela Peat case the only reason the police spent 7 years looking for her is because there was a warrant for her arrest. We know that Indigenous women are five times more likely to die as a result of violence, they're more likely to end up in prison than see the inside of a college classroom.

This is Connie Jacobs and her son Ty. Connie Jacobsen had several children and was always being harassed by social services and having her children stolen from her. On the last time a social worker showed by Connie Jacobsen greeted them at the door with a gun and said, this is it, you're not taking my children, I'm done with this. So, the social worker called the Tribal police, the Tribal police felt this was out of their control, so they called the Okotoks RCMP. The Okotoks RCMP showed up and felt Connie Jacobs was a danger to everyone's safety because she had a gun, meanwhile the RCMP have tons of guns, and they shot her to death! The bullet went through her and killed her 9-year old son Tai. So, the RCMP showed up, on reserve to supposedly protect children from their mother, and ended up killing one of the kids.

Criminalization leads to state sanctioned murder



March 22, 1998 Connie (33) and Ty (9) Jacobs shot by RCMP in Alberta while "attempting to resist seizure" of her five children

Lawsuit set to begin for woman alleging guards tied her to jail door



Robbi O'Shea poses for a photograph at the Pivot Legal Society offices in Vancouver, B.C., on Friday, May 29, 2015. (Darryl / THE CANADIAN PRESS)

First Nations women are over-policed and under-protected because police have been conditioned to view them as disposable criminals.

For an example, Canadian police will hunt down a First Nations woman if there is a warrant for her arrest but not put in the same kind of effort if she's considered missing.

In 2008, a First Nations woman called the Vancouver police department for help. They responded by arresting her,

throwing her in a jail cell, where guards tied up her feet and left her in severe pain for hours.

J.C. Mountie cleared of assault of First Nations teen

Const. Andy Yung acted reasonably during arrest of Jamie Haller: judge
CBC News Posted: April 22, 2013 2:18 PM PT | Last updated: April 22, 2013 2:18 PM PT



Haller said the bruising she suffered was from an assault by an RCMP officer. (CBC)

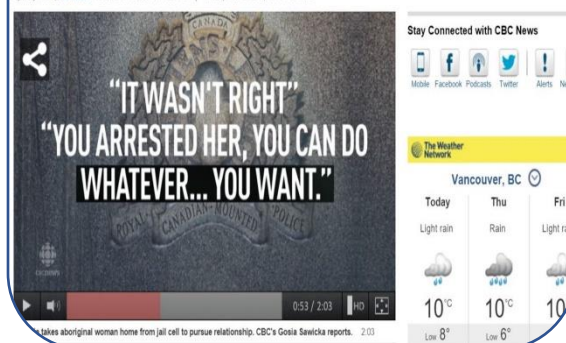
In 2011, a 17-year-old First Nations girl believed her life was in danger, called police. When the Williams Lake RCMP showed up, they handcuffed the girl, threw her in their cruiser, and punched her in the face repeatedly.

In 2015, 8 Quebec Provincial Police constables were suspended for allegations of assault sexual, sexual misconduct, and other abuses against

First Nations women and girls. This is an interesting case. An Indigenous woman was arrested for being drunk in public. The RCMP took her to jail. The officer who arrested her decided he wanted to have sex with her. The officer in charge said, well, you arrested her, you can do whatever you like with her. So, he took her home. Another RCMP officer didn't like what was going on so he called their sergeant who called the officer at home and told him to bring her back to the office. If no one had intervened she would have been raped by the officer in his home. And the only reason she was arrested was because she was drunk.

Mountie takes woman home from jail to 'pursue a personal relationship'

"It's a gross abuse of power," Manitoba's grand chief says of officer, who was docked 7 days of pay
The Daily Mirror, CBC News Posted: Jan 08, 2015 5:00 AM CT | Last updated: Jan 08, 2015 6:23 PM CT



Police will continue committing crimes like these ones against women until they deal with the sexism, racism, and misogyny that has plagued their institution. If there is no evidence of systemic change, then First Nations women and girls are left to believe one of the predators they must watch out for are the ones who wear uniforms and carry guns.

Under a Capitalist and Colonial society there can never be justice for Indigenous women!

I'm sure we all know about these "man camps", these construction camps where there is a high rate of violence against women. These man camps get put together and then when the men aren't working, they go off drinking and partying, going to local strip joints, including picking up Indigenous women and assaulting them, leaving them for dead if not killing them.



This is Pamela Jean George from Regina. She was a survival sex worker and she was Indigenous. In 1995 three men picked her up, raped her, and killed her. The judge in the case instructed the jury to remember Pamela Jean was a sex worker and was Indigenous. In the end, the men got 6 years in prison for killing her.

This is Tina Fontaine, a 14-year old Indigenous girl from Winnipeg. A man picked her up, raped her, killed her, and threw her body in the river. After her body was discovered the police arrested a man for killing her. When it went to court the focus of the case became the fact that Tina was found to have drugs in her system! Not that she was sexually assaulted. Not that she was in the company of a 50-year old man. Or even how Tina ended up on the streets. The man was acquitted, and the courts decided there will be no further investigation.





This is Cindy Gladue. She was a survival sex worker in Edmonton. She was working and a trucker picked her up. He took her to a hotel room and stuck a knife in her vagina. She bled out in a bathtub. Cindy died, and when the police arrested the man who killed her, and he went to court he was acquitted. As a result of that thousands of women took to the streets across Canada protesting the injustice, forcing the crown to re-look at the case and in 2019 there will be a new trial.

This is Helen Osborn who lived in Las Pas in Saskatchewan. Helen wanted to become a teacher. Four men picked her up, sexually assaulted her, and killed her. Only one man was convicted. Two men were never caught, and the fourth was let off for giving testimony against others.



This is Sarah DeVries a survival sex worker from the Downtown Eastside. In 1992 she went missing and in 2002 her DNA was found on Robert Pickton's farm.

This is Dawn Crey, a survival sex worker from the Downtown Eastside who was also murdered, and her DNA found on Robert Pickton's farm.



So, there is an interesting pattern here. The RCMP came up with evidence to convict Robert Pickton but the charges were dropped in the cases of Sarah DeVries and Dawn Crey! Let's compare that to the case of Paul Bernardo, a serial killer who raped and killed school girls. He was charged in every case because they were young white girls. But in the case of Robert Pickton they dropped some of the charges because they didn't want to "waste" tax-payers money.

Tara McDonald was a student who worked at Subway who was murdered in a robbery. The guy who killed her got something like 37 years in prison and isn't eligible for parole for 18 years. And in another case a man with mental illness who shot and killed RCMP officers is serving 75 years in prison – that's an American-type sentence. But if you look at the sentencing of Robert Pickton, he's only serving time for 6 charges for second-degree murder.

So, what can Indigenous women do about this?

We need to fight against state sanctioned violence against our bodies, our lives, and our land! Violence against women is also violence against our land.



We can take inspiration from struggles against extraction. Like the struggle to stop mining at Mount Polley.

We need to educate people on the role the police play in structural violence and the myth of Canadian justice versus the reality! That police don't take violence against Indigenous women seriously, and in fact, are causing violence against women.

We can build unity and recognise that all poor and working-class women have a stake in Indigenous liberation!

We can join marches to raise awareness on Missing and Murdered Indigenous women like this march in Seattle, and the annual March in Vancouver. One of the demands of this march is a government task force to probe the cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.



Working class women: over-policed and under-protected.

When violence against women becomes normal, it's time for a revolution!

On Layered Policing: Discussion of "The Surrey Model" of Multi-Tiered Policing

By Jeff Shantz, Critical Criminology Working Group

I teach here and I'm living in Surrey and I've been involved working with a number of the folks that organize things here organizing a range of events over the years some events... through some of you may remember the old Red Sparks Union and it's really fantastic to see so many folks here today and such active and engaged discussion and conversation. I really appreciate that.

I know that it can be difficult organizing on this campus, this, our commuter campus, and difficult sometimes getting folks to come out to Surrey too, those who aren't from Surrey.

I've been involved with the Critical Criminology Working Group, which we started as a way of using the tools and some of the analysis of criminology to deal with the actual and sources of social harms in our society. That means if we're looking at real social harms--the sources of social harms are the state, and capital! It's the system--it's a capitalist system of exploitation. And yet that's not the stuff that too much of Criminology wastes its time on--studying harmful activities, the things too many criminologists are preoccupied with. If criminology and criminologists took themselves and their work seriously, they would be entirely focused on studying exploitation, capitalism, state crime and the crimes of capital.



low-level, less

I'm going to talk today about some of the specific issues and recent developments around policing in Surrey. First, I want to frame things by saying that policing as we know it develops as part of a central feature of capitalist societies. When we talk about policing in capitalist societies, fundamentally, the purpose of policing is to create, maintain and reproduce systems of exploitation and oppression.

So, we will talk about some of the specifics of policing. I want to emphasize that that means in the Canadian context...and this is true of liberal democracies as well, right? It's a fundamental feature liberal democracy even though we like to tell ourselves a whole bunch of stories about the nature of policing in Canada being less violent and things like that...but, we're talking about colonialism. We're talking about dispossession, displacement. We're talking about the repression of the working class. We're talking about the construction of labor markets--markets where people are forced to sell themselves in order to survive on a day to day basis. We're also talking about the very systems in which productive subjects are produced too, right? So that is, where we internalize the values, morals, and norms that are reinforced by policing systems, that are market values, that contain us within these systems of market exchange and which play out in a whole range of ways getting us to demean and degrade other members of the working class who are not having a success on the labor market, for example, looking down on people who are poor or homeless, acting as gatekeepers in our neighborhoods and things like that. So, it's

important to look at the way that those sort of “soft” and psychological aspects of policing get played out, too. I say that to preface the discussion of specific forms of policing in Surrey or else we get caught up in the newness, the novelty, the specifics of new forms of policing--new developments in policing--which are then particularly “bad”, or particularly “brutal, as compared to other forms. It is policing that it bad. Policing is brutal. That's its structure. That's its function. That's where it comes from. That's what it's intended to do.

Okay so having said that I want to spend a little bit of time looking at some specifics of policing in Surrey and the layered policing that is being played out in the city. This is also sometimes called tiered policing, sometimes called plural policing, but what it amounts to is the spread of policing into a whole range of areas of everyday life--of social life and of areas of activity--from the streets through to schools to this campus, right?

And when we're talking about layered policing we're talking about a whole range of intersections of formal public policing; we're also talking about private policing and security. We're talking about volunteers and the recruitment of young people, especially, into volunteer positions to act as auxiliary cops, and we're talking about partnerships with schools. It's a range of activities. We can see the way that this plays out in different contexts too. So, just to give you also an example of some of the outfits that we're dealing with here:

- “Street Ambassadors” that are supported by Business Improvement Associations and regularly meet with the local RCMP detachment;
- The Surrey Crime Prevention Society that really preys upon that sort of internalization of policing perspectives amongst youth and younger people, recruiting them to go out into neighborhoods and target people doing what are survival activities. They're going after people for littering or for panhandling, or for low-level drug transactions, things like that.
- “Auxiliary police” that do some of the [regulatory] road functions of the police, [supposedly] to free up the cops to do other things.

A lot of this stuff is not paid [either], it's volunteer. It's got to be the height of neoliberalism where you don't even get paid for your work, you volunteer on the prospect that maybe somewhere down the road the fact that you're doing all of this policing work will maybe get you paid or you'll become an actual formal cop at some point. Others volunteer to routinely go around checking out parking lots in public parks' and strip malls all over Surrey, poking about in and around people's cars and then providing them with a “Crime Prevention” checklist under their window. Ridiculous, and yet also is casting a wider and wider net through the community, to enlist an ever enlarging layer of “citizen” police, social services workers, and others, who voluntarily and routinely enact policing functions on targets in target areas who are mostly chosen on the suggestion of the local Business Improvement Associations.

So how does it play out in different areas? We can think about one example that has gotten some attention outside of Surrey and that's a 135a Street in Whalley, “the Strip”, an area where there are numbers of homeless people who are living there, who are self-housed in tents on the 135a [sidewalk]. It's an area that is a quickly gentrifying area. City government [together with] transnational capital has been building a massive International Hotel right in the middle of this. So, global elites can fly in, stay at the hotel, and then, KPU is offering these expensive business courses here. So, it's literally a high-end hotel, global elites can fly and stay in the hotel, then take whatever incredibly high tuition weekend course they want, and then fly out again. And what this has meant, of course, is quick gentrification.

On the strip, police--and the various layers of policing: The Crime Prevention Society, the Street Ambassadors, as well as bylaw enforcement--are highly active there. They're not only regulating the movement and the activities of homeless people who are living on the strip but literally producing, have produced, an open-air prison there, where people are contained, contained right there on the strip, on 135a. So, the cops will interfere with people leaving, literally do checks of people who are leaving the street or checks of people who are trying to come to the street. For whatever reason, whether they live there or whether they're going to visit there, or they're working with people there, for example are in some sort of program there.



So, you have this tightly contained space. Now, partly the reason they're doing this, is they want to contain people because the strip is behind the main sort of commercial spaces, it's at the back of the commercial people in a space that is kind of out of sight of a business but and tourists and things like that.

spaces, so they can contain also out of sight of customers

But the other part of it is that by containing people there, they're restricting people's autonomy. They've expressed some concerns at the city level that people might set up a real organized, active, autonomous, self-determining tent city, with a political sort of pointedness to it. So, instead they work to contain people there under their terms. They've set up surveillance cameras as well as the various policing mechanisms: long range boom microphones, various megaphones, a classroom sized semi-portable office command unit with computers, and a fenced parking lot situated directly across the street from the tents, so that at night, they can shine their headlights into tents, or sit in their own fancy wooden gazebo, which is inside their fenced lot, exclusively for police use.

Incredibly, they finally actually got a harm reduction facility right on the strip, the SafePoint safe injection site, and one of the very first to have ventilation fans for indoor smoking use as well. But in order to access it you have to go past a phalanx of surveillance cameras. You can't get to it directly, without going along their chain-link fenced path, which they set up right next to their cop shop there, so they've their own little roving police station right there [even with a small fleet of ATV 4 wheelers.

Human rights violations occur there, where police are working with bylaw, going in on a regular basis to [forcibly relocate or even] tear down people's tents, tear open people's tents, trash people's belongings, steal people's belongings, subject people to unannounced entrances of cops into their tents.... even while people could be changing, or possibly unclothed, [such as during the early morning wake-up headcount, for example,] and the violence on the different levels that goes along with all that.

Let's talk about some other things that are happening as we move down King George Highway--they've tried to gentrify it by calling it a boulevard, but it's a highway--so, along King George Highway, police and bylaw have been openly working [together] for years now to shut down trailer parks. The trailer parks are some of the last remaining sort of lower cost housing in the area, where people may own the trailer home--and may have even owned it for generations, for decades--but they don't own the land that the trailer is on. So police and bylaw have been harassing people living in the parks, and also

harassing some of the owners, around issues—and it's some of the same sort of thing in terms of the demonization and the stigmatization, the techniques that they're using-- they're talking about “well there's drug trade happening in that park” or “there's sex work happening in that park” or “sex workers are living in the park.” They're using that to ticket people and people are then faced with eviction.

If you have a chance to go back via King George, go up King George and you'll see on each side what used to be vital, vibrant, long-standing living spaces where lots of people live--and we're talking about thousands of people-- okay [now] those parks are [almost] all gone... But what you will see are [huge] signs and new fences where the parks used to be. On a one-for-one basis those parks have signs on the fences that say “future home” of this condo development, this townhouse development, so they're sold like that for a complete upscaling. But it's happening [starting] with the policing, with the repressive actions of the state and bylaw first.

Then, if we go a little bit further, into Newton, again there we see the same sorts of things happening in terms of this, and there, it's very active with the Business Association, with tiered policing, Street Ambassadors, the Crime Prevention Society... [all working] right along with the RCMP detachment there. Surrey's the largest municipal RCMP operation in Canada, as well, so we need mention that fact too.

Now, next, schools. When we talk about schools in Surrey, we're talking about the gang task force, and we're talking about a broad gang panic in the city, which renders virtually any youth or young person a potential gangster in the making, but yet that's the lens through which our youth in Surrey are viewed, particularly on racist basis, on a highly racialized basis. So, the taskforce works closely [with the principals, in the schools] on different levels, with their presentations to classes, liaisons placed in the schools, and it's a snap for kids to get caught up in this. [Picture] three or four kids hanging out, having some texting back and forth, a chat [or beef] over social media and they're getting a little bit boisterous or rambunctious, and then maybe some push-and-shove happens, not even on the school grounds, say a block or two away from the school, even. The principals and vice principals, will come, take them back to the school, even though they're not on school property—they were away from school property—but take them back to the school, lean on the kids to hand over their phones, then access their phones, say, hey you got into a fight and we saw that you were having a conversation of whatever kind, three or four of you, right before you had the fight, so that's a gang, that's “gang communication” suddenly. Those kids, you know, they get brought back into the principal's office, [separated out], scared shitless, leaned on, they don't feel that they can say “oh yeah, you're not touching my phone” or anything like that, because the pressure is very real. Then what happens to those kids



then is they get split up, [expelled,] driven out of their school, driven out of their social environment, out of their friendship networks, they get driven out of their support systems. Oftentimes they just are kind of left to drift. You know, they take a long time to finish high school, they get put into placements, [centres] where there might only be a couple of other kids in the classroom who've also been targeted, they have no sort of social communication, no opportunity for their own sort of comradery and cultures there.

Then, as it can take them a long time to finish, or they may not finish, but even in not finishing, they still show up as a success [in police statistical terms] because the cops can say, look, we've diverted someone who was going to be in a gang! They've nothing to suggest that they were really going to be in a gang, they don't have to provide any evidence that that's the case, but now they can say they've rescued someone who was going to be a gang, so give us more money. And they get it, right? (And you hear these ridiculous things, you know, kids walking past a fight, and walking the dog, but at the time the principal comes, he grabs the kid with the dog, and says now you've brought a weapon to a fight, ok, so now you're a real gangster.

Ok, so now to take it to a little bit closer to my own workplace here, since we're seeing this kind of thing in the universities as well. So, what we can see, for example, there are two main universities active in Surrey, this one obviously, KPU, and Simon Fraser University has a campus here as well. Now, one of the things that the government has done—which was clearly a Liberal government, one that didn't have a repressive project that they didn't enjoy funding—but what they've done is to actually fund two criminology programs in the same area, which they typically wouldn't do, right, for example they'll say well, if you've got one program in horticulture you're not gonna have a second one in the same catchment area or whatever in the same [inaudible ~17:32] area. But here, they've got two criminology programs. Increasingly, and we've seen this change over time certainly at this institution, one of the things that the police are doing is to target these institutions as placements for cops, to get cops to come in as faculty. They're not trained in criminology, they don't have a [criminological] analysis, they don't have a social analysis of [courts and] criminal justice institutions, histories, organizations, social structures and so forth. What they do is, they come in to recruit. They get access to our kids. They get access to the students, right? They carry out a recruitment function. They make promises to kids, like that, you know, depending on how you act in this class, then maybe we can give you a nice reference and help you along your way on your career. They put all sorts of inducements out. They're bringing money in as well... for co-op programs, and for placements, for “educational” placements to practicum programs and things like that.

Now what is happening as this develops is a discourse that suddenly the commitment is not to developing critical analysis and critical thinking in the students, [instead the point is simply] to get students jobs. Where are they getting jobs? Well, they're giving them jobs in the criminal justice institutions, which then okay [becomes a justification], well then they need to hire more cops to do that, which is public money, okay, [let's not forget that] this is public money that is supposed to be set aside to educate, not to “copagandize”, not to recruit, this is to educate. But real faculty are losing those positions. So, who's getting hired? Not faculty, who come from sociology or criminology programs, who have an analysis of the state, who have an analysis of criminal justice systems, and can share that with students and develop that understanding, no, instead it's cops who can then come in, and, you know, tell you how to beat somebody up. They literally talk about that stuff here, I've had students who are concerned about their own education telling you this is the kind of stuff that gets discussed in those classrooms.

So, on the one hand there's this recruitment function that is public money funding the cost to build the state and targeting those students who are coming out of the high schools. They're already getting the message of criminalization and gang discourse and all that stuff when they're in our high schools and then they're coming into university, so there's that additional sort of sort of susceptibility or pressure or entre that the cops must get at them.

The other thing they're building is not just recruitment, they're also building snitch lines and snitch cultures throughout our community, because the students that they're not recruiting to actually join the force onto paid positions—oh of course they're recruiting them into the Crime Prevention Society, that they're recruiting them into the auxiliaries they're recruiting him into all of those layered agencies and practices that I talked about, so in fact, they're getting free labor in that way, but they're also getting access to those kids, as in, “hey, why don't you tell us about your cousin” or “why don't you tell us about your uncle.” They're getting research projects through an ethics board—that's either asleep or corrupt—to do “research,” to supervise honours students doing research where they're telling a supervisor—who's a cop—information about gang activity, drug use, drug trade in their communities.

I know I'm over time, the last thing that I'll highlight is something that people can investigate further, and this is really an example again of this integrated policing and what is layering right policing is layering throughout our everyday social lives. It's not just on the streets, or the cops on patrol, or whatever, it's literally in areas of our social interaction where we think we're just living our lives, right? One of the things that developed is the Surrey Mobilization and Resiliency (Tracking) Table, and if you hadn't heard of this, you can look it up, they're very proud of this [new integrated database tracking system.]. (If you didn't figure out the acronym, it's “SMART,” right, going to call stupid things the opposite of what they are, but that's typical practice.)

But it involves police, Corrections, housing, health, social services, income assistance and education. These are who they're working with—they've named BC Housing, Fraser Health, the Ministry of Childhood and Family Development, the Surrey school district, obviously, along with the RCMP and the Attorney General—and here's the other part of it, they actually are working with (and they name it publicly, this is their terminology) the “private sector.” A Kirk Fisher of the Larkin group is listed as a representative for the private sector but I guess that's not enough of a representation from the private sector, they also have representation from the Surrey Downtown Business Improvement Association, so it's capital, it's all capital, but they of course don't use the word capital, that would be too honest for them.

What they're doing and I mentioned this in a conversation at the break--what this does is to not kind of make random or informal references to the cops from social services or health or other areas—it institutes it. By instituted, it means it's always happening on an integrated basis. So, someone shows up or someone ends up a hospital, say, and you can get the reference right to the cops. Someone's getting housing, then--this is what they're doing, they're tracking people who their housing from the strip--automatically the cops are involved in that. So, it renders that regular practice, not just occasional practice, it literally institutes it through the system.

Then finally I'll just mention because I think it's important to mention too that the cops are killing us out here, literally. Just over the last couple of years, and I'll just mention a few: Hudson Brooks—a young man was shot and killed in South Surrey. Navarrone Woods, similarly killed by transit police in Whalley. Then just over two months ago someone in South Surrey--again who we don't even know much about, because they don't release this information nor document it systematically in the Canadian context--but who was killed because they were going to get addiction support in South Surrey, but the place that they went to turned them away, because they seemed like they were, yeah, “on something”, yes. Incredible, so actually the person that they encountered said well we're not going to take you in and we're gonna call the cops! Well, that's a great thing to tell the person, so they tried to get away and the cops came and then in the arrest the person died. This has been legitimized in the media

and police replayed this, it's more, common copaganda again, that well, of course because the person was, again, "on something," you know, what do you expect, right?

So, these are some of the things that we're dealing with specifically in the Surrey context. We have a lot of organizing work to do out here, under circumstances where we lack some of the resources and infrastructures and the connections across those resources and infrastructures than what exists elsewhere in the lower mainland.



Block the Bunker! Youth Undoing Institutional Racism

By Robert Gavino, Anakbayan Seattle

Magandang hapon, mga kasama. [Good afternoon, comrades.] Thank you everyone for helping to make this space possible. I wanted to acknowledge that it has taken a lot of struggle and resistance for us to be together. This anti-imperialist collective has never happened before and may never happen in this configuration again, so this is important work.

I am a member of Anakbayan Seattle, which is a member of BAYAN Pacific Northwest in the United States, and a member of the No New Youth Jail coalition. I will be speaking on the containment state. I would like to thank the speakers before me for sharing their histories and analysis, since it sounds so familiar to our experiences of the carceral, police, and imperialist state in Seattle, which is unceded Duwamish, Suquamish, and Coast Salish land.



I will be beginning by acknowledging that imperialist capitalism is very intentional. Many comrades have said before me that even things that seem intentional pieces of how the imperialist system functions all like mistakes are very over the world. To share some of the No New Youth Jail movement's analysis, systems of oppression that come from forces of imperialism happen on many levels, spanning the globe, across institutions, and trickling down into our interpersonal relations and ourselves in psychological, emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual ways. The fact that we have internalized imperialism is a propaganda tactic used to separate our peoples. Imperialism is self-reproducing. Although we are comrades, we have all internalized things we need to work on, since the state is built on lies to reaffirm itself. The tools of the bourgeois master state will never set us free; it wants us to perpetuate these systems. As a self-criticism, it is challenging to centre this work about internalized racism. As organizers who work against empire, what does it mean to wage war against empire when we've internalized it ourselves?

I want to say that "we're all working on it". We are not fully remoulded revolutionaries. Looking back at the comrades who have come before us, and the people we have inherited generations of struggle of from, we, since we are choosing to struggle against imperialism, are making offerings to their unfinished healing work of remoulding from imperialism. This work is not something that we will not finish in this lifetime, since we have so much to undo. The people who will call us elders are going to inherit this from us. This is heavy since I don't want to pass imperialism onto [the next generation]. It's imperative that we can do the work in this lifetime.

All these systems require each other: patriarchy requires capitalism, which requires colonialism, which requires settler-colonialism, which requires imperialism, in an ever-revolving door. We must think about how we internalize those systems too.

I bring this up because six years ago, the movement called No New Youth Jail began because King County, named after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on unceded Coast Salish territory, proposed a ballot

measure to fund a “youth and family justice centre”. If we had more time, I would ask you to envision what such a justice centre would look like, but that’s not at all what they are trying to build right now. This measure aimed to raise over US\$210 million to fund a youth jail and youth courts, but there was no mention [by King County] of the jails and the cells that would be put in this centre. Lots of powerful youth of colour lead organizations, especially young people who have been directly impacted by the carceral state, took up this work [of opposing the youth jail], and challenged organizers to take up the work of undoing the school-to-prison pipeline and the prison industrial complex in Martin Luther King County.

Aaron Dixon, one of the founding members of the Seattle chapter of the Black Panther Party, spoke with some of these youth a few years ago, and said, “75% of the work we do ought to be put into our own people and into improving ourselves as revolutionaries”. I agree with this, so that when we win, because we will, we’re not replicating imperialism, and so that we’re not investing in the bourgeoisie master state but instead ourselves. This is hard under conditions of repression, but we need to invest in the structures that we want to see.

Following this quote has been a guiding goal and a long-term strategy in this movement, that is not visible to the public. When you Google No New Youth Jail or Peoples’ Moratorium, you will see the direct actions, which is a tactic of a larger peoples’ plan to shift peoples’ energy and capacity from the tools of the imperialist state into developing what communities need. This is part of a larger strategy determined by our analysis and our values. If we understand our analysis and the values that come forth from that, that determines what the rest of our organizing strategy looks like. It helps us understand what values we want to see in a world without an imperialist, settler-colonial states.



All this to say a big challenge in our organizing has been focusing on that 75% and on understanding internalized oppression. In most organizing circles that I know of across the belly of the beast, the United States, I know about a lot of transphobia and unchecked patriarchy. We continue to prioritize debating tactics and planning actions over addressing these issues or demanding justice. “Punish it, put it away, move on”, sounds like a lot of radical spaces’ approaches to dealing with these issues. But that’s exactly the carceral state and its punitive justice. For those of us who are prison abolitionists, it’s terrifying because we have replicated the prison state in our own organizations, and we currently cannot overcome the ways we have internalized violence. As people who seek to build a world who isn’t like this, what does it mean to create accountability measures when we mess up and cause harm, and to create healthy relationships among us? How do we understand the context why someone does a harmful act, and not depend on the states’ mechanisms, propaganda, policing, incarceration and surveillance to hold them to account?

As prison abolitionists in unceded Duwamish territory or Seattle, we struggle with this. Being part of BAYAN, we hear about how comrades in the Philippines deal with these issues. Since they organize by barangay or barrio [neighbourhood], they live with each other and can deal with these problems in their collective life. However, in the belly of the beast, we are so divided physically, not to mention psychologically because of our conditions. What does it mean for us to do this remoulding, accountability, and care work collectively here when the conditions do not permit us to do it like our comrades in the Philippines?

We have won a lot of victories. No New Youth Jail has forced a national conversation across the settler United States around youth incarceration because we have pushed so hard on so many fronts. We have built a lot of alternatives to incarceration. We have talked to those most targeted by carceral state and the school-to-prison pipeline in Martin Luther King County, and they have been able to address harm without using prisons for kids. We know that prisons were only meant to be an extractive, violent tool for our communities.

Because of these victories, we have gotten pressure from the state to professionalize and NGO-ize these alternatives that are working for our communities. This is means to divide and conquer, which is such an old tactic that has been used for centuries across our peoples. So, for us, in Seattle, how do we respond when the state tries to divide us by dangling state grants in front of us? We need to resource to fund our movement until we can take the means of production back, but a lot of the grants in our liberal, non-profit haven of King County take away our agency and sound a lot like structural readjustment programs. Our access to their resources is not sustainable, and grant requirements can cause fall-out among organizers and networks. This is a way that the State uses our vulnerabilities and internalized oppression against us, and so organizers end up with analyses about what's wrong with each other rather than what's wrong with the State. This is how movements can collapse, and that has happened in the past because we are continuing to ignore these issues.

For us, there have been huge victories that have given way to collapsed coalitions. We are still working on it and trying to figure out how are we willing to remould collectively and devote time to deal with the problems within us as we able to in our organizing. I keep hearing about stories of transphobia, patriarchy, racism, and state violences that are happening among us, and nothing is getting better. We deserve better than this, and so do our ancestors and the people who will inherit this work from us.

To close, I'd like to end up with a chant. When we say imperyalismo ibagsak [down with imperialism], I'd like us to think about how imperialism will fall within us, among us, and for generations to come. Thank you.

Resisting the Fascist Containment State in Belfast and Kitchener

By Julian Ichim, 32 County Sovereignty Movements' International Department

Before we begin, we should get our terms right. What is the fascist containment state and how does it manifest in Ireland and on occupied native territory in Canada? A containment state is a form of policing where people are contained and controlled, notably by ghettoization, community policing, attacks on social programs, blatant colonialist attacks, or when a group of people is forced into an area where state monitors and controls all aspects of their life. This type of political program is usually imposed by one social group, the colonizer, onto the colonized, and with the goal of destroying the colonized's right to determine their own destiny.

The containment state in Ireland is quite visible in the form of the Police Services of Northern Ireland (formerly the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), responsible imposing British rule in Ireland), and Diplock Courts, which are British military courts where trials are based on secret evidence and where the accused's basic rights are suspended. Other methods include internment, which is holding someone indefinitely in jail, especially if a member of the Crown holds a grudge against you, or if you hold a political view that threatens the narrative of the state. This criminalizes the just desire of the Irish people for self-determination. Central to the imposition of the containment state in Ireland is the illegal occupation of the 6 counties in the North by the British. In other words, the containment state exists to deny the Irish people the right to express their sovereignty.

The Good Friday Agreement, which is presented to the world as a way towards peace in Ireland, entrenches the containment state by normalizing the British occupation of Ireland and the imposition of British rule. This robs the people of their right to self-determination. Since its signing, the Irish in the North have been further ghettoized, by forcing them to live in small enclaves surrounded by [British] Loyalist estates on all sides with so-called "peace walls" boxing them in. This happens while police facilitate sectarian marches of anti-Irish bigots through the hearts of the Irish enclaves, as they chant about marching through "rivers of Fenian blood", in the name of shared spaces and culture. Political status, which was won by 10 brave Irishmen who would rather die than be criminalized, has been stripped by the Agreement.

All those who dare talk about having a unified 32 county socialist republic [in Ireland] face the threat of being arrested in middle of night and held without charge indefinitely. For example, Marion Price was held for 2 years in jail, 9 months in an all men's jail, just for holding up a piece of paper at rally. Tony Taylor is still being held without charge, just for being an Irish Republican. The Craigavon Two are still being held, despite the key witnesses in their case being a proven liar, the ballistics' reports not matching, and there being an obvious miscarriage of justice in their case.

This containment state in Ireland is imposed through direct military occupation in the North, and economic occupation in the South by the European Union. Through British policing, collusion with criminal elements, such as in the case of Alan and Vinny Ryan, and collusion with British death squads such as the UVF, the British impose a containment state by violence and blood in the North, and by poverty and underdevelopment in the South.

In Kitchener, the containment state is quite visible by in the form of the theft of native land, economic deindustrialization, social cleansing, gentrification, and political and social policing. Kitchener is on Six Nations territory, which was stolen by the British crown. Despite a treaty clearly stating that Six Nations

territory is six miles on both sides of the Grand River, it is currently surrounded by the settler-colonial cities of Kitchener, Cambridge, Brampton and Hamilton. Like the Loyalist marches in Ireland, racist settlers such as Gary McHale can organize racist marches facilitated by Ontario Provincial Police. Indigenous people are overrepresented in soup kitchens, and the criminal justice system, which is foundational to state containment and control.

Kitchener is the poorest in the Ontario's Tri Region, with an unemployment rate of 11% as opposed to the regions' 7%. In some neighbourhoods such as Cedar Hill, unemployment is up to 30% due to the rapid deindustrialization which started under [former Ontario Premier] Mike Harris' imposition of neoliberal economics in the 1990s. This deindustrialization creates a mass unemployed people who are dependent on welfare and other tools of state control. Gentrification and social cleansing in the downtown are imposed through use of force and state-sanctioned murder, such as in the cases of Beau Baker, Robby Gas, and others. Political policing, such as the creation of an "anti-terrorist unit" in the 1990s to deal with so-called "left-wing extremists", is a way of imposing the containment state to combat successful organizing. "Left-wing extremists" are painted as the ideological counterparts of neo-Nazis, and propaganda presents that the role of the police is to come in and fight both extremists, which ignores the reality that the State is the real extremist who murders the people.

So, to resist the racist containment state, we must conduct social investigation, community mobilization, community implementation, and create an anti-colonialist united front. Social investigation is act of going to a community, finding out the issues that people can mobilize around, and afterwards, mobilizing the community around the issue and implementing their vision. Last year in Kitchener there was a police murder spree where they shot Beau Baker and 2 youth in span of several months. The community realized that this was a serious issue, and police were putting forward their propaganda about de-escalation and dealing with mental health issues. We went to the community, interviewed people directly affected, and out of this, we came forward with a proposal for dealing with police. We took the proposal to social service agencies, got feedback, and moved forward on there.



Another example is a recent proposal to solve the drug problem. Since 2009, there has been an opioid epidemic in Kitchener. Last year, over 200 people in the community, including people I know and had coffee with, died preventable deaths from the so-called fentanyl crisis, which is clearly a manufactured crisis. We went to the community again, interviewed front-line community case workers, addicts and their families, and others directly affected. Based on these interviews, we came up with a proposal which we took to community meetings. The proposal included the building of two spaces. One is a dry space where people have access to culture such as hip hop and punk nights, direct action case work, and political organizing, and another has a safe injection site and other harm reduction programs. We realize that we can't tell people not to sell drugs without offering alternatives, so we also thought of having a

consignment shop where people can use the skills that they have from the streets in order to make some money and to support themselves.

We then had more consultation and decided that some of these proposals could be implemented immediately, so we set up a Tent City action. On the second day, it was clear that we didn't have enough time to go through official channels to have harm reduction programs, because people were dying [from overdose], so we set up a safe injection site. We had some overdoses from assorted drugs but were able to prevent some more. City staff originally told us that it would take 10 years before we could have safe injection sites in Kitchener, but that was not good enough for us, and we did it anyway. So, the City came to us and let us set up focus groups where we could show them the need for a safe injection site. We are still pushing our proposal for the two spaces, because as radicals, we need to go to the root of the problem. People don't wake up one day and say that they want to become a junkie; there's a reason why people chose to use drugs. To go to the root of the problem is one way we can fight the containment state.

Key to our fight is reflecting on whether the work we're doing weakens or strengthens the containment state or colonialism. We can't build socialism on stolen land; that's just as bad as capitalism. To wrap up, I believe the key issue in North America is indigenous sovereignty. At the end of the day, fighting the containment state is fighting colonialism and supporting the indigenous struggles for self determination on a principled basis. This is support not just on the basis that they support our political program. This is the primary contradiction in Canada and Ireland. Thank you.



Round Table Two: Poor People Resist Gentrification and Displacement

Displacement because of parasitic real-estate speculation and development aggression is a common experience of urban poor communities across the globe. How are communities organizing around gentrification and displacement? What strategies and tactics are effective? What are anti-imperialist calls that can unite us across jurisdictions and borders?

Flora and Vince from the **Our Homes Can't Wait Coalition** in Vancouver, Canada, whose goal is to get 100% social housing developed at 58 West Hastings, a currently undeveloped site in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES) which has been owned by the municipal government for about 10 years.



Flora, part of the indigenous community living in the DTES, firstly expressed her anger that the Canadian state has broken its promises of “reconciliation” to indigenous people, when she sees that indigenous peoples are more likely to be homeless, to experience discrimination when seeking employment or housing, or to live in awful conditions on isolated reserves.

Next, Vince and Flora both agreed that direct action was crucial to their campaign's success in initially getting the City of Vancouver to agree to develop 100% social housing at the site. However, Vince commented that the meetings afterwards to get the City government to follow through on this promise were frustrating since the City government's policies on social housing instead actually favours developers rather than peoples' needs, and as such accelerates gentrification in poor and working-class communities. They ask other organizers to focus on direct actions to build peoples' power in these communities.

Cheuk-Ning from the Pacific Rim Solidarity Network is a member of the **Chinatown-International District Coalition** in Seattle, United States. This coalition started because there was a proposal to build a 14-storey Marriott hotel in Chinatown, Seattle, which they believed would not benefit the community. As a group, they have been struggling since their group is unfamiliar with the urban planning jargon which is used by governments, and since some people living in Chinatown believe that their group, being a diverse coalition including voices living outside of Chinatown, should not have a say in its development.

Cheuk-Ning points out that although many people would like to preserve Chinatown because of its role in preserving Chinese culture in Seattle and more broadly in North America, current plans such as building more “Oriental-looking” buildings in these communities does not actually help working-class people when they remain inaccessible to them. As such, she believes that there should be a sharper analysis to determine what anti-gentrification organizing should aim to achieve.

Jannie Wing-Sea Leung presented from **Chinatown Action Group**, an intergenerational group looking to organize working-class Chinese against displacement and gentrification in Vancouver, Canada, formed in 2015. She notes that Chinatowns often provide affordable places to live for working-class families and that there are many isolated and marginalized elders doing informal work in these communities. As of their social investigation, they came up with the “People’s Vision for Chinatown” in opposition to ongoing gentrification.

She notes that building trust among members, helping members develop skills through organizing, and creating intergenerational relationships has been crucial to their work. She also notes that coalition-building has been necessary in opposition to certain NGOs and other forces working in Chinatown who attempt to get certain segments of the Chinatown community to support gentrifying projects. Finally, she noted that formal government processes need boycotting sometimes when taking part in these processes requires much time and effort that could have been better spent doing grassroots work instead.

Neil La Dode, an organizer with the **Immigrant Workers’ Centre** in Montréal, Canada, shared his experience trying to build a base for mass organizing in the working class, multicultural neighbourhoods of Côte-des-Neiges and Parc-Extension. He noticed that members of these communities did not know about ongoing campaigns for workers’ rights, such as the widespread Fight for \$15 campaign, as well as resources to assist with housing and workplace problems affecting migrant workers. As a result, Immigrant Workers’ Centre has become a resource for these migrant workers to help them with their problems and has become part of coalitions in support of the broader labour movement.

Kym from **THAW-Victoria** reflected on the long history of Tent City movements in support of the homeless in Victoria, Canada. Tent cities are actions where individuals, often homeless, set up tents and living spaces in parks or other public places. He notes that these movements are needed since these spaces are effective in supporting the homeless, especially when the media often demonizes progressive movements. He notes that it is crucial that these movements are in solidarity with demands for indigenous sovereignty and decolonization.

Julian and Jonathan from the **Anti-Colonialist Working Group** presented about organizing in Kitchener, Canada. Julian notes that the problems in Kitchener date from the 1990s due to then Ontario Premier Mike Harris’ neoliberal reforms, which turned Kitchener from a big immigrant, industrial town to one with almost 30% unemployment in some communities and unfit public housing. Although there was a

big resistance movement against these reforms, certain opposition parties and unions eventually sold out and accepted some of Harris' program. Eventually, Kitchener's municipal government decided to gentrify its downtown and people were able to resist to this programme of "urban evolution" until the opioid crisis began. The current Tent City in Kitchener is running a grassroots program to prevent opioid overdoses.

Kevin Yake, current President of the **Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users (VANDU)**. As a community member in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES), he notes that the community members have shared struggles but at the same time, the neighbourhood is changing rapidly because of gentrification. He notes that gentrification has led to increased violence in the DTES because of greater police presence that targets drug users and vulnerable women. VANDU has then become an important space of resistance not just because of its services to prevent overdoses because of the opioid crisis but also because it builds community in the DTES.



Unity Statement

We, the participants in the International League of Peoples' Struggle Symposium on the struggles of Homeless, Urban Poor, and Displaced People resolve to continue building our united front of poor people in struggle against imperialism, white supremacy, and patriarchy, that are the root causes of genocide, theft and destruction of Indigenous peoples lands, criminalization, displacement, containment and exploitation that afflict our communities. By sharing our experiences, consolidating our social investigation and continuing our collective analysis we can identify who are our friends and who are our enemies and build the broadest possible united front against the violent institutions of imperialism that prey on and attack our communities. With the other mass organizations under the banner of International League of Peoples' Struggle along with the close allies of the League we can advance the people's struggle for decolonisation, national liberation and socialism.

