

## MASS EVICTION IN HERONGATE DEVELOPER THREATENS TO SLAPP TENANT COALITION



Homes boarded up at Herongate.

Photo: Adam Gibbard

Andy Crosby

The Herongate Tenant Coalition and their allies rallied on Oct. 4 to protest the mass eviction of over 500 members of their community, one of Ottawa's most diverse neighbourhoods.

Timbercreek Communities and its parent company Timbercreek Asset Management (TCOM), who purchased the housing development between Walkley and Heron Roads in 2013, ordered over 100 families out of their homes by Sept. 30, threatening to cut off utilities if residents did not move. This is the second round of Timbercreek demolition-evictions of low-rent townhomes in order "to help the area become a premium, active adult-oriented rental community meant to offer resort-style living," according to Real Estate News EXchange.

The rally wound through the neighbourhood streets, revealing stark images of boarded up windows, asbestos warning signs, and piles of garbage left by Timbercreek work crews who recently started to dismantle the vacated units.

"They have no demolition permits approved, despite what Timbercreek was telling tenants," said Herongate Tenant Coalition spokesperson Josh Hawley at the rally. "They said 'we have demolition permits approved, your locks are going to be changed, your stuff is going to be thrown out on the streets.' None of that was true, they still do not have demolition permits for these homes."

The day following the rally, Timbercreek lawyer Michael Polowin of Gowling WLG issued the fourth in a series of cease and desist letters to Hawley and Ikram Dahir of the Herongate Tenant Coalition.

The notice, along with the

earlier letters dated July 9, Aug. 7, and Aug. 30, alleges defamatory statements published by the coalition on social media. The notice threatens the use of "all legal remedies" if the use and encouragement of social media posts by the coalition do not "cease immediately."

"In all of the letters, they repeatedly quoted other social media users as they claim we 'have encouraged the posting of similar comments which harass TCOM's employees and contractors,'" Hawley told *The Leveller*. "We have no control over what other people post."

"We simply post the facts and an on-the-ground, real-time account of the activity in Herongate," he added.

Dahir views Timbercreek's legal manoeuvres as a form of intimidation.

"It is still a scare tactic to get us to stop speaking out for Herongate," she told *The Leveller*. "This letter came right after our rally on Oct. 4th."

The Herongate Tenant Coalition's lawyer, Daniel Tucker-Simmons of Avant Law, LLP, views the cease and desist notices as equivalent to the threat of a SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation).

SLAPP suits are used as a tactic to scare people from speaking out.

"The immediate goal is to suppress and silence criticism, but there is a secondary objective which is very important and can really have a devastating effect on an activist movement," he said. "I always see SLAPP suits as a form of baiting because the temptation is to engage in the legal arena."

Engaging in legal struggles drains financial and human resources, as well as emotional energy from community organizers and social movements, which detracts from public or political campaigns that function to level the playing field against developers

like Timbercreek.

Large corporations are not comfortable, adept, or agile in the activist arena, in engaging in public campaigns, according to Tucker-Simmons.

"They tend to not be very good at it, and so they risk losing in that arena, so what they're trying to do is bait the activists into an arena where they hold the upper hand, unequivocally," he said.

"We're talking about a multi-billion-dollar organization, essentially with limitless resources to litigate and (that) has absolutely no concern with counter suits," said Tucker-Simmons. "They will dominate in the legal arena, there's no question, so they want the activists to engage them in that way rather than engaging them in the public arena."

Although Timbercreek's tactics to compel Herongate families to vacate have succeeded, the legal battle continues.

Tucker-Simmons is currently preparing to file an application on behalf of some former Herongate residents with the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario over the way Timbercreek implemented the evictions.

Further, Tucker-Simmons pointed to another thousand or so Herongate units that could be affected by future rounds of evictions.

"The battle isn't over," he said. "The next step in the legal arena is seeking a right of return for all tenants in units of similar size and similar costs."

"A lot of the work the Herongate Tenant Coalition does is real-time citizen journalism," said Hawley. "Social media is a superb tool that has allowed us a platform to share some semblance of the actual experience of tenants who have to deal with an abusive landlord."

"The fact that they are trying to silence and even criminalize us for doing this is scary."

FEATURE

### GIVE US BACK OUR SEX-ED SEX-ED ROLLS BACK, STUDENTS WALK OUT



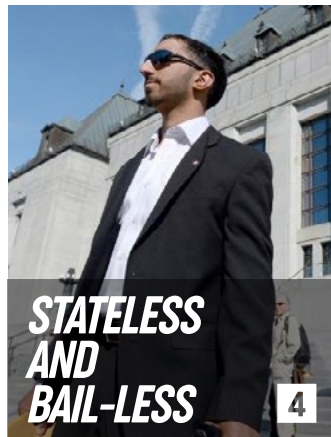
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## NAFTA 2.0 UPDATES EXPLOITATION

### NEW DEAL BASED ON THE SAME FLAWED TRADE MODEL THAT PROTECTS CORPORATE INTERESTS

Rick Telfer

On Sep. 30, after more than a year of negotiations, Canada and the United States reached an agreement to replace the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with a new trade agreement: the "United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement" (USMCA).

The United States had reached an agreement with Mexico before completing negotiations with Canada.

NAFTA came into force on Jan. 1, 1994 after being negotiated and signed by Canada, the United States, and Mexico. It replaced the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement (FTA) which had been in effect since 1988. With Mexico included, NAFTA established a trilateral trade bloc among the three countries and eliminated both tariff and non-tariff barriers to investment and trade.

Under NAFTA, most tariffs on goods traded between the three countries were eliminated, with a particular emphasis on agricultural products and automobile manufacturing.

The agreement also contained investor-state dispute settlement provisions – known as NAFTA's Chapter 11 – which established a process for resolving disputes between countries and corporations. The process permits foreign businesses to sue

states for damages when they believe that a government's decisions have harmed them unjustifiably.

While the Canadian government claims that "NAFTA has generated economic growth and rising standards of living for the people of all three member countries," the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) has argued that "On each of the proclaimed measures of success – jobs, productivity and market access – Canada's trade deals with the United States (the FTA and NAFTA) have been disappointing."

The CCPA has also criticized Chapter 11 of NAFTA, pointing out that "foreign investors have targeted a broad range of government measures in North America – especially in the areas of environmental protection and natural resource management – which allegedly adversely affected their investor rights."

Furthermore, "Canada has been the most sued party under NAFTA, having been targeted in 39 claims" and Canada "has lost or settled eight cases, paying out damages to foreign investors of \$215 million."

During the 2016 US presidential election campaign, Donald Trump criticized NAFTA. He called it the "worst trade deal in the history of the

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A tree-sitter halting pipeline construction s part of Appalachians Against Pipelines.



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The Leveller

# ARE WE DOOMED YET?

## GRIM CLIMATE CHANGE REPORT SETS 2030 DEADLINE

We can't say we didn't see this coming.

A new report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) says we have just over 10 years to get our sh\*t together or face catastrophic consequences.

The report states that we need "rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society" in order to keep global warming at bay and save our planet from irreversible climate change.

We really are screwed, aren't we?

With wildfires, hurricanes and extreme weather already ravaging the world at an alarming pace, while governments adopt a nonchalant, if not belligerent, attitude towards climate action – looking at you, USA – the future is looking pretty grim.

So what can we do?

According to CNN, we'll all be fine if we simply car-pool more, eat less meat – and ignore the fact that just 100 companies are responsible for 71 per cent of global emissions.

Blame consumers for climate change, that's the corporate media way!

That's not to say we shouldn't all be taking action. But modern climate change discourse, which shifts the blame to the average citizen while the real perps are entities like Exxon-Mobil and BP, isn't going to save us.

Ban plastic straws and buy Teslas all you want. Hurricanes will continue to pummel the coast, the ice caps will continue to melt, islands will continue to drown and people will continue to suffer, so long as the oil fat cats get fatter.

We say it's time we put the fat cats on a crash diet.

FEEDBACK ON THE LAST ISSUE OF THE LEVELLER

"I want to express my appreciation for the fine work you and everyone else did with the last issue of The Leveller. Your paper continues to make a very valuable contribution to the broad left in the city."

"IMO, U sound like a dangerous lunatic!"

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The Leveller is experimenting with paying our contributors, recognizing that your time is valuable and without you, the Leveller would cease to print.

- \$100 - Investigative pieces
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To facilitate paying our contributors, the Leveller has created an Investigative Journalism Fund, so that we can sustain this payment model as well as fund larger investigative research projects, or perhaps even add a journalist to the payroll someday.

Contact [operations.the.leveller@gmail.com](mailto:operations.the.leveller@gmail.com) to contribute any amount.

## Lev·el·ler noun

1 Historical: During the English Civil War (c. 1649), one who favoured the abolition of all rank and privilege. Originally an insult, but later embraced by radical anti-Royalists.

2 One who tells the truth, as in "I'm going to level with you."

3 An instrument that knocks down things that are standing up or digs up things that are buried or hidden.

The Leveller is a publication covering news, current events, and culture at Carleton University, the University of Ottawa, the Ottawa/Gatineau region and, to a lesser extent, the wider world. It is intended to provide readers with a lively portrait of their campuses and communities and of the events that give them meaning. It is also intended to be a forum for provocative editorializing and lively debate on issues of concern to students, staff, and faculty as well as Ottawa residents.

The Leveller leans left, meaning it challenges power and privilege and sides with people over private property. It is also democratic, meaning that it favours open discussion over silencing and secrecy. Within these very general boundaries, the Leveller is primarily interested in being interesting, in saying something worth saying and worth reading about.

The Leveller needs you. It needs you to read it, talk about it, discuss it with your friends, agree with it, disagree with it, write a letter, write a story (or send in a story idea), join in the producing of it, or just denounce it. It needs you—or someone like you—to edit it, to guide it towards maturity, to give it financial security and someplace warm and safe to live. Ultimately it needs you to become a more truly democratic and representative paper.

The Leveller is an ambitious little rag. It wants to be simultaneously irreverent and important, to demand responsibility from others while it shakes it off itself, to be a fun-house mirror we can laugh at ourselves in and a map we can use to find ourselves and our city in. It wants to be your coolest, most in-the-know friend and your social conscience at the same time. It continues to have its work cut out for it.

The Leveller is published every month during the school year. It is free.

The Leveller and its editors have no phone or office, but can be contacted with letters of love or hate at:

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The Leveller

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Clive Doucet outside the Timbercreek rental office in Herongate.

Photo: Adam Gibbard

# CLIVE DOUCET'S IDEAL HERONGATE WHAT HE WOULD'VE DONE IF HE WAS MAYOR

Yasmine Ghania

Mayoral candidate Clive Doucet's platform advocates ditching a "developer-first model of growing Ottawa" in favour of a "community-first model."

Since the platform prominently and specifically calls out the Herongate evictions that *The Leveller* has extensively reported on, we were intrigued to sit down with Doucet and discuss how he would do things differently.

Doucet spoke to your intrepid *Leveller* correspondent while sitting at a table in Carleton University, talking to students passing by. Doucet noted that he didn't believe anyone from Jim Watson's staff team made a trip down to Herongate. Glancing down for a quick moment he said, "They needed political will and that political will did not exist."

Other municipalities have found the will, so it's not impossible. The Herongate evictions would have been impossible in Toronto. A chapter of the Toronto municipal code,

the Residential Rental Property Demolition and Conversion Control, protects rental houses from being demolished to make way for condos. Anyone wanting to demolish or convert rental units needs approval and a permit from the city, and the city can make approval contingent on the replacement of the original units.

Meanwhile in Ottawa this May, 105 Herongate families received eviction notices, giving them until Sept. 30 to vacate their homes – even though demolition permits weren't issued yet. The community is overwhelmingly low-income, racialized, and made up of immigrants, some who have lived there for 20 years. Corporate landlords have neglected the buildings for decades, allowing them to justify destroying them today.

Speaking at a rally against the Herongate evictions on Oct. 4, Doucet said "We should be building a 1,000 units a year... we're getting 87... and we're not inspecting our houses the way we should. There's no political will to be a

city for everyone."

At the same really, New Democrat MPP Joel Harden compared Herongate's situation to that of Africville, an African-Canadian village that existed in the 1960s, in the north of Halifax.

Africville's land was expropriated for industrial development, with the city demovicting residents and justifying it all by saying its infrastructure did not meet minimum sanitation standards – after decades of systemic neglect.

The *Ottawa Citizen* reported Harden as saying, "those people in Africville had their possessions taken away in dump trucks. And I just heard that on Saturday, people (in Herongate) had their possessions forcibly removed in dump trucks. It's happened again."

Back at Carleton, Doucet told *The Leveller* action on Herongate needed to be taken by politicians 10 years ago. Politicians needed to push developers to conduct adequate home inspections going back a decade ago, he said.

Doucet then spoke about

the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan passed by Jim Watson. This plan was approved in 2014 and has a \$16 million budget for an initiative to help reduce homelessness and fix housing issues. But Doucet doesn't think Watson spent enough on this plan in order to solve the problem of inadequate housing.

If Doucet was mayor, he said the Herongate eviction would never have happened, because he would have made sure that long term housing inspections and inclusionary zoning were included in the city's Housing and Homelessness plan.

The Herongate complex logged the highest number of building complaints in the city. For example, in 2009, there were 150 complaints. Only a portion of these issues were solved, not by the landlord, but by the city.

If long term housing inspections were implemented, landlords would be required to take complaints more seriously.

Inclusionary zoning is an idea that was put into law in 2016 by the Liberal government. Essentially, it means that cities have the power to tell developers that if they're going to build a new residence, a certain number of units have to be priced so that people with lower incomes can afford them as well.

If this was implemented on a wide scale, Herongate tenants would have been able to find affordable housing elsewhere. In addition, it would force Timbercreek to build inclusive housing into their new development.

Doucet is a people-first candidate and said that's something that Jim Watson lacks. "I'm betting Mr. Watson spent more money on signs than I spent on my campaign. I don't think Ottawa can afford him."

## NAFTA 2.0 CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

world" and blamed it for the loss of US manufacturing jobs to Mexico because labour is cheaper there.

Because many workers in the US felt that they had not benefited from NAFTA, or that they were directly harmed by it, Trump's criticism of the agreement helped to propel him to victory.

After being elected president, Trump announced in Apr. 2017 that he intended to withdraw from NAFTA. Under the agreement, a country must provide six months notice to withdraw. Soon after, Canada and Mexico agreed to negotiate a new free trade agreement with the US.

Negotiations with Canada were protracted, in part because Canadian negotiators were resisting the United States' demand for greater access to the Canadian dairy market. They were also seeking to preserve investor-state dispute settlement provisions.

When it was announced that the United States and Canada had finally reached agreement – and that "NAFTA 2.0" would be named the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement – watchdog and labour organizations in Canada were quick to respond.

The Council of Canadians – which was founded in 1985 as a major civil society critic of the FTA and, later, NAFTA – described USMCA as "better but still deeply flawed."

The Council described it as "good news" that "Chapter 11 between Canada and the US is gone. The investor-state dispute settlement provisions that were in NAFTA 1.0 have allowed U.S. corporations to sue Canada for billions over policies and laws that infringed on corporate profits even if they were done in the public interest."

Mexico, however, remains subject to the investor-state dispute settlement process.

Additionally, energy proportionality – which required Canada to send a set percentage of its energy resources to the US even in times of shortages – was eliminated.

The Council added that "Canada was able to retain the cultural exemption clause from NAFTA 1.0. And there are promising signs of improved labour standards too, including increased wages and collective bargaining freedoms for Mexican workers."

While agreeing that the elimination of Chapter 11 was good news, Canada's largest union was harsher in its crit-

icism. The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), representing more than 665,000 workers, declared "NAFTA gets worse for Canadians under USMCA."

Charles Fleury, National Secretary-Treasurer of CUPE, said "Mr. Trudeau made a great show about negotiating strong, enforceable chapters on gender, labour, indigenous rights and the environment. But when push came to shove, he has come up empty-handed once again."

Of particular concern to CUPE was the fact that, under USMCA, patent protections for biologics were extended. Calling this "extremely disappointing," the union is concerned that such protections will drive up drug costs "dramatically" and "threaten the viability of a national Pharmacare plan."

"The Liberals have talked a big game about Pharmacare and making life-saving medication more affordable for Canadians," said CUPE National President Mark Hancock. "But behind the scenes they've been complicit in allowing the cost of prescription drugs to skyrocket, and extending patent protections doesn't help."

The Council of Canadians also lamented Canada's capitulation to the US in regards to the dairy market. It stated, "Our farmers will pay a heavy price as NAFTA 2.0 opens Canada's market to more U.S. dairy products, including products that contain bovine growth hormone (BGH), a genetically modified hormone that is injected in cows to make them produce more milk. BGH has been banned in Canada due to its link to serious health concerns."

The Council also noted that, under USMCA, "[t]here will be increased deregulation and harmonization of rules to accelerate approvals for massive pipelines to be built." This is a major obstacle to preventing climate breakdown, since oil pipelines encourage fossil fuel-burning instead of facilitating a shift to renewable energy sources.

Ultimately, the Council argues that the problem with the USMCA is that – like NAFTA before it – it is "based on a flawed trade model that protects corporate interests over people and the environment." It does not address climate change "and it could still leave our water vulnerable to corporate interests that want to buy and sell it."

The USMCA does not include any provisions on gender equality or Indigenous rights, either.

# NOTWITHSTANDING CLOTHES THE ELECTION OF QUÉBEC'S CAQ SPELLS TROUBLE FOR THOSE IN RELIGIOUS ATTIRE

Barâa Arar

Watching election night news coverage as a marginalized person is a truly visceral experience. New governments generate new concerns about employment, healthcare, and education for everyone. But for many underrepresented communities, a new government means a direct threat to their identities and safety.

October 1st CAQ, Coalition Avenir Québec, led by Francois Legault, won a majority government with 74 of the 125 seats. In doing so, CAQ unseated the Liberal party and Legault replaced Philippe Couillard as premier of Québec.

In Legault's first news conference as premier-elect, one of his primary concerns seemed to be the religious symbols worn by some civil servants.

Legault argued that the "vast majority of Quebecers" agree that public servants should be banned from wearing visible religious attire. He also said that he is prepared to employ the notwithstanding clause to make it a reality.

It is inflammatory and dangerous to frame a religious symbols ban as a pressing and widely shared concern, but it is not a new political tactic. With every Québec election, there seems to be a renewed policy promise, from various parties, to ban or restrict 'ostentatious' religious symbols, the most obvious of which are hijabs, niqabs, kippas, and turbans.

Even in between general elections, there was a resurgence of such sentiment. In November 2017, Québec Liberals passed Bill 62, in an attempt to appease some right-wing voters after the Parti Québécois' failed 2013 Québec Charter of Values.

Although Bill 62 did not come with an explicit call to ban hijabs or turbans, but a more general ban on "face coverings," the implicit message was clear enough. Many people rightly understood this piece of legislation as a thinly-veiled attack on Muslim-presenting women.

Protests erupted the following day across Québec, with bus drivers, public servants, and concerned citi-

zens covering their faces with scarves and balaclavas.

Less than a month after Bill 62 passed, a provincial judge suspended its implementation until legislators clearly outline how it can be reconciled with constitutionally protected religious accommodations. The law is facing a constitutional challenge from Marie-Michelle Lacoste, a Québécois who wears niqab. She is fighting alongside two interveners: the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and the National Council of Canadian Muslims.

Such legal challenges are often the response to these discriminatory policies. As a matter of fact, shortly after Legault's announcement, three justices in Québec's highest court found that a judge erred in banning Rania El-Alloul from wearing her hijab in court three years ago.

El-Alloul started this legal challenge when a Québec judge, Justice Eliana Marengo, told her she could not testify in a hijab since it broke courtroom decorum.

When asked by *The Globe and Mail* why she challenged

the system, El-Alloul said "I did it because I felt it was my duty and my right." In its judgement, the Québec court agreed that El-Alloul's case was a clear example of denying a citizen's rights because of their religious beliefs.

Identity politics mixed with populism produces legislation that disproportionately affect those who are most marginalized. We see this with Doug Ford cutting welfare and education programs in Ontario, and now with Legault in Québec.

What message do these sorts of policies send young women in Québec?

I think the subtext is clear: the state is forcing a certain segment of the population to choose between an expression of their faith and a career in the public service. It is saying to young people: if you want to become a judge or a teacher – lose the turban. Lose the hijab.

The seemingly relentless efforts to marginalize religious minorities only hurts already vulnerable citizens.

As a woman who wears hijab, I see first-hand how such

top-down rhetoric and restrictions translate into stifling the aspirations of young women in my community. These proposals to "protect secularism" push minorities to socio-economic peripheries and as such work to segregate communities.

Early Saturday morning, as I write this, thousands of people marched through downtown Montreal, chanting "everyone dislikes racists" in opposition to CAQ's propositions.

Muslim women, in various expressions of their faith, were at the frontline. These

women are systematically marginalized – the direct victims of these policies. Their Muslim identities are directly threatened with the election of CAQ. Yet, these women continue to participate unapologetically in the democratic process.

These women's increased socio-political engagement is proof of their secularism – their religious identities do not hinder their civil service and public presence. If CAQ believes in secularism as a societal tool of equality, they should align themselves with these women, not silence them.



# STATELESS AND BAIL-LESS

Stripped of citizenship without cause, Budlakoti now imprisoned without conviction

Matt Cicero

On Nov. 6, 2017 Deepan Budlakoti, a Canadian-born man of South Asian descent made stateless in 2011, was arrested by the Ontario Provincial Police in connection with alleged weapons offences.

The next evening, Budlakoti was transferred to the Ottawa-Carleton Detention Centre (OCDC). In addition to being stateless, he was denied bail and has been imprisoned ever since. Meanwhile his co-accused, who are white and Canadian citizens, received bail.

*The Leveller* reached Budlakoti by phone and asked why he had not received bail: "My case is high profile in terms of immigration matters," he said. "I'm Brown. I have a beard. It's systemic racism, inbred into the system. It's harder for people of colour to get bail than it is for Caucasian people."

Since 2013, Budlakoti and the Justice for Deepan Committee, have been fighting a campaign to get his citizenship back. Budlakoti and the committee say that the Canadian government has violated his human rights – rights that, as signatories to the UN Convention on Human Rights and the UN Convention on Statelessness, they have a moral and legal duty to uphold.

In an April 2018 decision, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights said that Bud-

lakoti's deportation to India would violate his rights under articles 12(4), 17 and 23(1) of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

## CRIME, IMMIGRATION AND PUNISHMENT

Budlakoti's citizenship was stripped from him in 2011 while the Harper Conservatives were in power.

Budlakoti was born in Ottawa at the former Grace Hospital in 1989. His parents, who were Indian nationals, worked as gardeners, cooks and cleaners at the Indian High Commission, but left their jobs to work for a medical doctor before Budlakoti was born.

The Canadian government, however, refuses to accept this version of events. It says that Budlakoti's parents still worked for the Indian High Commission, and so, because of a law that prevents the children of foreign diplomatic staff from becoming citizens by being born in Canada, Budlakoti is not a citizen.

It insists that this is the correct version of events, despite the fact that Budlakoti had a long-form Canadian birth certificate, passport, health card and social insurance number, all evidence of his citizenship.

It was not until Budlakoti was convicted and imprisoned for narcotics and weapons trafficking in 2010 that the question of his citizenship

first came to the attention of the authorities. A prison guard asked Budlakoti about his status. This eventually led to private discussions among bureaucrats at Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and ultimately to a 2011 decision by then Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Canada Jason Kenney to strip Budlakoti of his citizenship.

Budlakoti, Kenney declared, was a permanent resident, not a citizen. Subsequently the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada ruled that, as he a permanent resident, he was inadmissible to Canada on the grounds of "serious criminality."

The Canadian government tried to have him deported, and he was held in immigration detention for several months. However, the Indian government refused to accept the deportation of Budlakoti to India.

Today, Budlakoti is stateless and lives in dire poverty as a result.

## LAW AND ORDER, BORDERS AND PRISONS

The efforts to deport Budlakoti are part of a growing trend in Canada to restrict immigration, making it harder to acquire citizenship and easier to lose it, and to view migrants as threats to national security.

It's also part of the law and order agenda that demands

larger police forces, larger prisons, and harsher sentences. It demonizes people who have committed crimes, as well as people who have only been accused of illegal activities.

"This would never have happened to someone who was white, I'm almost certain," said Diana Ralph, one of Budlakoti's supporters, when interviewed by *The Leveller*. "Years ago I was working to support the security certificate detainees, five Muslim men. This is a Muslim man. None of them were guilty of anything, but they were kept without charge."

Despite not being convicted of anything, "Deepan has now been in jail for well over a year," Ralph noted.

## THE OTTAWA-CARLETON DETENTION CENTRE

If you talk with Mr. Budlakoti these days he speaks most about the conditions in the OCDC where he has been imprisoned since November 2017.

The OCDC is located on Innes Road in Ottawa and is considered one of the worst detention centres in the province.

In 2016, after a serious scandal about the conditions there, then correctional services minister Yasir Naqvi visited the centre, and the OCDC task force was created to ensure conditions improved.

"We're living in a hallway

that's about a two metres wide and a 45 metres long," said Budlakoti. "Twenty-four people in a range, double bunked. No sunlight comes in. You sit in front of the toilet to eat on the floor, like a dog. Yet there's tables outside on the range."

Another inmate, who spoke to *The Leveller* on condition of anonymity, called the conditions "deplorable," while noting that in the 10 years since he was first incarcerated in the OCDC there has been some improvement.

He said that while there is now recreation once a week and some games, such as puzzles, there remains little to do.

There is only one program available to prisoners, a four-week anger management course. Prisoners who want to do school are limited to only four classes.

Prisoners also say that the food is terrible. They are only permitted 40 minutes a week for visitors, including family. Both Mr. Budlakoti and the anonymous prisoner said that the conditions are hard on their physical and mental health.

In 2015 and 2016 three prisoners committed suicide at the Ottawa Carleton Detention Centre.

Budlakoti, who has been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, has not received therapy despite repeated requests. He has had to fight hard to get any of the medical attention that he needs.

"It's not a healthy living environment, whatsoever," the anonymous prisoner told *The Leveller*. "It's dirty. There's clogged up vents with dust in

them. Every day is long and hard in this place. And for a lot of people that are not built for it psychologically, it's tough. You can break down."

## GUILTY BY ACCUSATION

Many of the prisoners at the OCDC are awaiting trial. These prisoners have not yet been found guilty of the crimes for which they are accused. However because of systemic racial and class oppression they are forced to spend months or even years waiting for trial.

The anonymous prisoner *The Leveller* spoke with, who expects his charges to be dropped, has spent two years at the OCDC. This is time he will never get back.

It is time spent in hard, inhumane conditions that violate these prisoners' rights under section 11 (d) Canadian Charter of Rights & Freedoms and multiple sections of the UN's Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

Budlakoti will be at the provincial courthouse from Oct. 30 to Nov. 2, after spending almost a year at the OCDC. He has not been found guilty of a crime. Budlakoti is asking supporters to come to the courtroom on Oct. 30 and 31.

From the phone inside the maximum security prison where he has been housed for the past year, Budlakoti told *The Leveller*, "You are not classified as innocent here. You're classified as guilty. And people should be aware that this is not right. This should not be happening in the capital city of Canada."

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# TORNADO RELIEF

Natural disaster bringing communities together

Caroline  
Rodriguez-Charette

Tornado warnings are not unheard of in Ottawa-Gatineau weather forecasts, but they have usually provided little cause for concern. All of that changed on Sept 21. That's when an outbreak of six tornadoes hit Eastern Ontario and Southern Quebec.

Between 3:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m., one of the tornadoes caused a great deal of damage in the small community of Dunrobin, located in the west end of Ottawa, moving on to devastate the Mont-Bleu neighbourhood in the Hull sector of Gatineau.

The Dunrobin-Gatineau tornado was classified as a high-end EF3 (capable of considerable damage) by Environment Canada, with wind speeds reaching up to 265 km/h.

As a result of the tornadoes, approximately 30 people were injured, and more than 1,700 buildings were damaged. This left numerous people without homes, displacing them to hotels and community centres. Powerlines and trees were downed, leaving over 200,000 residents without electricity and debris all over the streets.

In addition, l'École Secondaire Mont-Bleu was evacuated when it caught fire after school hours. The fire is believed to have been started by a lightning strike from the

storm. The school has been shut down.

The 1,500 students are currently attending classes at l'École Secondaire de l'Île – splitting the two schools into morning and afternoon sessions. Mont-Bleu students will start attending classes at the Asticou Centre in December, while their school will be closed for repairs for the remainder of the year.

Kelly Thomas, a single mom residing in the nearby Jardins Radisson neighbourhood in Hull, was at home with her nine-year-old son Aiden when the tornado happened.

"My windows were all open so we did see everything, which was very scary," said Thomas. "My son was yelling 'Am I gonna die?' And inside, I was afraid he would and I wouldn't be able to save him. But, once it was all over and my son was unharmed, all I could feel was happy."

Thomas's balcony shattered but her apartment was okay. "We thought we would be home once the power was back, but when we were evacuated and saw the extent of destruction to our complex and the entire neighbourhood, the situation started to become very real," said Thomas.

Due to the damage to the buildings and grounds, as well as dangerous debris everywhere, the residents were displaced for as many as 10 days.

Approximately 1,500 residents from Thomas's complex were homeless, and given very few updates regarding the situation, which caused a lot of anxiety for most people.

Residents of the Mont-Bleu neighbourhood were searching for answers from the City of Gatineau in order to start rebuilding their lives. However, residents told the CBC that the city was generally unhelpful and uninformative.

Little information was made available to residents and, as the situation went on, little resources brought to the area. City-run relief was largely inaccessible.

Jardins Radisson and Mont-Bleu are very diverse, low-income neighbourhoods, where many new immigrants live, and they faced a lot of destruction.

"To be displaced for over a week was awful for everyone," said Thomas. "But to those who have no means to get through such a situation, it was brutal. People in our neighbourhood would be seen walking dazed and confused, waiting for some kind of relief or support to show up."

"The city should have had a presence on the ground," Thomas added. "It would have made a difference."

Many residents and concerned people reached out to the City of Gatineau, the Canadian Red Cross and the



Folks at the DIY 'Community Support Village' in Mont Bleu neighbourhood of Hull, hugging it out.

Photo: Sam Smith

CLSC to find out if they had an information table on location or nearby, to assist them. According to Thomas, they were told that residents who needed help had to get it themselves, as the various services were unable to bring help directly to those affected.

People from other communities did not know what was happening in Mont-Bleu. They wanted to help, volunteer or donate but were being turned away by the city relief facilities. People did not understand why they were being turned away. Thomas tried to inform and help, by guiding them through the needs of the residents and sensitivity of the area.

"We just did things to help," explained Thomas. "It started with Chelsea Shawarma writing to me to offer hot meals. When I went to pick up the food, a handful of people from the 'Chelsea Folks' Facebook group, who I had never met before, showed up to help. And, every day this happened."

Individuals and businesses from the Chelsea and Wakefield areas brought relief to the neighbourhood with their donations and generosity. "I really feel like the people of Chelsea and Wakefield went above and beyond to get a whole neighbourhood through such a disaster," said Thomas.

saster," said Thomas.

Chelsea Shawarma donated nearly 50 large pizzas and shawarmas, volunteers organized a barbecue with food donated by the IGA in Farm Point, and Chelsea Freshmart donated groceries and necessities, allowing Thomas to set up a pop-up grocery for her neighbourhood. Wakefield's Petalia store even organized a pet support table.

A 'Community Support Village' was also set up, coordinating offers of help and featuring an information table, coffee, treats, and more.

In sum, the community came together to help itself when governments and official agencies were missing in action.

The help was badly needed, as residents faced an otherwise-grim situation.

Yousry Okguchung, 19, for example, was a resident living in the Daniel-Johnson neighbourhood in the Mont-Bleu area. He had been working at the Carp Fair when the tornado took place.

On his way back home, he found the entire area blocked off. The police told him that he could not stay inside his building because it was not safe. He could only go in to get certain essentials and then was required to leave.

"I was extremely sad," said

Okguchung. "Why did this have to happen to me? I asked myself. Luckily, my building was still in one piece. I saw some other buildings and their roofs were completely gone."

Although Okguchung's home was still intact, the damage to the structure was too severe for it to remain habitable, leaving him temporarily homeless.

"I have never seen so much fear and hysteria," Okguchung said. "I remember seeing people sleeping on the streets." However, everyone came together as a community to help each other.

"We were all in the same boat, going through the same thing. It really made the community that much closer, given the chaos we had just been through," said Okguchung.

Donations are still welcome, as residents continue to suffer the after-effects of the tornado. Whether it is delivering groceries to an affected family or donating to GoFundMe campaigns, every little bit helps.

"This was very life changing. We still feel different. Life feels different. The continuing support is very helpful, but the crisis is over," said Thomas.

Thomas can be contacted at kelz@live.ca for more informa-

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# CONSERVATIVE POLITICS UNDERLIE ANTI-CFS CAMPAIGN



CFS and CUSA referendum campaign material. Photo: Adam Gibbard

## Leveller Staff

Carleton undergraduate students are going to the polls on Oct. 17-19, to vote in a rare fall semester referendum on whether or not to decertify from the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS).

The question reads, "Are you in favour of continued membership in the Canadian Federation of Students?" It was initiated by the Carleton University Students' Association (CUSA), which has concentrated considerable financial and human resources into a decertification campaign spanning a number of years.

CUSA is Local 1 of the CFS. The founding meeting of the CFS was held at Carleton in 1981. There are currently 64 students' union members of the CFS across Canada.

As a national union for post-secondary students, CFS enables students to speak to power with a united voice, in particular putting pressure on governments for lower tuition fees. CFS referendum

campaign materials state that Carleton undergraduate students currently pay \$8.37 each per semester, which is collected by the university administration as an ancillary fee, for membership in both CFS and the Ontario component of CFS.

CUSA referendum campaign materials claim that the CFS costs Carleton students \$440,000 each year.

CUSA's official "CU Later CFS" campaign was launched in September 2017 with a petition.

"Like any referendum to join or remain members of the CFS, students had to collect petitions from 15 per cent of the student population," Nour Alideeb, chairperson of CFS-Ontario, told *The Leveller*. "We received these petitions in May 2018."

"After those petitions were submitted, they were verified to ensure that the signatures were from registered students," Alideeb added. "Once we verified the signatures, CUSA and the CFS agreed on dates for the referendum based on our respective schedules."

## THE CONSERVATIVE CONNECTION

The referendum vote is the culmination of a multi-year concerted strategy of a series of CUSA Executive slates targeting progressive campus groups.

The campaign against the CFS and other left-leaning student organizations must be contextualized in the right-wing politics that underlie successive CUSA administrations since the "A Better Carleton" slate took power in 2012.

Although "A Better Carleton" and its successors have been forced to rebrand over the years, responding to scandal after scandal, the same clique of right-leaning students has been groomed for power by the original conservative regime of anti-left ideologues.

In 2009, the *Ryerson Free Press* exposed a series of leaked audio recordings, photographs and documents from a workshop organized by the Ontario PC Campus Association (OPCCA) and the Manning Centre for Building Democracy at the University of Waterloo. Conservatives described strategies for taking over student unions, defunding Ontario Public Interest Research Groups (OPIRG), and decertifying from the CFS.

The suspicion was that similar workshops were taking place across Ontario, with a particular emphasis on Carleton University.

Conservatives organized these workshops to build influence on campus – by setting up shell groups such as the "Campus Coalition for Liberty" to push a right-wing agenda – as well as to recruit students into

the Conservative Party.

In 2012, writer Glenn Burley attended a campus political activism panel at the Manning Centre conference in Ottawa. Burley said a speaker identified as Bruce, a former Carleton student, boasted that "from 2009 to present his close-knit group of Conservative students had slowly won position after position, eventually putting them in control of all six student-held seats in CUSA, giving them what he called, 'full control to battle the CFS'."

## THE CUSA OFFENSIVE

Once obtaining power, the "A Better Carleton" executive set to work. In 2012, CUSA broke a long-standing contract with the Graduate Students' Association (GSA) by withdrawing from their joint not-for-profit health plan and signed with a for-profit provider.

To do this, CUSA changed the definition of "referendum" in its bylaws to mean a vote of the CUSA Board of Trustees — three CUSA executive officers — instead of CUSA's entire membership.

At the time, GSA president Kelly Black believed that the real motivation for withdrawing from the joint health plan was due to the association with the CFS's National Student Health Network.

With equal pettiness, CUSA opted to spend money on producing student agendas, a service originally provided by the CFS. The new agendas were purged of all information related to the CFS or any other progressive levy fee-funded organizations on campus, includ-

ing the CKCU 93.1 FM radio station, whose space was also threatened by CUSA.

CUSA also immediately went after the CFS. In October 2012, *The Leveller* reported on the first round of volleys fired in a war with the ultimate aim of CUSA leaving the CFS. At that time CUSA ordered that the student service centres be purged of all CFS materials, including those related to anti-Islamophobia, anti-sexism and anti-homophobia/transphobia campaigns.

Service centre coordinators were put on notice and ordered not to wear any CFS-related paraphernalia, lest they be "written-up." Three "write-ups" meant dismissal. At least three co-ordinators were either dismissed or did not have their contracts renewed at the time.

In December 2012, CUSA amended its Discrimination Code after arranging a council meeting on a day where less opposition was anticipated. The amendments approved funding for groups opposing access to abortion, removed CUSA's ban on specific racist groups such as the KKK and Heritage Front, and altered the nature of CUSA's safe space policy.

Not surprisingly, student "orientation leaders" felt empowered to wear "Fuck Safe Space" tank tops during frosh week in 2014, a few months after CUSA reluctantly cancelled its annual Pandamonium concert featuring rapper Rick Ross after public outcry over lyrics promoting date rape. CUSA organized the event with a company run by a former CUSA president.

## THE CURRENT CAMPAIGN

CUSA's current anti-CFS campaign is being framed in benign terms of saving students' money to mask the political and ideological underpinnings. A similar strategy was used when CUSA Executives ran a referendum campaign to defund OPIRG-Carleton in 2013.

In that referendum, despite the absence of a level playing field – CUSA controlled the electoral and appeals offices, did not follow its own election code and tried to shorten the campaign period – students overwhelmingly voted in favour of funding OPIRG. Progressive students also organized to thwart an attempt by the CUSA Executive to evict OPIRG-Carleton from its office space in 326 Unicentre in 2015.

Despite CUSA's ongoing efforts, the CFS believes it has the support of Carleton students.

"Generally, speaking to average Carleton students, they relate and appreciate the work the CFS does," said Alideeb. "They are taking advantage of the CFS discount card, ISIC, and we have issued the cards since the start of the school year. It's been great having these conversations with students on campus and we're glad they are getting the information they need to make a decision at the polls."

CFS bylaws set quorum at 10 per cent, meaning that a simple majority of over 2,600 Carleton undergraduate students must vote 'no' in order to approve decertification.

Voting takes place on campus on Oct. 17-19.

CUSA president David Oladejo did not respond to a request for comment.

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# François Legault élu à la tête du Québec

## À quoi s'attendre avec un gouvernement de la CAQ

Daniel Birru

Après les Ontariens en juin dernier et les néo-brunswickois en septembre, ce fut au tour des Québécois d'élire un nouveau premier ministre le 1er octobre dernier. Au cours des cinq semaines de campagne, François Legault, Jean-François Lisée, Manon Massé et Philippe Couillard ont débattus des valeurs et des promesses de leurs partis respectifs. François Legault, chef de la Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) a ultimement défait le premier ministre sortant de la province, Philippe Couillard, du Parti Libéral (PLQ). Avec un total de 74 sièges, il forme un gouvernement majoritaire à l'Assemblée Nationale du Québec.

Cette victoire de la CAQ a amené plusieurs discussions chez les analystes de l'élection. C'est en effet la première fois depuis 1970 qu'un parti autre que le Parti libéral ou le Parti québécois accède au pouvoir. Ces deux partis ont subi leurs plus sévères défaites depuis leurs créations aux

maines de la CAQ, un parti créé il y a sept ans sur les cendres de l'Action démocratique du Québec (ADQ).

### Souveraineté

Avec l'élection de la CAQ, un parti qui mise sur le « nationalisme québécois », la remise en question la plus importante a été celle de la souveraineté du Québec. Étant la raison d'être du Parti Québécois (PQ), qui est tombé au quatrième rang au résultat, la plupart des experts en viennent à tirer comme conclusion que cette idée est morte au cœur des québécois. N'ayant pas été au pouvoir de la province depuis maintenant quinze ans, mis à part une courte présence de 17 mois entre 2012 et 2014, cette notion, qui avait été au cœur de la politique québécoise pendant les années 1980 et 1990, semble effectivement prendre de moins en moins d'ampleur au sein du peuple québécois.

Avec François Legault au pouvoir, il n'y a aucun plan de souveraineté du Québec en vue. Par contre, la CAQ souhaite renforcer l'autono-



mie du Québec au sein de la fédération canadienne, grâce à l'obtention de plus de pouvoirs et fonds fédéraux, et veut une reconnaissance du Québec dans la constitution du Canada.

### IMMIGRATION

Au cours de la campagne électorale, la promesse de François Legault qui a fait le plus réagir le public et qui a été grandement critiquée par ses adversaires a été celle au sujet de l'immigration et de la question nationale. À ce sujet, le chef de la CAQ a exprimé le souhait de vouloir faire passer un test de français à tous les immigrants après trois ans au Québec. En cas de deux échecs à ce test, la province du Québec n'accordera pas à un résident le Certificat de sélection permettant de devenir citoyen canadien. Cette affirmation a été disputée par les trois autres parties, notamment parce que c'est le gouvernement du Canada qui émet ce certificat avant l'entrée d'un immigrant, et non le Québec.

### ÉDUCATION

L'autre grand thème sur lequel les chefs du PLQ, du PQ et de Québec Solidaire (QS) ont le plus questionné Legault a été celui sur l'éducation. François Legault a fait de la prématernelle quatre ans pour tous les enfants son cheval de bataille, son projet de société. De plus, sa promesse d'abolir les élections et les commissions scolaires pour les remplacer par de simples centres de services aux écoles pour la petite enfance a été très souvent au cœur des débats.

### EXTÉRIEUR DE LA PROVINCE

Il faut savoir que plus tôt cette année, l'Ontario et le Québec étaient tous les deux dirigés par un gouvernement libéral, ce qui était à l'avantage du premier ministre du Canada, Justin Trudeau. Il est crédible de penser que les deux nouveaux premiers ministres vont s'allier pour contrer les décisions et les plans du gouvernement fédéral. Cependant, il faut également garder en tête que plusieurs sujets séparent Ford et Legault, notamment ceux sur l'environnement (Legault, bien qu'il ait

très peu parler d'environnement, soutient le marché du carbone, dont l'Ontario de Ford s'est retiré), et le rôle du gouvernement dans la création d'un projet de société. Il faudra être vigilant sur les relations à venir entre Toronto et Québec, plus particulièrement avec la tenue, dans 12 mois, d'une élection à Ottawa.

Quoi qu'il en soit, il sera fort intéressant de voir les répercussions qu'auront les politiques du gouvernement caquiste mené par François Legault, tant au niveau des affaires internes au Québec qu'au niveau de ses relations externes.

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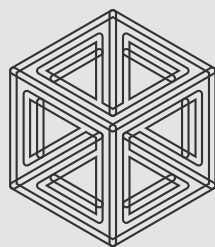
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GI  
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GIVE US BACK  
OUR SEX-ED



*"This walkout  
changed me  
and so many  
people,"  
said Quinn  
Jeffery-Off.  
"And it will  
continue  
to change  
us as we  
understand  
our power  
and voices."*



## SEX-ED ROLLS BACK, STUDENTS WALK OUT

By Kieran Delamont

The first thing down was the stop sign, because it was there, because it was convenient, and because stop signs aren't ambivalent in their message.

I'm not really sure whether it was pulled down sometime before a couple hundred high school students walked out of their classes, or during, and it didn't really matter anyways. It was theirs now, a suburban talisman on which the simple, distilled message of protest could be projected.

**STOP** it read, before a young woman yelled out for someone to hand her a sharpie, knelt down over top of it while her classmates looked on, and added, in handwriting

**DOUG FORD!!** with two exclamation points, since one was not enough and zero wasn't an option.

And then she backed away, having done what she wanted to do. The high school boys took over (as they do), hoisting it in the air and parading it around as if it were a war standard flying above a battle that, technically speaking, isn't even theirs yet.

\*\*\*

On Sept. 21, nearly 40,000 students across Ontario walked out of their schools at 1:00 p.m. to protest the Ontario government's roll back of the elementary sex-ed curriculum.

Teachers had been instructed to teach the same sex-ed as 1998 - curriculum created before gay marriage and trans rights, before social media and sexting, curriculum with gaping holes where discussions of consent and gender identity should have been.

As 1:00 p.m. hit, the students began streaming out of Glebe Collegiate Institute (GCI) in Ottawa. They formed a crowd on the lawn, as media stood along the outside of the property, a school-administration-requested perimeter.

They were angry, but in a way they were jubilant too. Many of them seemed proud to be standing up to the Ford government, even if they didn't know what good it would actually do.

One young girl walked around handing out cookies - rainbow cookies, she said, to celebrate the LGBTQ+ community - while others laid out picnic blankets and ate their lunch.

\*\*\*

None of the students walking out of class were of voting age - how much of this was actually their fight to fight? What

responsibility do they bear for the choices done to them?

Stopping Doug Ford was both the point of it all - and not.

Nothing - not the courts, not other political parties, not some fuzzy and nebulous notion of norms - seem poised, or able, or willing to stop Ford. How would some high school students, even 38,000 of them, manage to do it?

Can a show of solidarity among students, however complete and visible, change the minds of the PC government? Probably not. And absent any reason to do so, expecting it to change feels, to be honest, somewhat naive.

There is a point to protest that goes beyond achieving a halting effect, though. It is about community and solidarity and sending a message. Protest can be - maybe - about vanquishing apathy.

\*\*\*

There is a theme, I've noticed, when I talk to and interview people in their early twenties or younger - a feeling of exhaustion and a nausea existing on a cellular level.

They look out and see a world that needs to change or be changed - and feel like they're the only ones who see it.

It's a feeling of despair as they look on as the world gets stupider and meaner, as it lets them down over and over again - while all the important people seem to agree that everything, at last, is getting better.

It is not a universal feeling, though, and these young people, who will feel the cancellation of modern sex-ed the most (can you ever know all the ways an absence of knowledge affects you?), they seem willing to overcome it.

\*\*\*

As a couple hundred kids streamed out of Glebe Collegiate Institute, hopelessness was banished, replaced with defiance and hope and all sorts of other feelings that - to a high school student in the year 2018 - must have felt big and must have felt important and must have felt real.

Quinn Jeffery-Off, wearing a bright pink t-shirt and blue jeans, but probably more identifiable by their full head of bleach-blond hair, emerged as the ringleader with a megaphone.

A circle of high school students formed around him, chanting slogans like "stop Doug Ford," "Indigenous history







is Canadian history" and "decolonize my classroom."

As they gathered and chanted, students took to the mic to talk about how crucial it is to have a modern sex-ed curriculum.

Several came out publicly, possibly for the first time, to their classmates. Many identified openly as part of the LGBTQ+ community, and said that to have a modern sex-ed curriculum, such as the 2015 curriculum, meant something, even if it wasn't perfect.

It meant that kids in school were being taught about the world they lived in, about the skin they lived in.

And then, suddenly, it was gone.

They were all high school kids, so it wouldn't directly impact them.

That's right, high school students will still be taught the 2015 sex-ed curriculum. See, the two curriculums - one for elementary schools and the other for high schools - were introduced at the same time, but only the elementary curriculum was rolled back by the Ford government.

But many of these students weren't far out from grade eight, where much of this information is taught.

Even if the policies don't directly impact them, they feel them.

\*\*\*

What is an abstraction for politicians at Queen's Park is, for young high school students, becoming a very real disconnect between what they are taught and the world they live in.

I spoke with Ian and Zoe, both grade nine students at GCI who asked for their last names to be withheld. Ian identifies a bit more conservatively - he thinks that some "SJW policies" hurt free speech. Zoe is a bit more demure, politically, if she has any real leanings at all.

But both agreed that the education reforms passed by the Ford government are a mistake.

Ian called the sex-ed rollback "wrong," while Zoe said that learning that information in grade eight made several of her friends confident enough to come out to their classmates. Both worried that the rollbacks would erase those gains.

Both also complained that overall curriculum changes would decrease the amount of information on Indigenous history and culture that would be taught.

"Getting rid of residential schools [in the curriculum] is

wrong," Ian told me, referring to the cancellation of a planned rewrite of the province's overall curriculum that would have boosted the amount of Indigenous content.

"Canada's done some good shit," said Zoe, "but Canada's done some bad shit, too."

It is always important to learn about the bad shit.

\*\*\*

Like virtually all protests, the high school walk-out was a balance between ambition and what is actually possible.

If the Ford administration thought anything about the protests, they didn't do so publicly. When education minister Lisa Thompson was pressed on the subject by reporters at Queen's Park ahead of the walk-out, she simply said that she was "very, very much looking forward to the rolling out of this consultation" with parents and stakeholders on the new curriculum.

By 3:00 p.m., the protest began dissipating. And then Ottawa was hit by a tornado, and thrust into a weekend of chaos. Reporters and cameramen were scrambled to the scenes of natural destruction taking form in the city's west end, and the focus of everyone's attention shifted away from the high school students.

But for the students, the walk-out was a transformative experience. An entry into the civil arena of politics and resistance.

"This walkout changed me and so many people," said Jeffery-Off in a message a day after the walk-out. "And it will continue to change us as we understand our power and voices."

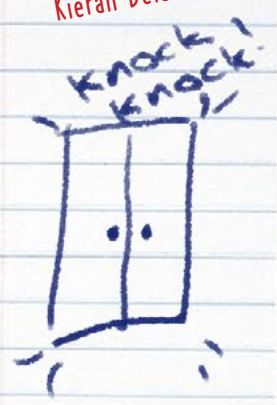
[From left to right]

1. Students at Glebe Collegiate were out in large numbers on September 21 - some there to vocally protest, others there to support their classmates.

2. A stop sign, emblazoned with "Stop Doug Ford!!" is hoisted above the grounds at Glebe Collegiate Institute during the student walk-out.

3. A female student (unnameable because school admin asked your intrepid correspondent to stand on the public sidewalk shortly after taking this picture) from Glebe Collegiate writes on a felled stop sign.

All photos by Kieran Delamont







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# THE FACES OF PRESENT-DAY PERSECUTION

## TURKISH HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES HAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR CANADA

David Kitz

What do the faces of present-day persecution look like? They look remarkably like the faces of the boy and girl pictured here.

After fleeing arrest in their hometown in Turkey, this family risked their lives in a daring midnight dash across a rain-swollen river that marks the border with Greece. Currently, these children live with their mother and four other refugee families in a crowded apartment in Athens. They subsist on funds sent to them by their father, who has gone ahead of them to start a new life in Canada, working as an Uber driver in Ottawa.

So what heinous crime did they commit? Their mother was a teaching assistant at a Hizmet private school. That was their crime.

The Hizmet movement is a Sufi Muslim religious sect that advocates for peace and inter-faith dialogue. Hizmet means service, and the movement has been particularly active in the field of education.

Hizmet was founded by Fethullah Gülen, and he initially supported Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's election and rise to power in the early 2000s. However, by 2013 Gülen had withdrawn his support as corruption, rights abuses and strongarm tactics within the Erdoğan regime became evident (details in our companion piece, "Turkey's Democratic Suicide").

Following the coup attempt of July 15, 2016, all Hizmet schools were shut down by order of President Erdoğan. But the Turkish government was not content with simply closing the schools, firing the teachers and revoking the teachers' licenses. In the weeks that followed, Erdoğan blamed Gülen for the coup, and the government began to systematically arrest and imprison all Hizmet-associated teachers.

On a trip to Athens in late June of this year, I met with several Turkish refugees and heard their first-hand accounts.

Most of the refugees who escape to Greece from Turkey have been fugitives in their homeland for more than a year. Often, to avoid arrest, they have been secretly staying with relatives or friends. But their presence is a burden that endangers the lives of their hosts. Since there is a nationwide warrant for their arrest, they are unemployable.

They see escape to Greece as the only way out of the predicament in which they find themselves. Frequently, they hire human smugglers to act as guides to avoid arrest.

The Turkish refugees fall into three broad categories: journalists, teachers and intellectuals.

Upon arriving in Athens, my first interview was with a senior-level journalist with *Zaman*, the biggest daily newspaper in Turkey. In 2013, *Zaman* reported that truckloads of armaments were crossing from Turkey into Syria in support of ISIS fighters.

The Erdoğan government's response was swift. They did

not want this dirty secret revealed to the world. The newspaper's assets were seized and the journalists were arrested.

The next day, I met with a university professor and engineer, Yunus Karaca. Karaca patented an award-winning system for separating glass, metal and plastics for municipal recycling. Yet despite numerous accolades, including an award from NASA, his career has been stifled. His passport was cancelled by the Turkish authorities, and fearing arrest, he fled with his young daughter to Greece.

But my most gripping interviews were with teachers, some of whom were imprisoned for a year or more, with as many as 28 men crammed into a cell.

The leader of a Hizmet-affiliated teachers' union told me that after the coup attempt, the 30,000 members of his union lost their jobs, and then they were systematically arrested and imprisoned for being members of a terrorist group.

For most of his career, this man worked as a teacher to deaf children. Now the Turkish government sees him as a terrorist.

On my last day in Athens, I had breakfast with another family with three children. For the safety of family members who remain in Turkey, they wished to remain anonymous for this story. The husband had been a teacher in Turkey. After a delicious meal they began to tell a shocking account of government-sponsored terror and torture. It all centred on their youngest child, a daughter.

After the coup, in order to avoid arrest, the family went into hiding. But the wife soon realized that she was pregnant. Under normal circumstances she would see her doctor for prenatal care. But a doctor's visit would reveal her identity and trigger her husband's arrest. The pregnancy proceeded normally, but in the final weeks she experienced bleeding. Fearing that she would lose the baby, she made the fateful decision to see a doctor. A caesarean section was scheduled for the following week.

The procedure went well, resulting in the birth of the healthy baby girl. But the mother awoke in the recovery room surrounded by four male police officers who demanded that she sign a confession that she was a member of a terrorist organization — the Hizmet movement.

The mother refused to sign. What followed was 36 hours of intense interrogation, intimidation and torture. At one point the police insisted that she be taken in for further questioning.

Despite the pleas of the doctor and medical staff, the mother was forcefully removed from the hospital. Her stitches were ripped as she was transported in a paddy wagon to the police station.

Later they threatened to transport her in this condition to a city five hours away, where the warrant for her husband's arrest was originally issued. Fortunately, the direct intervention of a courageous member of the Turkish Parliament

prevented further abuse.

It was a delight to see mother and baby united and healthy with the whole family safe and sound in Athens. They too made a daring midnight escape from Turkey to Greece.

Dr. Markos Karavias, the head of the Greek Asylum Service, explained the difficulties that Greece faces in accommodating this new wave of asylum seekers. Over a million refugees from the Syrian conflict poured into Greece between 2015 and 2017. But a second wave of Turkish asylum seekers is now arriving as Turkish nationals flee arrest by the authoritarian Erdoğan regime.

"Our greatest need is for competent Greek / Turkish translators, so these new arrivals can get a proper hearing to determine their eligibility for refugee status," Dr. Karavias commented.

What has been the Greek response? In many respects, it has been identical to our federal government's response. When refugees land on Greek soil, they contact the Greek police so they can be registered as asylum seekers and begin the long wait for their case to be heard. In the meantime, they need housing and gainful employment.

The responses of the Canadian and Greek government are identical because both countries are bound by the 1951 International Convention on Refugees. But make no mistake — Greece and Canada are in a very different situation. The Greek unemployment rate sits at 20 per cent compared with Canada's 6 per cent. Greece is a small, densely populated country while Canada is able to absorb larger numbers of refugees.

In the first six months of this year, just over 10,000 asylum seekers have arrived in Canada. Some say this is a crisis. Others believe it is a

tempest in a teapot that a few politicians on the right are exploiting for political gain.

Former cabinet minister and international human rights advocate David Kilgour sees this 'crisis' differently. "For a country as big as Canada, this is a small problem, and it comes with a silver lining. We need more people, not less. Many of these refugees — the Turkish refugees fleeing the tyrant Erdoğan — are highly educated. They appreciate democracy and human rights."

As for those two refugee children that I met in Athens, they and their mother are still waiting to be reunited with their dad in Ottawa. Will Canada open the door or slam it shut?



Turkish children who fled persecution.

Photo: David Kitz



Teachers' Union leader with his wife in Athens. Faces are hidden for the safety of family members who remain in Turkey. Photo: David Kitz

## TURKEY'S DEMOCRATIC SUICIDE

David Kitz and Tim Kitz

Democracy and human rights have been steadily eroding in Turkey under the increasingly authoritarian rule of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

After serving as mayor of Istanbul in the '90s, Erdoğan became Prime Minister in 2003, switching to President in 2014, and remaining in power to the present.

Erdoğan's program promotes economic liberalism paired with a religious conservatism that seeks to undo the secular basis of the Turkish state. His 'neo-Ottomanism' glorifies the era of Turkish imperialism, when the Ottoman Empire dominated the region.

Erdoğan deploys a cult of personality, projecting an image as the individual personification of Turkish democracy.

The Islamic Felicity Party has criticized Erdoğan, saying he uses religious rhetoric to legitimize his political authoritarianism among the devout.

Erdoğan and those close to him have amassed enormous fortunes. When his associates were arrested in 2013 in a \$100 billion corruption scandal, he dismissed and reassigned thousands of police officers, prosecutors, and judges. No convictions were ever made.

The coup attempt of July 2016 provided an ideal opportunity to crack down on those whom the regime saw as enemies. The coup was blamed on Fethullah Gülen, the religious leader of the humanitarian Hizmet movement. Using ongoing emergency powers, an estimated 120,000 so-called opponents of the people have been imprisoned. Tens of thousands more have fled the country as refugees (see our companion piece "The Faces of Present-Day Persecution.")

Thousands have been purged from the judiciary, academy, military, and government bureaucracy. At least 131 independent media outlets have been shut down, 117 journalists have been arrested and a further 500+ have lost their journalistic accreditations. A number of websites are blocked within the country, including Wikipedia, Wikileaks, and the Turkish satirical *Leman*.

In an attempt to legitimize this assault on democratic systems and institutions, Erdoğan held a referendum that altered the constitution in 2017. This shifted Turkey from a parliamentary to a presidential system. It centralized legislative, executive, and judicial power in an Executive President position that seems to have been created with Erdoğan in mind.

Critics have called the role an "elective dictatorship" and Erdoğan won an early election in June 2018, amidst accusations of ballot stuffing and the arrest of opposition party leaders on terrorism charges.

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CRISES IN VENEZUELA AND ARGENTINA  
THE LEFT AND RIGHT-WING IN LATIN AMERICA

Mike Hermida

This decade has seen major financial crises in Venezuela and Argentina. At first glance, they might seem similar: two of the top five Latin American economies are failing, causing detrimental effects to their people. Nevertheless, these two examples lie at either side of the extremes of the region's political spectrum.

Financial problems in Argentina date back to the military dictatorships of the Cold War, but peaked with the election of far-right president Mauricio Macri in 2015. According to a September article from Telesur (a Venezuelan anti-neoliberal news source), Argentina's crisis was exacerbated by Macri's decision to reopen the market to the foreign trade.

This was a reversal of the previous president's policy, the populist leftist Cristina Kirchner. The Kirchner government applied a closed-market regime, where the majority of goods had to be bought from domestic sources. Macri's foreign trade policy gave rise to the prices of everyday necessities, such as groceries and gas used for heating one's house.

Macri also increased the interest rate to an unprecedented level. Together, these changes lead to mass devaluation of the Argentine peso. This means that the cost of living has gone up and job opportunities have gone down.

To make matters worse, Argentina has structural problems that have gone unad-

dressed under the Macri administration. There is a large dependence on goods, such as foodstuffs and grains, which have their prices set by the international market. Therefore, any shift in prices in the international market affects the domestic prices of goods.

Similarly, an Al-Jazeera documentary on left-wing Venezuela's economic crisis reveals that the financial problems started in 2013, the year ex-president Hugo Chávez died. The documentary blames a downturn in the world's oil prices and the country's dependence on its oil revenue as the source of the crisis.

After Chávez died, Nicolas Maduro became president. At that time, the world oil price dropped, so the country's revenue decreased.

It must be added, however, that there are other factors hurting the economy, like United States-aligned Colombian groups. Because of their geographical proximity and encouragement from the U.S., these groups engage in acts that harm the Venezuelan economy.

In an interview with Telesur, Minister of the Economy Ricardo Menendez states that a large problem is extraction smuggling. Extraction smuggling is an act by these Colombian groups that take "Bolívars [the Venezuelan currency] out of the borders in order to generate a drought."

The same situation happens with food. The problem is so bad that Menendez hyperbolically stated that the coun-



An anti-Macri protest in Buenos Aires

Photo: Igor Wagner

try has "imported 300,000 tons of rice, and 300,000 tons of rice goes through the border towards Colombia."

The key difference between the cases of Argentina and Venezuela is in their ideology. Macri is a right-wing, U.S.-friendly president. On the other hand Maduro and Chávez are from the United Socialist Party. This means that, although both countries are experiencing major economic struggles, the reactions by the U.S. and Canada have been radically different.

The ideological differences between the two presidents are reflected in their responses to each crisis. The Argentina response to its crisis was to ask for a bailout by the International Monetary Fund.

In a press release, the IMF stated that it approved an arrangement with the government. The IMF is to give Argentina \$50 billion USD over the next three years. In exchange, the country will adopt IMF-dictated structural adjustment programs. Most notably, Buenos Aires has already started to apply austerity measures to the public sector.

On the other hand, Venezuela has a strong policy of refusing to take any loans from the IMF in order to avoid structural

adjustment programs that can have devastating effects on the people. It has also managed to pay off \$60 billion USD of its foreign debt.

Despite the efforts by the Maduro administration, an op-ed for Sputnik reveals that Western media has been openly (and often erroneously) attacking the Venezuelan government since Chávez's presidency began. For example, anti-Maduro protesters are represented as peaceful, upstanding victims, while police violence is exaggerated. Further there is regular reporting on politicians (notably Republicans of the U.S. Senate) who call for a coup on Maduro's government.

That is not to say there are no legitimate criticisms of Maduro. Amnesty International has noted that since 2016 there has been "an increase in the deployment of military forces to repress protests." Amnesty also points to the way human rights defenders have been "subjected to attacks and smear campaigns," such as in the case of transgender lawyer and activist Sam Seijas.

Maduro's rule by decree and weakening of the National Assembly's power are also disturbing. Yet the demonization of Maduro by neoliberal

forces is equally rooted in a desire to wipe out alternative economic and governmental arrangements – in this case a socialist regime. The existence of such possibilities show that there's nothing natural or inevitable about crowning the market God-Emperor.

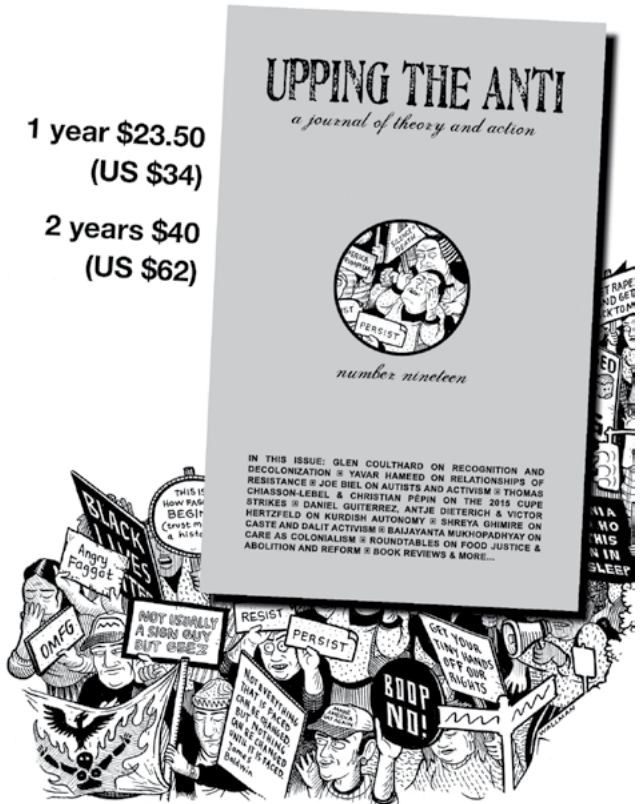
Tense relations between Venezuela and the U.S. are juxtaposed with friendly relations between Macri and North America. Since he came to office, Macri has met with former U.S. president Barack Obama, vice president Mike Pence, and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. He even literally tangoed with the Obamas, dancing the traditional Argentine dance with the then-president and first lady in their

visit to Buenos Aires.

Regarding Trudeau's visit to Macri at the presidential Pink House in 2016, the CBC reported that the two countries have a "developed relationship and a free-trade agreement." The article further notes that Macri's presidency as being "a continent-wide shift away from the left-wing populist agenda represented by the Kirchners, Brazil's [sic] Lila da Silva and Venezuela's Hugo Chavez."

The similarities and differences on the cases of Argentina and Venezuela reveal a need for the people to think critically and stay informed. It is important to consume media sources that posit an alternative to the neoliberal narrative.

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MATCH THESE WORDS OF WISDOM TO THE PUBLIC FIGURE!

- A. "The Me Too movement is real. It matters. It is needed, and it is long overdue. ... I found [Blasey Ford's] testimony to be sincere, painful and compelling. ... Mr. President, I will vote to confirm Brett Kavanaugh."
- B. "The Leader of the [U.K.] Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn [is] as extreme and troubling a figure as any in democratic politics."
- C. "Why doesn't the prime minister just say the truth and tell Indigenous peoples that he doesn't give a fuck about their rights?"
- D. "It's a bit of an urban myth that City Hall is controlled by people outside of City Hall. I have great respect for the integrity of the people that run for political office and the reality is that we are no longer allowed to accept corporate and union donations." [Reporter: So are you saying you have not accepted donations from any developer in this campaign?] "No, I have."
- E. "Criticism is optimism. Criticism is what you do when you think there's hope."
- F. "Mr. Watson won't debate me directly because he's not sure who is the front runner."
- G. "Yeah, the only people that should be locked up are the Liberals for this budget, I'll tell ya."
- H. "When someone proposes demolition or disfigurement of a property that you think has value... Refuse to take the annihilation of our history lying down."
- I. "Looks like the Mayor of a City of nearly 1 million people will be refusing to participate in both EcologyOttawa and NowWhatOtt debates. This City deserves better on the environment and gender inclusivity."
- J. "Independent media tries to save history – today's history – tries to save it and share it so it will not disappear."

- 1. Jim Watson, Ottawa mayor (for now?)
- 2. Peter Coffman, architectural historian
- 3. Romeo Saganash, Cree member of parliament
- 4. Shawn Menard, city councillor candidate
- 5. Stephen Harper, obvious expert on political extremism
- 6. Jaron Lanier, virtual reality pioneer and social media critic
- 7. Susan Collins, Republican Senator
- 8. Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, spokesperson for the Zapatista Army of National Liberation
- 9. Doug Ford, premier of Ontario
- 10. Clive Doucet, mayoral candidate



(a) Susan Collins; (b) Stephen Harper; (c) Romeo Saganash; (d) Jim Watson; (e) Jaron Lanier; (f) Clive Doucet; (g) Doug Ford; (h) Peter Coffman; (i) Shawn Menard; (j) Marcos.



# VENUS ENVY

## SEXUAL HEALTH & PLEASURE ALERT



### DEAR VENUS ENVY,

I'm a 22 year old cis woman, and I've been with my boyfriend for just under a year. I'm a little embarrassed to say that I've been faking my orgasms with him during that time.

When we first met and started hooking up I thought we were going to keep it casual, so I didn't think it was a big deal. But now I'm frustrated and I feel stuck. If I tell him I need something different he'll know I haven't really been having orgasms.

I've tried having sex and just not faking it, but

I can tell that it makes him confused and insecure since he's not doing anything differently.

I feel so anxious about the idea of having sex, and it's creating tension between us because he knows I'm avoiding sex with him but doesn't know why.

He is a sweet and caring guy who I love, and I feel so stupid for creating this problem.

I don't know how to fix it without hurting my boyfriend. Please help?

- Frustrated

### DEAR FRUSTRATED,

I'm sure that there are so many people reading your question and nodding along, because this is such a common experience. At Venus Envy, I've had conversations with women in their 50s and 60s who have been faking orgasms for the full 30 years of their relationships!

I don't think any of those women are stupid for faking orgasms, and I don't think you're stupid either. So many of us are exhausted and stressed so much of the time, and so used to navigating a world that tells us not to ask for too much. And sometimes faking just seems like the easier choice – until, of course, it's not.

It doesn't help that pop culture perpetuates the idea that Good Sex™ is when two people orgasm at the same time from penetrative sex alone. That idea is incredibly pervasive, and it's also some really damaging bullshit.

Most people with vaginas are just unable to get off through penetrative sex. Yet we continue to hold it up as the ideal, and so many people believe that they're broken when they can't achieve it. No wonder there's so much faking happening.

Of course, women fake orgasms for many different reasons. If you haven't already, spend some time figuring out what the reason is for you.

Are you afraid of hurting your boyfriend's feelings? Do you feel too much pressure to come? Are you worried about taking too long or seeming too "needy"? Knowing what's getting in your way will make it that much easier to move past.

I think you already know that you will also have to talk

to your boyfriend about this. Inevitably, he will want to know why you've been faking all this time, and I think you should be as honest as you can stand to be.

If you're tempted to soften the blow, remember that more white lies will likely lead you back to this same conversation in another few months. It might help to emphasize that it's not about him being a "bad lover," it's just that the kind of sex you're having together isn't the kind of sex that gets you off.

Make sure you also let him know that you're excited to play and explore. Then tell him specifically what you want more of.

If what gets you off is clitoral stimulation, then find ways to incorporate more of that into your sex life. Masturbate in front of your boyfriend to show him where and how you like to be touched.

Also, don't be afraid to take charge of your own orgasm when you're together. It still counts as sex when you're touching yourself or using a vibrator. Plus it might take some pressure off both of you to know that it's not his responsibility alone.

I really believe that most decent guys do want to know how to please their partners. Assuming your boyfriend is as sweet and as caring as you say, I think opening up this conversation will ultimately change your relationship for the better.

And on that note, I'll leave you with the immortal lyrics of Bikini Kill: "I believe in the radical possibilities of pleasure, babe. I do. I do. I do."

Sincerely,  
**SAM WHITTLE**  
Sex Educator and Owner of Venus Envy

Send questions you want answered in to [editors.the.leveller@gmail.com](mailto:editors.the.leveller@gmail.com)

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# FEAR IS WHY YOU'RE ABLEIST

Kristen Williams

As a person who lives with a visible, hard-to-ignore disability, I have a theory on disability. It's not a popular one, mostly because people tend to squirm whenever the word disability is dropped.

But here it is nonetheless: people are scared of disability because it reflects their own fragility.

People generally pity-smile, look away, or gawk at disabled people out of fear. In some places, we are still locked away, house-bound, or killed for existing. Humanity does not know what to do with disabled people, and I believe personal fear is to blame.

Cultural beliefs and media sources also tell us how to feel about disability. And where do those messages come from? An individual, and eventually collective, fear of fragility. People look at disabled bodies, in all their variation, and see a spectrum of human vulnerabilities that they don't want to be impacted by personally.

The idea that disability is very human and can happen to anyone, even you, is almost unbearable for many people. (One-in-seven of us are living with a disability, according to Statistics Canada, and one-in-three workers will experience a period of disability lasting longer than 90 days.)



Illustration: Megan McLaughlin

To cope with this terrible fear, society has turned disability upside down and made it monstrous. As far from human as it gets, disability is portrayed as a symptom of villains and bad guys, people that 'had disability coming to them.'

For proof of this, look only as far as superhero movies, where characters associated with darkness and fear have deformities and use assistive devices like canes – and as such, are no longer seen as valid parts of humanity. (Where do you think the word *invalid* comes from?)

Our collective fear of our own fragility has us constantly widening the gap between disabled people and that which is human. It's the motivator behind the demonizing of disability.

The issue with this is that disability is actually quite natural and it's pointless to fear it. Many living things experience a spectrum of ability – humans, dogs with three legs, cats with missing eyeballs, the whole lot.

As we grow and change, and with the development of technology, more and more people with disabilities are surviving (some would even say thriving).

Some (inherited) disabilities are the inevitable result of genetic variation, while others (acquired) follow from being fragile beings in a some-

times-dangerous world.

You could say that disability is a natural side-effect of human trial-and-error.

Disability ranges almost infinitely in kind and severity. It is as variable as the people that carry it and as diverse as life itself, but we've villainized it, to our own detriment.

Acknowledging the fear of fragility that is behind every disability-related-prejudice, every ableist comment, is the initial step in dismantling it. Realizing that disability is a natural and acceptable way to exist – not something to be deathly afraid of, is a great, and deeply necessary start.

Deconstructing it further, and finding ways to validate those that live with disability also combats fear-related disability discrimination. These are steps towards ridding us of ableism, through understanding its root, and engaging with our humanity.

As far as take-aways go, take comfort in knowing that if you fear disability, you're not alone. Everyone has some discomfort with it, because it's branded as unnatural and, well, scary.

But, as is good practice with any overwhelming emotion, I encourage you to sit with it. Feel it. And try to assess the areas where it limits your perspective and support toward people with disabilities.

# THE ANTIFA COMIC BOOK

## Gord Hill brings graphic resistance to Ottawa!

Brad Evoy

On Oct.11, Kwakwaka'wakw nation artist and anarchist Gord Hill's ongoing launch tour for his newest book came to Ottawa. Published by Arsenal Pulp Press, *The Antifa Comic Book: 100 Years of Fascism and Antifa Movements* is Hill's latest work combining artistic skill with a fire for resistance.

At the McNabb Community Centre, Hill led a packed house through the history and development of fascist parties and paramilitary groups. For Hill, these groups – no matter their outward differences – are united by their intention to militarize politics.

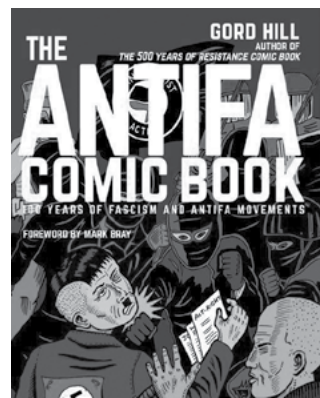
Hill also reflected upon his own and his comrades'

experiences in groups like Anti-Racist Action, where direct confrontation with neo-Nazis and other members of the far right became a part of activist resistance in the '80s and '90s.

Hill also explained how he developed and refined his technique from previous works – like *The 500 Years of Indigenous Resistance Comic Book* – with digital colouring and deeper linework.

The book launch was hosted by local anti-fascist collective ¡No Pasarán! With that in mind, Hill gave attendees his take on recent actions by far-right groups like Soldiers of Odin – and the resistance carried out against them in several cities.

While these groups may



seem disorganized, they pose a direct threat of violence to various communities, like the Tent City in Nanaimo which they've already targeted.

Those gathered were able to purchase limited copies of the book, which is available now from Arsenal Pulp Press and Kersplebedeb.



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# TRIPLE 7 CELEBRATES THEIR FIRST YEAR OF BUILDING A CREATIVE COMMUNITY REVOLUTION

Chrissy Steinbock

On October 20, Triple 7 will be throwing a party to celebrate their first year cultivating creativity and community out of their arts space in Old Hull. There will be live music, media installations, and a vernissage featuring resident artists.

At first glance it's hard to pin down Triple 7. There aren't many places that host dance parties, slam poetry workshops, communal meals and tap dancing classes all under one roof.

It's probably said best on their Facebook page: "Triple 7 is a lot of things, but at the core we are a community of like minded creatives leading a Counter Cultural Revolutionary Movement," they proclaim, with enthusiastic capitalization.

Triple 7 is a meeting place as much as it's a workspace where musicians, VJs and other artists can experiment in performance and rehearsal. It's also a gallery, DIY venue and classroom. Members aim to have Triple 7's doors open as often as possible

so that the space is accessible to the community for drop-ins and jams, their weekly vegan potlucks, workshops, and monthly events.

Your intrepid *Leveller* correspondent caught up with co-founders Julie Gauthier and Adam Vegys to learn more about how Triple 7 came to be and where it's going.

Julie and Adam appear relaxed in the way of people who are doing exactly what they're meant to or people who dance a lot. In this case, both might be true.

Triple 7 has a warm vibe, with ambient electronica playing in the background, colorful walls displaying art, and psychedelic blacklight murals and sculptures in the stage area.

Julie and Adam explain that the space was formerly the home of Le Temporaire, a diverse collective of visual artists and musicians who used it as a workshop and event space for nine years. By the time Julie and Adam came along – with psychedelic visions of Triple 7 dancing in their eyes – the col-

lective was winding down their activities. So the timing was right for something new.

Aymara Alvarado Lang, a former member of Le Temporaire and friend, acted as a bridge helping to transform the space from Le Temporaire to Triple 7. The new venture opened to the public in October of 2017.

A year later, Triple 7 might be celebrating their first anniversary but really "it's a vision that has been percolating probably for over ten years," says Adam.

Back in 2007 Julie started something like Triple 7 in Vancouver's lower East side. "I had a vision to open a multifunctional space for people to come in and be inspired and then when people are inspired they have access to tools to release that inspiration," Julie said.

After spending time abroad and landing in Toronto, she met Adam. One day she casually mentioned her vision for a space she wanted to call 'Triple 7. At that point, "Adam's like 'What? I have a very similar vision actually and I wrote a

business plan too and I called it Triple 7!' It was a spiritual moment," shared Julie.

They later married and spent their honeymoon hashing out plans to launch this vision together. They started in Toronto, putting on parties with an emphasis on building community and showcasing new artists, eventually coming to Ottawa, where they connected with Aymara.

The first year has had its fair share of challenges, with the biggest being financial stability. The events and workshops have modest fees but Triple 7's ideal would be to have more people join as members. There are guest memberships that come with discounts on events and artist memberships that give access to Triple 7's space and equipment.

*The Leveller* also got in touch with George Pranschke, a musician and Triple 7 member. "I initially became involved mostly as a place to practice," says George. There's a great sense of community that's made me want to get more involved. It gives people a space where they can feel free to be their genuine selves. It feels like home."

"Oh!" he exclaimed. "And people there dance! I have been to countless shows where live musicians are putting out solid, energetic grooves and everyone just stands in a nervous little semicircle around the stage while tapping their feet or bobbing their head and hoping they don't look too silly."

The of Triple 7 will depend on attracting new members, securing some arts grants, and discovering new ways to generate revenue. As anglophones, they also realize the importance of representing both languages, they don't yet have a member to consistently cover translation.

They want to make it clear that everyone is welcome in the space regardless of language and hope that new team members will bring more language skills onboard.

If you're looking for a safe space to express your creativity, connect with other artists, or are just curious about what goes on at Triple 7, their first year anniversary party makes for a nice introduction.

It starts at 7pm and runs 'till late on Saturday Oct. 20.

# HOROSCOPES

BY VEGAS HODGINS

## PISCES

I think you owe someone an apology. They may say all is fair in love and discourAse, but if you don't want the past to come back to haunt you, you need to apologize. Like, to their face. Vague posts do not count.

## AQUARIUS

You may think the contributions you're making to your cause are more valuable than those of the people around you. Sure, your passion and humanitarian spirit are valuable – but make sure you aren't isolating yourself through being "leftier than thou." Your card pulled is the six of hearts, which represents being cared for by others. Maybe the work of those around you is more necessary to your success than you think.

## CAPRICORN

Oh Capricorn, this erotic rut you're in is frankly, well, a little embarrassing at this point. To solve it, you're going to need to stop obsessing over it. Maybe simmer this issue on the backburner instead of attacking it head on – you might get some, ahem, fuel to your fire where you least expect it.

## SAGITTARIUS

The stars are really working you over this month. Just like everything else. The drudgery of Ottawa life is getting to you – and between the long bus rides, the sea of khakis and pencil skirts, and the eye-straining fluorescent lights, no one could blame you. When's the last time you visited Toronto, or Montreal? I'm sure you know a couch you could crash on. Or at least, a floor.

## SCORPIO

Have you mistaken your politics for a personality? Your name doesn't need to be on every project, your views don't need to be in every conversation, and your face doesn't need to be in every publication. You've heard of work-life balance, so how about "emotional labour-life balance"? Your card pulled is the ace of clubs, which represents cold hard cash. Are you taking away the opportunity for someone else to be paid by always taking the spotlight?

## LIBRA

I know you don't want to be alone, but if you keep baiting for affection in the same polluted canal, you're going to run out of mutant fish to catch eventually. You are unnecessarily afraid of breaking your comfort zone in forming friendships. There are comrades everywhere – even if they don't wear the same flag as you.

## VIRGO

It's demoralizing to see the something so valuable to you be whisked away by the grinch who stole sex ed. But, the direct action is interpersonal action. Model and explain good consent to those younger than you. "No, Little Billy is not pulling your hair because he likes you, he's deliberately pushing

your personal boundaries to figure out how much harassment he can dole out to girls around him without punishment." Your card pulled is the seven of spades, which represents issues with men. Well, go figure.

## LEO

You are a beam of sunshine on a cloudy day... usually. What's gotten into you? I know the walls of the system that confines us seem to be closing – no collapsing – in on us every day. But then haven't they always been, ultimately? If you want to survive, you must fight – even if it is getting a little claustrophobic in here. Could someone crack a window?

## CANCER

Be careful with these sweeping generalizations you like to categorize people by. The world is not black and white – it is rich with colour, shades of light and dark. It's easy to apply a "with me or against me" viewpoint to the people you converse with. Give subtlety a shot – painting in broad strokes is for fences, not people. Your card pulled is the red joker, who has a message for you: sometimes, it's your fault. Not every time, but sometimes. You are not without flaws, either.

## GEMINI

Your passivity in social spheres has gotten you far in life. But it may be coming off to people as disingenuous when you claim a passion for righting wrongs, yet can't stand up to any you encounter in the real world. I get it, it isn't as easy as anyone makes it out to be – but that doesn't mean you shouldn't try. Your card pulled is the seven of clubs, which represents loss. Not standing up to something for fear of losing a friend, a job, or an opportunity is understandable, but know that that problem will keep inflating until you pop it.

## TAURUS

There is something in your life that you spend way too much time doing. It's starting to take over. Is this the way you want to spend it – maybe you feel immobilized by the commitment you've made, but I promise, there's always wiggle room. Even if you have to use your elbows to make space.

## ARIES

There is no shame in taking time off. It can be hard for you to slow down – one project always leads to another, you can't get through one action before someone has asked you to help them with another. Your friends miss you, your bed misses you. All work and no play makes Jack an unbearably stressed out boy (Jill on the other hand... well, remember that quintessential riot grrrl band Jack Off Jill? Maybe if Jack worked harder at pleasing Jill, he'd be less dull.). Your card pulled is the ace of hearts, which calls for troubles lifting, and things getting a little bit better. But the Rube Goldberg machine that it will take to lift those troubles won't start without you giving it a little push.

## Reconciliation: Re-Membering Creator's First Sacred Pipe

### A Panel Discussion with

Albert Dumont, Lynn Gehl, Randy Boswell, and Lindsay Lambert



### Honouring Akikpautik and Akikodjiwan

Canada continually subjugates Indigenous rights because when nation states break up, Indigenous territorial boundaries are the fault lines that they crumble under.

**Date:** Saturday, October 27, 2018

**Time:** 2:00 – 5:00 pm

**Location:** Alexander Community Centre  
960 Silver Street, Ottawa

**Tickets:** \$22  
Only 100 tickets available on a first come, first serve basis

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