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## Reflections on the Action for Safe Shelters

by Lauren Emily Oxford

VANCOUVER - On March 22, a coalition of women's groups marched to BC Housing. Members of the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, WISH drop-in, Power of Women Group, and Battered Women's Support Services brought three demands:

- 1) Open a 24-hour, low-barrier, women-only drop-in space and shelter in the Downtown Eastside;
- 2) Build housing for homeless women and children with at least 100 new units available immediately;
- 3) Implement clear provincial standards for women's safety in co-ed shelters immediately in all existing and new shelters.

They were met by more than 30 Vancouver police barricading the entrance to the Terminal Avenue building. The crowd walked up a parkade driveway to see a group of First Nations elders and frontline workers negotiating with BC Housing Regional Director Dale McMann surrounded by police and media.

Nintey minutes later, BC Housing announced a 24-hour, women-only, drop-in centre in the DTES to be managed by Atira.

There are lots of questions we are all asking ourselves: What did that process look like at 369 Terminal Street? Was there prior discussion around the opening of this 24-hour shelter? If the funding was there, why wasn't it opened earlier? Or did BC Housing CEO Shane Ramsey speed dial his wife - Janice Abbott - the CEO of Atira, asking her to get him out of this mess? Wife you ask? Yes wife. DTES service provision politics always seems to include a large amount of nepotism for some bizarre reason.

The general tone of the community is that BC Housing should not have been let off the hook. People feel that more and more we are seeing service



March by DTES women's groups to BC Housing to demand safe shelter. *photo: Sandra Cuffe*

providers co-opting the movement, and silencing the demands of grassroots organizations by collaborating with government and settling for crumbs.

We've seen this with 58 West Hastings and the Portland Hotel Society, planning to build social housing at the site of last year's tent village with zero consultation or communication with the community that spent years demanding housing on that site.

Do you ever wonder how non-profit organizations and programs are created? Do bureaucrats sit around and think "Today is a good day to be charitable!" "We have gaps in services that need to be filled and it's our duty to do it!"

No, although I'm sure there's the odd Robin Hood bureaucrat ripping through red-tape somewhere to create some type of change from within. The reality is that the only way resources are ever funded is if there is enough of a demand, and that demand usually comes from the community.



photos: murray bush and David P Ball

## March Against Racism

Nearly 500 people in Vancouver marched to mark the International Day to End Racial Discrimination. Organized by No One Is Illegal, speakers addressed colonialism and indigenous sovereignty, state racism, deplorable employment conditions for migrant workers and Canada's legacy as a racist state.



Activists denied an opportunity to question federal Immigration Minister Jason Kenney. *photo: murray bush*

■ Women, men, and children marched down Commercial Drive in Vancouver to celebrate the 100th anniversary of International Womens Day.

■ A candlelight vigil was held outside the Chinese Consulate on Granville street to commemorate the 52nd anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising.

■ The RCMP enforced an injunction granted to Sunshine Logging by the BC Supreme Court against the Slhu7kin-Perry Ridge Protection Camp in Sinixt Nation territory. The camp was taken down without conflict; however, court battles, community organizing, and territory protection are ongoing.

■ Federal Immigration Minister Jason Kenney showed up for a photo op at a new immigrant swearing in ceremony. But despite being a public event, opponents of Kenney's racist policies were barred from entering and physically removed by RCMP and Vancouver police.

■ More than 100 people on the speakers' list did not even make it to the podium at a packed City Council review of Chinatown's historical building height restrictions; more meetings are scheduled. Opponents of lifting the restrictions say opening the area to luxury condo towers would displace many of the more than 1,000 low-income residents in the area and squeeze out affordable food stores.

■ Celebrations took place late in March after Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood Council pressure led to supportive housing for single moms and kids being included above the future Strathcona Public Library on East Hastings .

■ A theatrical action was held outside Enbridge's Vancouver office after major media picked up a

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hoax story that the pipeline company would use human hair to mop up oil spills. The following week, dozens attended an upbeat rally to support the Yinka Dene

Alliance and broad Indigenous opposition to Enbridge's Northern Gateway pipeline.

■ Anti-war activists gathered in front of the US Consulate as part of an international day of action to free alleged whistleblower on war crimes Bradley Manning, being held in solitary confinement in a US military prison.

■ On March 22, anarchists in Vancouver caused a disturbance at the Chilean Consulate and on the street outside ``to send a strong embrace to our imprisoned companeros on hunger strike in Chile.'' Fourteen anarchists and comrades have been framed with conspiracy charges for explosive attacks against state and capitalist institutions. Nine of the prisoners began an indefinite hunger strike on Feb. 21. Four Mapuche Indigenous prisoners re-started their hunger strike on March 15.

## Gentricide

by Joseph Jones

let me manufacture new language  
for the same old displacement

absentee land speculators  
team up their mouthpieces  
with a brigade of daytrippers  
foolish footsoldiers  
always the enthusiastic  
know-too-little youth

all out to revitalize  
Chinatown in Vancouver  
where parking-garage monuments  
stand from the last incursion

a beholden city council  
opens the campaign  
desperate to develop  
at the eleventh hour  
their fallback strategy  
to sever the situation  
pick off at least one piece  
within the target perimeter  
under the current mandate  
do some payback

say the streets are empty  
claim no one can thrive  
but insist that entrepreneurs always will  
prepare to disappear unwanted classes  
the poor the old the immigrant  
not to mention the aboriginal third  
who never left their own land

a dying ocean of acid  
global capital keeps on eating away  
ready to corrode any perceived safe  
haven

in the ghetto  
pushed to the last alternative  
bodies will fill the streets

### Upcoming Events

#### Saturday, April 16 7pm

Vancouver Launch Party for the Dominion magazine's special issue on Climate Justice. Speakers, music! By donation Rhizome Café 317 E Broadway,

#### Wednesday, April 20 7pm

Crisis and Revolt in Greece: Occupied London comes to Vancity Joe's Café, 1150 Commercial Dr

#### Friday, April 22 2pm

Mother Earth Day Climate Justice Action, Meet at Annieville Supermarket, 10996 River Road, Delta

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The VMC relies on the active participation of hundreds of activists, journalists, readers, and concerned people to contribute stories, photos, press releases, personal accounts, and videos in an open-publishing format that receives over 10,000 page views every month. In addition to user-created

media, the VMC is an open and democratic collective open to you to join.

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