

MONITOR

Progressive news, views and ideas



14



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Founded in 1980, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) is a registered charitable research institute and Canada's leading source of progressive policy ideas, with offices in Ottawa, Vancouver, Regina, Winnipeg, Toronto and Halifax. The CCPA founded the *Monitor* magazine in 1994 to share and promote its progressive research and ideas, as well as those of like-minded Canadian and international voices. The *Monitor* is mailed to all CCPA supporters who give a minimum of \$35 a year to the Centre. Write us at monitor@policyalternatives.ca if you would like to receive the *Monitor*.

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Hatred unmasked:
*Tracking the rise of right-wing
extremism in Canada*

Standing up to blaring hate
Zexi Li / 13

**The wellness-to-white-supremacy
pipeline is alive and well**
Stacy Lee Kong / 15

Freedom from what?
Arushana Sunderaeson / 18

We need to talk about 1907
Written by Róisín West
and layout by Katie Sheedy / 20

**The playful undertones
of radicalization**
Scott DeJong / 22

**We keep us safe:
How Ottawa stood up
to the occupation**
/ 25

Uprooting the racism in our ranks
Stephanie Fung, Anna Liu,
Karine Ng, and Chris Ramsaroop / 26

**Hate on display:
How two years online helped
shape a full-scale occupation**
Erin Gee / 29

**Breaker breaker:
Lessons from the communities
that blocked truck convoys**
Shane Burley / 31

In Conversation

Writing links to the past
In conversation with
Terry Watada / 37

Up Front

**Pressure cooker: Declining real wages
and rising inflation in Canada
during the pandemic, 2020–22**
David Macdonald / 6

Thank you, Rieky!
Larry Brown / 7

**Recent labour wins reveal
hidden costs of provincial
government’s wage freeze**
Julie Guard and Niall Harney / 8

**Is the “Freedom Convoy” a sign
of inequality-fuelled escalation
of violent class conflict?**
Bruce Campbell / 12

Columns

Freedom in the name of
Anthony N. Morgan / 9

You call this a waiver?
Stuart Trew / 10

**Brazil: Bolsonaro’s crimes
against humanity**
Asad Ismi / 34

Books

**Untangling our sense of place:
A review of *Lot* by Sarah de Leeuw**
E.R. Zarevic / 40

Staples

From the Editor / 2

Letters / 4

New from the CCPA / 5

Index / 24

Get to know the CCPA: Letisha Toop / 19

The good news page
Elaine Hughes / 36

RÓISÍN WEST

Grow through what you go through

IN THE FACE of surging COVID-19 cases this spring, Dr. Irfan Dhalla asked: “If someone had told us in March 2020 that two plus years into the pandemic, we’d know so much and be doing so little, would we have believed them?” The question gave me pause. It made me think back to the earliest days of the pandemic, when people clamoured to show their support for health care workers, when the dominant idea was that we were all in this together. Less than 24 months later, Ottawa would be taken hostage by a group of angry and openly hateful people who had travelled from across the country to be here. It made me think about how we started this pandemic journey with optimism and the belief that our better selves would prevail. But outlasting a virus isn’t a sprint; it is an ultra marathon that requires patience and persistence. The same can be said for uprooting the white supremacy that allowed a 26-day occupation to occur.

If we make the mistake of thinking that the problem of rising right-wing extremism in Canada dissipated with the dismantling of the occupation’s last illegal blockade, we will repeat the ill-advised pattern playing out with our pandemic experience of ignoring the signs until we reach a crisis point. So how do we solve a problem like white supremacy?

In early March 2022, Black TikTok creator Kiki Rae posted a video asking why white people cannot hold each other accountable. Instead, she reflected, it was more common to see white people respond to another white person’s egregious behavior by saying, “We don’t claim them.” White people, she observed, do not see

ourselves as a collective. Rather, we are individuals who can stay separate from other white individuals who have made mistakes. Rae concluded, “That’s mind-blowing to me because as a Black person in America, and for people of colour, we are not afforded that privilege. If one of us messes up, all of us have messed up, and we’re going to have to carry that burden...no matter what we do.”¹

In 1999, Tema Okun and Kenneth Jones delineated the characteristics of white supremacy culture. What they meant by white supremacy culture wasn’t the culture of the Ku Klux Klan and similar overtly violent organizations. Okun and Jones define culture as “the knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings...concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving.”² White supremacy culture is rooted in the belief “that white people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are superior to people of colour and their ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions.”³

Okun and Jones identified several key tenets of white supremacy culture including either/or thinking, worship of the written word, fear of open conflict, power hoarding, quantity over quality, individualism, a sense of urgency, defensiveness, paternalism, progress as bigger and more, the right to comfort, and perfectionism.⁴

If we want to grow through this experience, let’s use it to dismantle the white supremacy in our own practices. Let’s stop fearing conflict. Let’s interrogate our own

defensiveness. Let’s recognize that when we prioritize our comfort, we allow conflict to fester and problems like the ongoing radicalization of our relatives, neighbours and friends to continue. Finally, we need to abandon our own radical idea: our individualism that allows us to maintain a cool and detached distance from any white person causing violence by saying that we aren’t associated.

During the occupation, many white people responded to the scenes in downtown Ottawa by saying, “This is not my Canada.” I understand the impulse, I truly do. But this is our crisis, as white Canadians, to solve. And it is a marathon.

It did not end when the last illegal blockade came down. It did not end when occupation supporter and Ontario Member of Provincial Parliament Randy Hillier surrendered to police. The reasons that led to this conflict still exist. The tensions remain and will, left unchallenged, continue to grow.

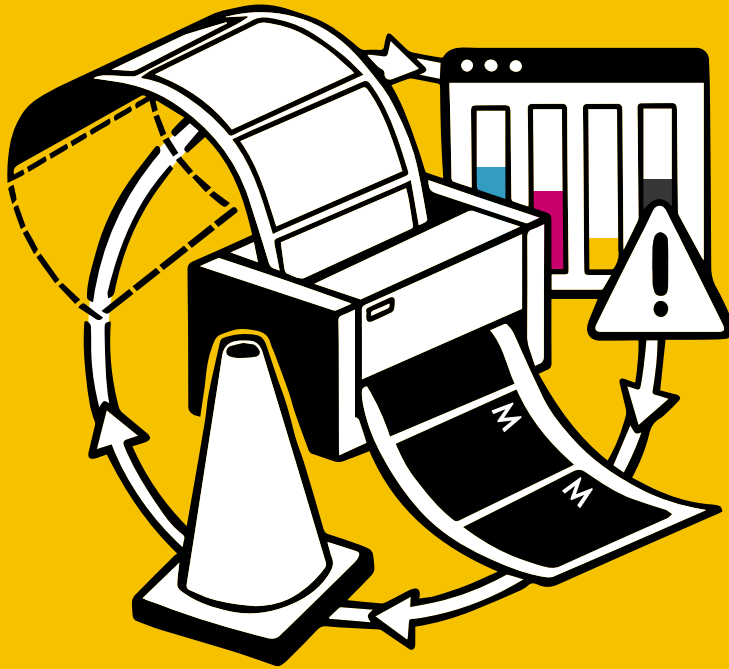
Every convoy participant belongs to us collectively. It’s our job to turn this tide. Because the alternative is throwing up our hands and letting extremism win the day. And if that happens, we won’t pay the price. It will be left to the the historically marginalized: Black, Indigenous, racialized, queer, disabled and poor people. As Okun explains, “White supremacy targets and violates BIPOC people and communities with the intent to destroy them directly; white supremacy targets and violates white people with a persistent invitation to collude that will inevitably destroy their humanity.” Let’s not lose sight of what is possible, even if the road to get there is long. **M**

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While we continue to do everything we can to get the magazine to your mailbox, we've set up a special link just for subscribers. Here, you can find the latest issue of the *Monitor* online without having to wait. Visit MonitorMag.ca/TheLatest to start reading today.

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Letters

Countdown to Armageddon

In the present standoff between Vladimir Putin and the (more or less) civilized world, it is expedient that a lot of us reread Jonathan Schell's *The Fate of the Earth* from 1982.

The prospect of a nuclear holocaust, which he so ably describes, is now bookended by the prospect of a creeping holocaust of planetary life as Earth's climate responds to what we have done to it.

We deny the truth that is all around us... if once we shook off our lethargy and fatigue the climate would change.

—Schell, p. 230.

Frank Thompson,
Parry Sound, Ont.

Don't believe the hype

I have just finished reading the September/October issue of the *Monitor* and I have a concern about how electric vehicle production and investment, etc. received extensive coverage on the Good News page. This framing that EV production is seen

as a net positive needs to be addressed when considering where the materials needed for EVs come from. It was even more interesting that this page immediately followed the well-written article about Pedro Castillo and neoliberalism in Peru from Asad Ismi, which indicates that Peru is the world's second-largest copper producer—a material used in EVs—in the world and the industry is owned mostly by companies headquartered outside of the country. The article also mentions Canada's involvement in this mess through the Canadian-owned mining company Barrick Gold which faced criticism from the local community and its own workforce in Peru. As James Wilt notes in his book *Do Androids Dream of Electric Cars?*, mining company Glencore suggests that copper production would need to triple to keep up with increased demand for EVs. Wilt concedes that this *could* be done ethically with proper unionization and consultation, however, this is not the reality in which we live, where the majority of the resources that are required for EV production come out of the Global South, which has experienced centuries of exploitation and harrowing labour practices that continue to this day. It seems to me then that an increase in EV production can only be pitched as good news in a radically different global economy—one that adopts and maintains proper labour standards and engagement practices worldwide. Aside from that,

decoupling our society from the car altogether should be our main priority in reducing the stress on the global ecosystem.

Julian Riou
Saskatoon

Consider geothermal

Our governments have spent vast amounts of money, during the COVID-19 pandemic in particular, on supporting interests that do little or nothing to help reduce ever-increasing climate chaos and weather damage to our health, comfort and economy.

Large sums have been allotted to the ridiculously inefficient methods trying to capture Earth-warming carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The result? Mostly just another way to keep fossil fuel companies well padded enough to continue wrecking our climate and polluting air, land and water.

However, there is another avenue as yet little explored, which could hold the prospect of huge quantities of clean energy able to be either continually or easily variable in delivery and have relatively little impact on the landscape while remaining impervious to varied weathers.

Enhanced geothermal systems, utilizing laser, plasma, percussive or high pressure water jet technologies, may reduce deep-drilling costs through hard rock to economic feasibility.

Only by harnessing the nearly limitless energy provided by Earth's inner

heat can we attain sufficient direct carbon capture without thereby destroying our planet's hospitality with more emissions. Storage may be as difficult.

This will be a massive task, but our survival most likely depends upon it or upon catastrophic forced abandonment of most technologies developed over the last 200 years, reverting to small groups scattered among a few remaining supportive ecosystems.

Perhaps the greatest impediment to the proper use of this technology will be our greedy impulse to use surplus energy for the enjoyment of climate-disruptive and eco-destructive activities.

Glynn Evans
Saanich, B.C.

Acknowledgements

We originally had a different issue scheduled for May/June, but changed course when the occupation began in Ottawa. That meant racing against the clock to connect with experts on the topics related to the rise of right-wing extremism in Canada. This issue absolutely would not have been possible without the efforts of Jenny at the Initiative for Student Teaching and Research in Chinese Canadian Studies at UBC, Lisa Ayuso at CBC Ideas, Nick Bonokoski, Fenwick McKelvey, Robert Neubauer, Gail Vanstone at York University, Patricia Roy and the guidance of the *Monitor* Editorial Board.

Letters have been edited for clarity and length. Send your letters to monitor@policyalternatives.ca.

Dispelling privatization's promise

CCPA-Saskatchewan Director Simon Enoch and Vivic Research's Inez Hillel and Saamia Ahmad slay the myths of privatization in *Seven reasons why privatization of public services is the wrong answer*. The authors show how privatization creates low-wage workforces with little incentive to deliver quality public services; introduces the profit motive into public services, increasing the potential for risky, unsafe and even illegal work practices; makes service delivery less responsive to the public and how governments use privatization to "cloak" previously accessible information from public scrutiny, undermining the very notion of open government.

Monitoring affordable housing promises

For renters and homeowners alike, housing costs continue to skyrocket. Research at CCPA-BC monitors progress on affordable housing commitments by both the federal and B.C. governments—or lack thereof, as the latest analysis by

Senior Economist Marc Lee shows. In a series of recent articles on the B.C. office's blog PolicyNote.ca, Lee examines what happened to the 2017 National Housing Strategy and checks on the B.C. government's 2018 promise to build 114,000 affordable housing units within 10 years.

Lee's research also highlights the many solutions available—including how to expand the stock of non-market and co-op housing with public-led approaches and non-profit development, and creative approaches to "upzoning" in Metro Vancouver's detached housing neighbourhoods.

A people-centred plan for Winnipeg

CCPA-Manitoba has been working hard ahead of municipal and provincial elections and in the face of governments' ongoing failures to address the pandemic, publishing research to help us navigate it all. In February, the annual *State of the Inner City* report was launched, focusing on the principles for a truly just recovery for Winnipeg's inner city residents and organizations. The chapter by Owen Toews takes a special focus on Portage Place as a study of how community input can transform an urban mall to better meet their needs. In May, the *Alternative Municipal Budget* will yet again provide a people-centred budget for the City of Winnipeg, highlighting again that budgets are always reflective of choices and that there are always more choices than the

status quo would have us believe.

What's driving inflation? Corporate greed

The latest research from CCPA-National Office Senior Economist David Macdonald reveals that it's runaway inequality, not workers' wages, that is driving Canada's high inflation rates. Macdonald's analysis, which he presented to the House of Commons standing committee on finance in March, reveals that in 2021, corporate pre-tax profits in Canada hit an all-time high of \$445 billion. Canada's oil and gas extraction industry recorded its highest quarterly profit in 2021, while the country's big banks annual profits rose to \$56.5 billion, with pre-tax profit margins hitting record-breaking levels in the second quarter of the year. Macdonald called on the federal government to commit to helping Canada reduce our reliance on fossil fuels to reduce the drivers of inflation and climate change.

Measuring platforms, planning for the future

It's election season in Ontario, and that's always a fascinating time for a non-partisan organization. In recent months, CCPA-Ontario has published reports and commentary designed to set the stage for lively policy debate in the weeks ahead. How do we end child and family poverty? How do we help students

recover from two years of pandemic disruptions in our schools? How do we solve the housing crisis? What happens when we raise the minimum wage? How does Ontario fund health care and other public services? These questions—and our answers—provide a measuring stick to help assess the policy platforms of the major parties as June 2 approaches. Watch policyalternatives.ca and follow @CCPA_Ont to find out more!

Advocating for payday protections

Dr. Michael Bradfield, a CCPA-NS Research Associate, spoke at the Utility and Review Board hearing on payday loans in Nova Scotia, detailing what our written submission to the board outlined: the urgent need for the government to design regulations that protect vulnerable populations from usurious lenders. With the opening of the Nova Scotia legislature and the 2022–23 N.S. budget announced, the CCPA-NS outlined that, despite having the fiscal capacity to make the investments into supports that Nova Scotians need, the province has wasted this capacity. Prior to the N.S. budget release, the CCPA-NS outlined priorities that would lead to building a better Nova Scotia, addressing poverty in N.S., investing in a just transition and environmental protections, protecting and extending public health care as well tackling the housing crisis. **M**

David Macdonald / National Office

Pressure cooker

Declining real wages and rising inflation in Canada during the pandemic, 2020–22

WHEN INFLATION IN Canada began to take off in 2021, some blamed rising costs on workers’ wages. This “wage-price spiral” is a frequent favourite target of wage-increase opponents who argue that workers’ wages drive inflation, and then workers seek higher wages to compensate for that higher inflation. New research from CCPA National Senior Economist David Macdonald, released this April, demonstrates that workers’ wages haven’t been the driving force behind higher than usual inflation in Canada.

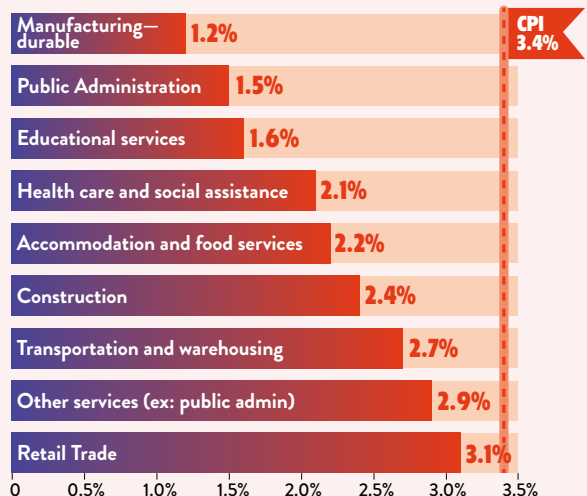
Through his research, Macdonald reveals that most workers have been experiencing real wage losses over the past two years: two-thirds of workers’ wages in Canada are actually falling behind inflation. The most commonly affected are employees in the public sector, including teachers and health care workers, who have continually risked their health to provide front-line services during the pandemic. In part, lower public sector wage gains are due to several provinces aggressively limiting wage growth in recent collective agreements. This has resulted in large real average wage losses during the pandemic in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Newfoundland and Labrador among public sector workers. Workers in the manufacturing of durable goods (think cars and trucks) saw the smallest wage gains as plants shut down, laying off workers.

Macdonald’s research also finds:

- **Adjusting for tenure, industry and occupation, average wages have increased by 2.7% a year compared to the 3.4% average yearly inflation rate over the past two years.** In other words, adjusted wage increases have not kept pace with inflation in Canada. In fact, 64% of workers had wage increases that were less than the 3.4% average inflation over the past two years.
- **Workers in some industries did better than others.** Workers in information, culture and recreation experienced the biggest wage gains during this time period: 5.2% a year, far above the general inflation rate. Workers in manufacturing non-durables, like food, beverages, textiles and paper, saw gains of 4.7% a year as Canadians’ buying patterns changed due to lockdowns. Wholesale trade and real estate workers both saw average gains of 4% a year since February 2020.
- **Workers with less tenure are receiving higher wages in 2022 compared to a similar group in 2020.** Those who were hired in the last five months are making 3.9% more a year than similar workers pre-pandemic. However, workers who didn’t switch jobs during the pandemic experienced lower wage gains of only 2.4% a year—well below the 3.4% change in consumer prices.



Average annual changes in hourly wages, by industry, Feb 2022 vs. Feb 2020



It's worth noting that those with less tenure get paid less, on average.

• **At the other end of the spectrum, two-thirds of workers are seeing real wages go down, when adjusted for inflation.** This is particularly true for workers in the durables manufacturing industry—think auto plants. Three industries with the lowest wage gains are in the public sector: public administration, education and health care/social assistance. Workers in these industries have seen wage growth of 2% a year or less. Although this would be considered adequate in normal times, it now falls well behind the 3.4% annual CPI that we've seen during the pandemic.

Due to a number of drivers, inflation has risen rapidly in Canada in 2021 and into 2022. The headline CPI figure that receives the most attention is the year-to-year figure, the most recent of which is February 2022 versus February 2021, where the average consumer price change was 5.7%. However, this ignores the fact that the CPI stood at only 1.1% between February 2021 and February 2020. This is what is called “base effects”: the starting point of today's high CPI was a very low CPI from the previous year. But if we track inflation over two years, as Macdonald does—February 2020 versus February 2022—we get a better picture of trends and don't get fooled by the base effects. Over this period, inflation rose by 6.8%, or an average of 3.4% a year—not nearly as concerning as the most recent yearly figure on its own.

To get a clear picture, we also need to make adjustments for the substantial changes in labour force composition because of the pandemic. If we simply look at average wages early in the pandemic, we would see large wage gains due to the fact that a large proportion of low-wage workers lost their jobs and aren't counted in the average wage anymore.

But there has been sustained job loss for lower-wage workers, particularly in the food and accommodation industry. In the initial months of the pandemic, those who were working at or near the minimum wage were much more likely to lose their job or the majority of their working hours, compared to those further up the income spectrum. While job loss during the pandemic was closely associated with hourly wage rates, there seems to be no connection between hourly wage rates and wage gains during the pandemic. Lower-wage workers saw massive job losses, but didn't see any offsetting increase in wages as industries re-opened.

Since most workers have been experiencing real wage losses over the past two years, it clearly isn't workers' wages that are driving inflation. The “wage-price spiral” theory doesn't apply to the reality for Canadian workers—particularly in the public sector—whose wages haven't kept pace with inflation since the start of the pandemic. **M**

To read David Macdonald's full report, visit policyalternatives.ca/pressurecooker

Larry Brown / Chair of the Board of Directors,
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

Thank you, Rieky!

AT THE END of March, Rieky Stuart completed her role as a consultant to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, helping us to design, develop and then operationalize a new iteration for our governance model. She stayed with us longer than she had ever intended, for which we are deeply grateful.

Rieky joined us when we needed to do some overdue repair work on our governance side. We appointed an ad hoc committee to wrestle with the problem and create a new and better CCPA. One of our wisest moves was to engage Rieky to help us with that project.

Rieky was wise, patient and very, very good at creating consensus out of what initially sounded like disagreement. Of course, points were strongly argued, discussions occasionally got heated and through all that Rieky never became frustrated or annoyed. She simply helped us see beyond the immediate, to winnow out the common points from what began as disparate positions.

I think everyone on the ad hoc committee would agree that without Rieky's skills, our ability to land on a new consensus and design a new model to take CCPA into the future would have been pretty precarious.

However, with her help, we got there, and we agreed on a new set of bylaws that was based on a more decentralized operational model, ultimately overseen by a board representing all the various parts of CCPA.

But of course bylaws are blunt instruments. They tell us what direction to go and provide a foundation, but don't provide all the details about how to actually operate.

So we implored Rieky to stay with us for a bit longer, while we worked through some of the kinks and wrinkles that always accompany a new structure. The “bit longer” got longer again. I'm afraid we took advantage of the fact that Rieky was a strong believer in the importance of the work that CCPA does, and she stayed on, working through some of the sticky issues that are likely inevitable with a new governance model.

Throughout her time working directly with us at CCPA, Rieky has been unfailingly focused on making sure that the Centre lives on and thrives. Without her skill, her patience, her wisdom and her considerable experience, we would all have been the poorer.

The board, the steering committees, the staff and all the supporters of CCPA across the country owe Rieky Stuart a huge debt of thanks.

Rieky, you have made such an important contribution to the Centre. Thank you! A thousand times, thank you! **M**

Recent labour wins reveal hidden costs of provincial government's wage freeze

THE \$19.3 MILLION the court recently awarded to the University of Manitoba Faculty Association (UMFA) highlights another costly mistake made by the Manitoba government.¹ The award compensates UMFA members for damages incurred by the government's illegal interference in collective bargaining. UMFA was the first casualty of the 2016 Public Services Sustainability Act (PSSA), otherwise known as Bill 28, which imposed wage ceilings of 0%, 0%, 0.75% and 1% on all public sector workers. It was part of the government's attempt to slay the deficit,² but illegally overriding workers' Charter rights to collective bargaining has proved costly.

Health care and educational institutions are bleeding staff as demoralized skilled workers seek better opportunities elsewhere. The government-imposed wage freeze stalled negotiations with school bus drivers, nurses and Hydro workers, forcing their unions to seek costly remedies to get a resolution. The Hydro strike alone cost taxpayers \$18 million.³ Nurses won a pay increase following arbitration. Overburdened parents drove their children to school for three months while Winnipeg School Division bus drivers struck for a modest pay raise, winning it only when the court ruled the wage freeze unconstitutional.⁴

Sadly, the high price of their interference has failed to convince the government that the wage freeze is a bad idea. Despite the Court of Queen's Bench decision ruling the wage freeze unconstitutional and calling the PSSA "draconian," the Manitoba government persists in mandating austerity-level wage increases.⁵

The Province refused to allow the University of Manitoba (UM) to make a competitive salary offer even after a 35-day strike. Had the government stayed out of the university's negotiations in 2016 and 2021, UMFA would have accepted a modest wage increase that was well within the UM's operating budget and both strikes would have been averted. UM faculty have typically been reluctant to strike, but salaries, which were already lower than those at comparable universities, have become even less competitive, impeding retention and recruitment. Staffing shortages have increased teaching and administrative workloads. Frustrated and demoralized, faculty voted overwhelmingly to strike, forced out on the picket line by the government-mandated wage freeze.

The added cost of lengthy contract negotiations, strikes, arbitrated settlements and the disruption of education, health care, and other essential public services is particularly worrisome considering the revenue foregone by the government in anticipation of savings.

While mandating the public sector wage freeze, the province cut the PST, raised income tax thresholds, and introduced an education property tax rebate, all of which reduced provincial revenue.⁶ Not only were those savings illusory, but the real costs of the wage freeze have yet to be calculated. Overly optimistic tax cuts and the costs of the wage freeze added to a record-setting provincial deficit during the pandemic, and continue to leave the province in a more precarious fiscal position.⁷

Despite the wage freeze mandate's apparent costs, the wages of over half of Manitoba's 120,000 public-sector workers remain frozen. Those workers have not been able to negotiate new contracts and face added financial stress from sharp increases in the cost of living. The dismal record of this government's flawed plan to cut the deficit through wage freezes highlights the fallacy that cutting public sector pay is sound fiscal policy.⁸ Its determination to force public sector workers to subsidize its budget priorities is bad public policy. Employers must be released from government constraints so they can bargain in good faith with public sector workers. **M**

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Worth Repeating

Individualism is an enemy to anti-racism.

It's frustrating to speak out about racist behaviours that I experience and about racist systems and then have white people in my comments talking about "I don't claim them. That's not me. Some of us are different." Which are all variations of "not all white people," which is never helpful...

When we, as Black, Indigenous, and other people of colour are telling our stories, white folks you must resist the temptation to dissociate yourself from whiteness and the harm that it causes. [W]hen you respond in a way seeking to separate yourself from these systems of racism and white supremacy, you are prioritizing your own feelings and reputation, and you are also shedding responsibility for dismantling these harmful systems.

—Tony Nabors, March 28 on TikTok. Find Tony on TikTok at [@racialequityinsights](https://www.tiktok.com/@racialequityinsights) or on his website, tonynabors.com



Colour-coded Justice

ANTHONY N. MORGAN

Freedom in the name of

“WHEN YOU’RE ACCUSTOMED to privilege, equality feels like oppression.” This adage comes to mind when I consider the Freedom Convoy and the truckers’ protests. Why? Because, from my vantage point, the Freedom Convoy wasn’t much more than a Canadian-brand revolt of the white worker.

After watching weeks of news reports and images, it became obvious that the overwhelming majority of the leaders, supporters and participants in convoy protests were white workers. Of course, the protestors and its leaders professed to be speaking for and in support of the rights and freedoms of *all* Canadians. But we know that within Canada, the racialized nature of national rhetoric is such that when folks speak in terms of “all Canadians,” the unspoken default “all” is actually white people. Further, this claim of representing all Canadians was contradicted by the conspicuously minimal presence of Indigenous, Black and racialized workers, workers’ associations and labour organizers among the agitators. For instance, it’s important to note that many South Asians, a group that makes up 16% of Canadian truckers, and comprises more than half of the truck drivers in Vancouver and Toronto, have consistently and openly expressed that they did not identify with or support the protests.

Moreover, absent from the public communications and messaging of the protest organizers and participants was any recognition of the fact that it is Indigenous, Black and racialized workers in Canada that are the most disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. As the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives reported¹ in December 2021:

The economic and health impacts of COVID-19 were not randomly distributed and did not affect everyone equally. The impacts were more severe for marginalized people. At all times during the pandemic, a larger share of Indigenous and racialized households faced economic hardship compared to white households.

This is to say nothing of the swastikas, Confederate and Nazi flags, and other symbols of racial hate, or the white supremacists and white nationalist contingents that

were present and active among the protesters. Despite these symbols and sympathizers of white racial hatred, a considerable number of Canada’s right-wing commentators and politicians have either avoided denouncing the alarmingly racist expressions and undercurrents of the protests, or offered words or actions in response to the protests that have endorsed and lent credibility to the movement.

Indeed, the Freedom Convoy’s most prominent champions have claimed that this movement aimed to resist and repeal COVID-19 public health measures. However, the movement’s messaging and the make-up of its participants is evidence that it has primarily sought to preserve, promote and protect white freedom, or, said differently, the freedoms of white people. This can be reasonably inferred because data shows that those who, up to the early months of 2022, had suffered the longest and deepest social and economic losses during the pandemic and its public health measures have been BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) Canadians. Yet it was not these BIPOC Canadians whose voices and experiences were centred in this movement that was supposedly in the name of “all Canadians.”

In other words, it was only once the depth and breadth of COVID-19 health measures seemed to reach a critical mass of average white Canadians that the convoys prominently emerged, raising several millions of dollars in the process. These health measures, then, seemed to be socially tolerable by the truckers so long as the measures were mostly impacting racialized workers. However, once the mandates were introduced and had an impact on white workers in ways that BIPOC workers had already been experiencing for months, a racial line was crossed and the rage of white resistance was ignited.

None of this means that the movement is to be summarily dismissed or isn’t to be taken seriously. To the contrary, it means we should all take note and consider even more carefully what this was about. This deeper level of consideration is what leads me to referring to it as not just a White Freedom Convoy, but again, a revolt of the white worker. I characterize it as a white workers’ revolt because the movement was driven by white workers that intentionally used the central tool of their trade, namely their heavy trucks, to incapacitate Canada’s capital. They also leveraged the machinery of their labour to slow the Canadian economy, in part through blockading key corridors of commerce (land borders and bridges). As such, the protest should be considered a message sent on behalf of Canada’s white working masses: if our white worker privilege is not protected by *our* Canadian government, it is within our white worker power to not only punish all Canadians, but also replace the government to secure that protection. This latter point was most clearly made through their now infamous memorandum of understanding initially championed by the convoy’s lead organizers.

Although the Freedom Convoy eventually rescinded this memorandum of understanding that sought to replace Canada's government, this withdrawal only came after an explosion of negative publicity. The MOU had been circulating online since December 2021, weeks before it was taken down and the convoy's organizers sought to distance themselves from it.

Taking all of the above points together, in my estimation, "Freedom Convoy" is a misnomer. I think it's fairer and more accurate to characterize it as a *White Freedom Convoy*. When we look a little deeper, we see that what was really at issue in the protests was white workers refusing to allow themselves to be treated in an unfair, discriminatory and violative way. Or, said differently, treated the way BIPOC workers have been treated in this country for centuries. **M**

1. ALOOK, BLOCK & GALABUZI (2021). A DISPROPORTIONATE BURDEN [HTTPS://POLICYALTERNATIVES.CA/SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/UPLOADS/PUBLICATIONS/NATIONAL%20OFFICE/2021/12/A_DISPROPORTIONATE_BURDEN_FINAL.PDF](https://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/NATIONAL%20OFFICE/2021/12/A_DISPROPORTIONATE_BURDEN_FINAL.PDF)



Inside Trade

STUART TREW

You call *this* a waiver?

“LOWEST-COMMON denominator,” “worse than nothing,” and “an abomination” are some of the ways international health advocates have described a pared-down draft of a compromise “TRIPS Waiver” proposal after it leaked to the press on March 16. It’s hard to argue with them.

Far from being a true compromise that will benefit global public health, the widely anticipated proposal mainly reflected European genuflecting to Big Pharma and an unreasonable U.S. insistence on limiting the waiver to vaccines only. After 18 months of foot-dragging by wealthy countries at the World Trade Organization (WTO), including Canada, this was a very sad outcome.

I know I only just wrote about the TRIPS waiver in the last issue of the *Monitor*, but this is important stuff. Despite provinces dismantling vaccine and mask mandates, COVID-19 continues to pummel populations globally while western nations prioritize intellectual property protection over health outcomes. Emergency shutdowns in China are once again reverberating through supply chains, ratcheting up inflation pressures.

On multiple levels, this pandemic is a major failure of international trade and health governance. The war in Ukraine is compounding problems for low-income and developing countries who now face potentially extreme food shortages on top of public indebtedness from responding to the pandemic.

Please note that as I wrote this, the future of the waiver compromise proposal was still uncertain. Only the EU had reportedly approved it while South Africa, India and the United States had not. Having just got off a call with officials from Minister Ng’s and Minister Champagne’s office, I really can’t say what Canada’s position is or if the government has developed one yet.

What is the TRIPS waiver?

Originally pitched by India and South Africa in October 2020, the “TRIPS Waiver” proposal would temporarily freeze a number of WTO-protected intellectual property rights on pandemic-related vaccines, diagnostics, therapeutics and medical goods like ventilators. The idea was, and still is, to give countries the legal room to circumvent patents, trademarks, trade secrets and copyright as needed to scale up global production and export of critical vaccines and medications in the battle against COVID-19.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, along with dozens of other civil society groups in Canada, support a broad waiver and have encouraged the Canadian government to back it at the WTO. But the proposal is vehemently opposed by self-interested pharmaceutical companies and countries—like the EU, Switzerland, Norway, Japan, and, unfortunately, Canada—inclined to cater to their interests. The United States initially opposed a waiver, but the Biden administration made a partial reversal in early 2021, claiming it would support negotiations on a vaccines-only proposal.

In December, India and South Africa agreed to join the U.S. and EU in closed-door quadrilateral discussions to try to break the impasse on the

waiver at the WTO TRIPS Council. The talks, while hardly inclusive of broad WTO member interests, had the strong backing of WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, who is under pressure to show that the trade organization can play some role in solving multilateral trade governance problems.

A severely compromised alternative

The most glaring flaw in the compromise text is that the waiver would apply only to vaccines, as pitched by the U.S. Clause 8 of the proposal says members must decide “no later than six months” on whether to also cover the production and distribution of COVID-19 diagnostics and therapeutics. But given the stalling on the waiver to date, this is not a promise to take seriously.

What’s upsetting about this limitation to COVID-19 vaccines is that we’re now at a stage in the pandemic when rapid, regular and affordable testing and treatments are just as important to saving lives as vaccines are. Precisely because western countries consumed all the vaccines, leaving low-income nations extremely vulnerable to new, more contagious strains, we owe it to the world not to make the same mistake on life-saving medicines.

In March this year, Pfizer announced it will make 10 million doses of its promising COVID-19 therapeutic, Paxlovid, available to low-income countries. That’s out of 120 million two-dose treatment courses the company will produce in 2022, most of them destined for countries who can pay the full price. While Pfizer has agreed to let generic firms in several countries produce versions of Paxlovid, these courses will not be available until 2023 and may only be exported to a list of 95 low-income countries representing only 53% of the world’s population.

According to Doctors Without Borders (MSF), the unequal coverage provided by voluntary licensing with brand-name firms (for production or export), and Pfizer’s refusal to promise that it will not enforce its intellectual property rights tied to Paxlovid, reinforce the need for a broader waiver at the WTO not limited to vaccines.

A second flaw in the compromise waiver is that it does not cover all the intellectual property rights barriers that can get in the way of the production and export of off-patent vaccines. As Public Citizen points out, many key COVID-19 vaccines and medicines are “protected by thorny thickets of intertwined IP protection, not just a patent or two.”

Those thickets include clinical trials data and other proprietary information deemed protected trade secrets in the WTO TRIPS agreement. While the European Commission claims companies in developing countries will be able to “rely on data produced through earlier trials, without having to re-produce this data themselves,” it’s not clear how this compromise waiver ensures access to all the information generic producers will need.

Furthermore, James Love at Knowledge Ecology International notes that the compromise text creates *new* burdensome, or TRIPS-plus, obligations on countries. For example, point 3(a) of the compromise text states that eligible WTO members “may issue a single authorization to use the [patented] subject matter of multiple patents necessary for the supply of a COVID-19 vaccine.” This is, in fact, already permitted by Article 31(a) of the TRIPS Agreement. The compromise makes things more complicated for countries, though, by requiring that they “list all patents covered” by such application—an onerous new obligation not currently in the TRIPS agreement.

Is this it, or can the waiver be fixed?

“The current text requires substantive revision and improvement when negotiations move forward, to avoid setting a harmful precedent for future public health challenges,” notes a March 30 MSF brief. The group urges WTO members not to adopt the current text without major revisions.

On March 29, Third World Network reported that WTO Director-General Okonjo-Iweala was advocating for the rapid adoption of the text as leaked. As mentioned earlier, it was not clear going into April that the U.S., India or South Africa would agree to this outcome. If they do, the first opportunity for the TRIPS Council to debate the matter would be at a regular meeting scheduled for June 8 and 9, unless a special meeting was organized before that.

On March 25, the CCPA joined 17 other civil society organizations in strongly encouraging the Canadian government to resist the urge to rubber-stamp whatever comes before the TRIPS Council for the sake of “the appearance of consensus.” In this case, no deal would be better than the draft deal hashed out by the QUAD. The letter to Ministers Ng and Champagne made the following four recommendations:

1. The waiver should apply to all products needed to prevent, treat and contain COVID-19.
2. The waiver should apply to all forms of intellectual property that are needed for production.
3. The waiver should apply in all WTO member countries.
4. Conditions in the proposal that are more onerous than current WTO provisions should be removed.

Perhaps optimistically, the letter to the ministers concluded:

“Your government has stated that it would work constructively to find a consensus-based waiver text that would be acceptable to all member countries. By working collaboratively at the WTO to urgently remedy these flaws, Canada can help to ensure that vaccines, treatments and other pandemic-related products are treated as global public goods available to all, as Prime Minister Trudeau called for in May 2020. The world has waited long enough.” **M**

Is the “Freedom Convoy” a sign of inequality-fuelled escalation of violent class conflict?

THE FREEDOM CONVOY, led by a small group of well-funded, seditious and far-right activists (with well-documented ties to white supremacist groups), tapped into the grievances of a much larger segment of the population. This demographic is resentful of government policies that have triggered anxiety about the ability to earn a living.

EKOS pollster Frank Graves and Munk School senior fellow Michael Valpy’s analysis of the forces behind the convoy highlights the sympathy the protests have generated from one-third of the Canadian public.

The authors link this support to a long-held belief by 65% of Canadians that growing wealth concentration could result in violent class conflict. The number rises to 78% for those under 35 years old and 81% for those who identify as working class.

The convoy protests—which are correlated with extreme wealth disparities—may very well foreshadow an escalating series of violent class conflicts in Canada and abroad.

The power of the super-rich has increased as the working classes have become increasingly marginalized. In his 1979 book *Annals of an Abiding Liberal*, John Kenneth Galbraith warned of the impact of ascendant corporate power and declining union density on income and wealth inequality. He described the return of depression-era laissez-faire capitalism as trickle-down economics.

Waves of privatization, deregulation, tax cuts, corporate concentration and financially-driven corporate globalization—the return of what John Maynard Keynes called the oppressive speculative power of “functionless financial investors”—have validated Galbraith’s prediction of an unprecedented wealth pyramid with corporations and the super-rich at its apex. Canadian Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland described this cabal as “plutocrats” in her former life as a journalist.

The 2022 World Inequality Report found that the poorest 50% of the world’s population owned just 2% of total wealth, while the richest 10% owned 76% of total wealth. The top 1% has 19 times more wealth than the bottom 50% of the population—a level of inequality unseen since the beginning of the twentieth century.

Canada is no exception. The poorest 50% of Canadians now hold 6% of total wealth, while the top 10% of Canadians hold 58% of total wealth, according to the World Inequality Report. Canada’s billionaires are as wealthy as the 12 million poorest Canadians combined.

Journalist Aaron Wherry recently recalled Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s 2017 speech in Germany, wherein he discussed anxiety towards the government due to increasing income and wealth inequality. Trudeau anticipated this resentment turning into anger.

However, apart from a few boutique tax measures, this government has done little to reduce the wealth gap in the five years after Trudeau’s speech. There is no wealth tax on the super-rich, no increase in rates for the top income tax bracket, no corporate income tax increase,¹ no increase in the capital gains and dividends tax, no surtax on Canadian billionaires profiteering from the pandemic, no significant penalties on high carbon-emitting activities, no significant clamping down on tax avoidance and evasion by corporations and the very wealthy via a spider’s web of tax havens. The government’s aversion to imposing an estate tax ensures Canada’s family dynasties can pass down exorbitant amounts of wealth to their descendants.

All this suggests that sympathy for the convoy is in part a manifestation of Trudeau’s own diagnosis of the consequences of government inaction in reducing wealth inequality. EKOS polling hints at how anger and the potential for violent class conflict could well intensify.

The emergence of a pyramid of wealth and power that maintains the status quo and resists systemic change was one factor noted in Ronald Wright’s 2004 Massey Lectures, which explored factors that have led to the collapse of past civilizations.

While Wright was focused on the likelihood of worldwide civilization collapse due to nuclear war or climate catastrophe, plutocratic inaction on worldwide inequality can only amplify the risks.

Resentment over growing wealth and inequality in Canada helped generate sympathy toward the convoy insurrection. It stands as a warning sign for Canada and the world that unless those with the most wealth and power recognize equality as a priority, political instability and violent conflict threatening civilization collapse will fester.

Editor’s note: The 2022 federal budget introduced an excess corporate profits tax on the banking industry. For an analysis of this tax and the budget, visit <http://monitormag.ca/banktax>.

ZEXI LI

Standing up to blaring hate

WHEN THE FIRST trucks rolled in on January 28, I knew something bad was coming our way. What I didn't realize at the time was that nobody had a plan to stop them.

Many participants have described the first weekend of the occupation as a joyous, celebratory event—a gathering of like-minded individuals—akin to Canada Day. It didn't take much sleuthing for me to discover the true intentions of those who had descended on our city.

What first stood out to me was their use of noise. Often downplayed as “just some honking,” the noise produced by transport trucks carrying aftermarket horns—which one occupier described to me as “no louder than 140 decibels”—produced noise at an ear-splitting volume that was constant and unbearable. Given the roving pickup truck carrying a literal train horn in its bed, an air raid siren across from my home and the miscellaneous honks that accompanied every sound, it's no wonder that so many who lived downtown needed to escape their homes for a modicum of rest. This so-called protest had taken up residence in our streets, but it had also invaded our homes and disrupted our lives for that same reason.

Let's be clear: this was not a protest. The intention from the very start was to hold the residents of Ottawa hostage and to make our lives so unbearable that we had no choice but to heed their demands—which were garbled at best. These rambling demands covered everything from the anti-mandate demands that they were supposedly here for, to calls for Justin Trudeau to be removed from office and tried for crimes against the Canadian population, as well as conspiracies about the government working with the World Trade Organization to track and control vaccinated individuals. Combined with their use of a constant barrage of noise and their imposition of sleep deprivation—an internationally recognized method of torture—it was clearly demonstrated that these individuals could not be reasoned with, negotiated with, or allowed to stay.

Demonstrating disregard and apathy for residents' suffering, the Ottawa Police Service (OPS) continuously described the occupation as a peaceful, successful protest while Ottawa's leadership expressed their appreciation in blissful—and perhaps willful—ignorance. It was exceedingly difficult to watch this narrative repeated, and each time it was, a little bit of my hope was chipped away.

By February 3, I decided that I had had enough. For over a week, I had observed the occupation firsthand:

watching and listening in awe of the absurd reality we were living in. I made an effort to speak to many of the police officers I encountered, mostly to find out why they were allowing this to happen. Some responded dispassionately, while others suggested they were sympathetic but unable to act.

Regardless of their reasons, the OPS observing from a distance while the law was being broken in every direction only fanned the flames of resident frustrations and emboldened the occupiers to continue their siege. The tensions in downtown Ottawa were rising, and many of us felt that a response would soon be seen, not from the OPS, but from the residents—particularly when the OPS made statements suggesting that nobody was calling them or reporting any issues, which was unequivocally untrue. I found myself organizing a meeting with OPS community liaison officers and residents of my building for us to air our grievances, demand help and establish accountability—nobody would be able to say that the Ottawa Police Service was unaware of our issues. My secret intention for the meeting was to diffuse some of the anger many of my neighbours were feeling, as I worried immensely about any kind of resident-occupier confrontation. I'd like to think it helped.

From this community meeting I was identified as a candidate for the lead plaintiff of the class-action lawsuit. Paul Champ and his team had been working on the case but they were having difficulty getting an individual to put their name on it, largely due to valid concerns over safety. After the meeting, Paul Champ called to inform me of the work they were trying to accomplish. In particular, the potential for the injunction against noise resonated deeply with me. I agreed to be the lead plaintiff almost immediately. This wasn't a frivolous decision by any means, but we were desperate for any kind of action. By this point, it was quite clear that our city would not be leading a solution so time was of the essence. I knew that members of my community were suffering—both those that I knew personally and those that I didn't, but all of whom I cared about.

Personally, I felt some hesitation and doubt, primarily because I knew that I wasn't the worst off. There were countless young children, elderly residents, those living with physical and mental illnesses and so many others that were more gravely affected than me, and I feared that my own experience was not enough to emphasize the real harm that was being dealt to these particularly vulnerable communities. However, I did come to the eventual realization that I had to stand up

150_{dB}A
Firecracker

120_{dB}A
Live concert

110_{dB}A
Snowmobile

105_{dB}A
Chainsaw

95_{dB}A
Lawnmower

88_{dB}A
Subway

85_{dB}A
Alarm clock

60_{dB}A
Conversation

55_{dB}A
Urban night

20_{dB}A
Rustling leaves

Just how loud was it?

Data visualization company Spatial Media used crowd-sourced information to map the noise and air pollution impacts that the convoy had on Ottawa. **Noise levels in the downtown and Centretown neighbourhoods in the first 14 days of the occupation consistently averaged between 70 and 110 decibels (dBA).** Prior to the occupation, the area normally had noise levels averaging between 30 to 50 decibels.¹

In 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) published data establishing the connection between environmental noise and cardiovascular, pulmonary and mental health, as well as noting the positive correlation between increased noise, sleep disturbance and cognitive impairment. Based on these findings, the WHO established the health-protective guidelines of 55 dBA outdoors for daytime and 40 dBA outdoors for nighttime (and 30 dBA indoors at night).²

Noise levels above 85 decibels can cause permanent hearing loss after 8 hours of exposure. Noise at 110 decibels can cause permanent damage in under a minute.³

1. SPATIAL MEDIA. (2022). IMPACTS OF THE PROTEST. [HTTPS://CAPORTAL.CA/SPATIAL/OTTAWA-TRUCK-PROTEST-NOISE-TOOL](https://caportal.ca/spatial/ottawa-truck-protest-noise-tool)

2. WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION. (2009). NIGHT NOISE GUIDELINES FOR EUROPE. 2009. COPENHAGEN: WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION.

3. SOURCE: HEALTH CANADA. (2016). IT'S YOUR HEALTH. [HTTPS://WWW.CANADA.CA/CONTENT/DAM/HC-SC/MIGRATION/HC-SC/HL-VS/ALT_FORMATS/PDF/VH-VSV/ENVIRON/HEARING_LOSS-PERTE_AUDITION-ENG.PDF](https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/hc-sc/migration/hc-sc/hl-vs/alt_formats/pdf/vh-vsv/envIRON/HEARING_LOSS-PERTE_AUDITION-ENG.PDF)

and offer a voice for the people impacted. I knew I had the strength and resilience to weather the guaranteed slew of hate and vitriol that would, and did, come because of the injunction.

The legal team had told me that putting my name on the case was more than enough to help the community, but as I watched the inaccurate depiction of what was happening in my city, it was important that I offered another perspective, as the lead plaintiff and as a resident of the community living through what I often described as a hellscape. Speaking out painted an especially large target on my back, resulting in everything from generalized hate messages, to having my address and number leaked, and, of course, the extreme conspiracies dreamed up by creative occupiers (and occupier sympathizers). All these responses were expected, and really, they didn't mean much to me. What was unexpected, however, was the positive response to my actions and appearances on the news.

One of the rays of hope throughout this experience has been how the community was able to unite in the face of such extreme hardship. Neighbours from down the hall and those from across the country alike came together to offer support, kindness and encouragement, while recognizing and condemning what was happening in Ottawa. We had finally been heard, and while it took far longer than it should have, we took back our city. The damage from the occupation lingers in our streets, homes and minds, but at the very least, we can start our recovery in peace. **M**

On February 4, 2022, a class-action lawsuit was filed against the Freedom Convoy protestors with Zexi Li as the lead plaintiff. On February 7, an Ontario Superior Court justice granted a 10-day injunction against horn honking. The injunction was later expanded to include discharging fireworks, idling vehicles and setting fires.

On March 23, Mayor Jim Watson and Councillor Catherine McKenney presented Li with the Mayor's City Builder Award for her leadership and inspiring contributions during the occupation.



Feature

ILLUSTRATIONS BY DOAN TRUONG

STACY LEE KONG

The wellness-to-white-supremacy pipeline is alive and well

Wellness influencers like Angela Liddon of Oh She Glows threw their support behind the trucker convoy—and considering the white supremacist origins of wellness, that’s no surprise.

IN JANUARY 28, the same day the trucker convoy rolled into Ottawa, Canadian food personality Angela Liddon posted an Instagram story fawning over the convoy.

“I can’t think of anything else except the [Freedom Convoy] right now. I get emotional thinking about how this movement has brought a lot of people out of a really dark place,” she wrote. “Our family has had many hard conversations over the past two years. What will our future look like if the government continues along the path of lockdowns, segregation, division/blame, mandates and censorship? Like many

of you, that’s not the future we will accept for our kids. I want kids to be able to live freely again...to see their friends’ smiles...to play sports and SING... for ALL Canadians to be equal, free and to be able to thrive again. I’m curious, [Justin Trudeau], is this an ‘unacceptable view?’”

It might seem like a mostly innocuous statement—who can argue that all Canadians should be equal, free and able to thrive? But the reality is, the convoy was not about kids at all. It was a white supremacist movement, and Liddon’s Instagram story helped sanitize its message for her 600,000+ followers.

The trucker convoy was a white supremacist movement, not a protest

Yes, the so-called Freedom Convoy was ostensibly about vaccine mandates. However, if examined closely, it was clear from the very beginning that this “protest” was less about vaccines and more about overarching right-wing hate and paranoia.

Some of the organizers—Pat King, Benjamin Dichter, Jason LaFace (or sometimes LaFaci) and Chris Barber—have known links to white nationalism. As *Global News* reported, King loves antisemitism and racist conspiracy theories, particularly the idea that the government is actively trying to “depopulate the Anglo-Saxon race.” Dichter spoke at a People’s Party of Canada convention in 2019, where he said the Liberal Party is “infested with Islamists.” LaFace is a member of the Soldiers of Odin, the Canadian arm of a Finnish anti-immigration group that “organize[s] events that will try to stop immigration, people who are BIPOC or people who are in LGBTQ communities,” according to Carmen

Celestini, a post-doctoral fellow with the Disinformation Project at Simon Fraser University. Other leaders, including Dave Steenburg, have also shared videos that imply an affiliation with Soldiers of Odin. Barber keeps getting banned from Facebook and TikTok for his racist posts, including a video he filmed in front of two Confederate flags.

But even if you missed all of that, it was obvious something was not quite right by the number of upside-down Canadian flags and Confederate flags that were in full view on their drive into Ottawa—well before Liddon made her post.

White supremacy has been part of the wellness industry since the very beginning

At first glance, Liddon doesn’t seem like she’d be a supporter of far-right movements. She started blogging under the name Oh She Glows in 2008 after suffering from an eating disorder for more than a decade. In the beginning, the blog was a hobby and a way to repair her relationship with food, but it quickly grew to

encompass multiple popular social media profiles, a website and a slew of bestselling cookbooks. And while she likely didn’t realize it at the time, Liddon was entering the wellness space, which has always been a breeding ground for misinformation, exploitation and white supremacy—and would soon explode in popularity.

When I say white supremacy, I really mean it. The Nazis, for example, were hyperfixated on wellness, linking the idea of healthy, clean, *good* bodies with racial purity. According to philosopher Jules Evans, policy director for the Centre for the History of the Emotions at Queen Mary, University of London, “Hitler, Hess, Himmler and many other leading Nazis were into alternative medicine, organic and vegetarian diets, homeopathy, anti-vaxxing and natural healing. Hess, the deputy führer, opened a center for alternative medical practices in Dresden in 1934. Himmler, meanwhile, supported alternative medicine—such as using plant extracts to heal cancer—and authorized experiments on prisoners in concentration camps for this research.” Their interest in healthy diets was actually about eugenics, while their well-documented love of yoga was really about using the practice as an “occult tool for purifying and exalting the individual body as a microcosm of the nation that would ultimately triumph over a [Jewish conspiracy] and impure invaders,” says yoga practitioner, writer and conspiracy theory expert Matthew Remski.

When yoga became the first tentpole of western wellness in the 1990s, those racist ideas became implicit instead of explicit, but they didn’t disappear. During this period, yoga’s deep breathing and intentional movement was immediately decoupled from its cultural and spiritual context and the practice instead became a way for (mostly) white women to feel better, especially in the face of traditional medicine’s bias against women.



From there, wellness quickly grew to encompass other forms of fitness, healthy eating, personal care, nutrition, meditation, alternative medicine, spa services and weight loss—especially that last one. And its market share increased in lockstep with its popularity. A 2021 McKinsey & Company survey estimated the value of the global wellness market at more than US\$1.5 trillion, while the Global Wellness Institute suggests it's likely much higher: US\$4.5 trillion. The market's value is also likely to continue growing, according to a recent U.S. Chamber of Commerce report, which quotes Wendy Liebmann, the CEO of retail strategy and market research firm WSL Strategic Retail, as saying, "What this pandemic has revealed is that taking care and control of your own health—individual, family, home, etc.—is even more critical than before."

Unsurprisingly, when companies learned they could offer a vulnerable group that was legitimately underserved tools and techniques to fill the gaps left by western medicine—and charge them a lot of money in the process—it further encouraged the rejection of western medicine, and by extension science, expertise and government authority. There's a term for this: conspiratoriality, which "describes the sticky intersection of two worlds: the world of yoga and juice cleanses with that of New Age thinking and online theories about secret groups, covertly controlling the universe," according to a 2021 *Guardian* article. "It's a place where you might typically see a vegan influencer imploring their followers to stick to a water fast rather than getting vaccinated, or a meditation instructor reminding her clients of the dangers of 5G, or read an Instagram comment explaining that vaccines are hiding tracking devices."

Liddon's post fits right into white supremacist narratives

At the same time, racialized, Indigenous, queer, disabled and poor people rarely have access to wellness spaces as customers, much less the opportunity to become practitioners themselves, even though many wellness trends are derived from their traditional practices, then repackaged as "ancient secrets" or "mystical knowledge." It all creates the perfect opportunity for white supremacy to flourish—and for the wellness industry to do serious harm.

According to journalist Terry Nguyen, "it's 'New Age capitalism' at work: A robust system of knowledge is taken apart piecemeal, divorced from any philosophical or religious roots, and transfigured into a commodity, something that can be bought and sold to improve consumers' lives." She goes on to explain that cherry-picking meaning like this also makes it easier to layer political meaning on to personal choices. This is particularly true when it comes to food and nutrition influencers, who are often rich white women who gatekeep veganism.

She also quotes Remski, who argues there are fascist undertones in New Age beliefs. "Fascist ideas of the perfected body and earth [have] generated enduring cultural memes for holism, embodied spirituality, and health," he says. "Those memes, sanitized of their explicit politics, carry jagged edges of perfectionism and paranoia about impurity. And that double message—your body is divine but it is also under attack—has become standard in the commodification of yoga and wellness."

This just scratches the surface of how the wellness industry writ large and Liddon's content specifically harmoniously fit with white supremacist viewpoints and attract white supremacist audiences. The innocuous nature of wellness content like that produced by Oh She Glows allows it to generate buzz and garner attention without raising red flags. Liddon's work has been covered by *Chatelaine*, *Canadian Living* and *House & Home*, the *Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Star*, the *National Post*, *Cityline*, Food Network and more.

Angela Liddon isn't the only wellness influencer to support the trucker convoy

While Liddon was the most notable example of wellness influencers to throw their support behind the convoy, she was far from the only one: their followers report seeing similar perspectives from food blogger Joy McCarthy of Joyous Health, fitness influencer Maddie Lymburner of MadFit and nutritionist Meghan Telpner, among others.

But while Liddon and her ilk are 100% responsible for their problematic views, I think media outlets should feel some sense of responsibility for the platform these influencers have now. These women may have built large and dedicated audiences on social media, but they simply wouldn't have the power they do now if they didn't also get buy-in from the media.

In recent years, the journalism industry has been discussing what it looks like to ethically cover white supremacy, which means taking a careful look at our own actions. It's essential for journalists to explicitly name white supremacy instead of using "softer" terms like alt-right, which only serve to rebrand the racists. Some experts recommend avoiding interviewing these extremists entirely. During this news cycle, in particular, news outlets need to acknowledge the differences in how their journalists treat these protesters compared to how they have historically covered Indigenous and racialized protesters. And I think it's fair to add to that list holding non-protesting sympathizers accountable, especially when they're providing legitimizing and harmful rhetoric.

Because if we are going to play a role in creating platforms for people who may abuse them, don't we also have a responsibility to at least act as a counterweight to the misinformation they spread? Otherwise, we're just going easy on white supremacists. **M**

ARUSHANA SUNDERAESON

Freedom from what?

IN JANUARY 28, the city of Ottawa changed forever, as the result of actions taken by a group of individuals labelled a “fringe minority” by the prime minister. These individuals drove into Ottawa, ostensibly to end the COVID-19 mandates.

Instead, their trip turned into a 26-day demonstration of hate, racism, misogyny and homophobia that created emotional turmoil for the people of Ottawa. Downtown residents were scared, anxious and on edge. Many lost faith and trust in law enforcement and all levels of government, who had failed on all counts to fulfil their job to protect and provide support.

Mackenzie, one such resident, described the occupation as a waking nightmare. “The first week of constant honking was like a wall of sound—there was nowhere to escape it. I couldn’t leave my apartment without being barraged by the horns, the fumes of the trucks and the people participating. On one occasion I was surrounded by men who chanted ‘freedom’ in my face and told me to take my mask off. It felt like we had been abandoned by all levels of government.” Another downtown Ottawa resident (who wished to remain anonymous for safety) echoed this sentiment: “I felt unsafe and frankly uncomfortable to go out of my house. I kept the walks with my dog short in fear of running into them. I was confined to my house for more than three weeks. That is not a way to live in a supposedly safe city.”

Some of the city’s most marginalized residents were particularly impacted by the occupation. Many homeless shelters in the Ottawa area, including Cornerstone Housing for Women and Shepherds of Good Hope, were affected by the disturbance created by the chaos of the occupiers. “Staff and residents had issues accessing the shelter on the bus. Then, when the city got put into the red zone, the increase of police presence made it difficult for residents to get appointments or look at housing outside the sector,” explained Amber Bramer, the resource development manager of Cornerstone Housing for Women.

“Staff had to [re]arrange their lives...many BIPOC staff and residents didn’t feel safe coming into work or leaving the shelter. Truckers were stationed right outside the shelter, which increased mental health issues and anxiety. The horns were torturous the first couple of weekends—women were seeking hospital support and more mental health support, and some of the convoy supporters tried booking spaces at the shelter, taking the spaces of women in crisis. The protest also resulted in residents increasing substances

to cope with anxiety and mental health of these protests.”

The downtown havoc meant Shepherds of Good Hope’s staff and clients faced similar challenges. In a statement, Shepherds of Good Hope wrote, “Trucks were parked in our ambulance drop-off zone for nearly 12 hours until they were removed and towed with the support of Ottawa Police Services. In addition, the staff and volunteers at our soup kitchen experienced verbal harassment and pressure from protestors seeking meals.” Fortunately, the situation resulted in Shepherds of Good Hope receiving financial support, raising over \$750,000 from community members in Ottawa and supporters across the country. This is just one example of how the community in Ottawa, and beyond, came together to support each other during this time. But even with our efforts, the threat remained.

I was also impacted by the experience. As a woman of colour and a child of immigrant parents, living in Ottawa’s downtown core during the 26-day occupation was a nightmare. I was terrified to leave my house or to make eye contact with people on the streets for fear of being targeted by occupiers. Throughout the night, I could hear music blaring. Fireworks being set off sounded like gunshots, resulting in anxiety attacks and my being fearful of even sleeping in my home. I saw police officers high fiving and hugging protesters and allowing them to aim fireworks at my building.

Occupiers were yelling “freedom” in the streets, but I asked myself: what freedom? I did not feel free. I was struck with sadness and disappointment. For more than three weeks I was terrified, exhausted, and anxious about what would or could happen every hour and day.

As someone who recently moved to the city, this October will be my first time voting in an Ottawa municipal election. Not just I, but everyone in Ottawa will be looking for answers. We will be asking how the city will ensure that all of its residents feel heard and safe in their own streets, communities and homes. What will the police do to rebuild what was already a shaky trust, and what impact will this have on existing calls to revisit their budget? **M**

YOUR CCPA

Get to know **Letisha Toop**

OFFICE: **NATIONAL**

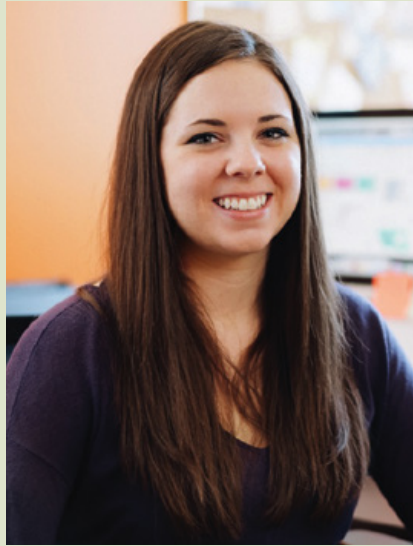
POSITION: **EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT**

YEARS WITH THE CCPA: **8**

As someone who has grown with the CCPA, what are some of the biggest wins that stand out for you? There are so many wins that I've seen at the CCPA over the years, but recently it's been great to see how our child-care fee data has influenced new government policy. Each year, I see all of the effort and co-ordination that goes into that project, with callers contacting hundreds of child-care centres across the country to get the most recent fee data. I'm really happy to see that it has paid off with acknowledgement that affordable child care is desperately needed.

How has your role with the CCPA changed during your time with the organization? I was hired in 2014 to assist the development team with processing donations and other development work. Five years later, I switched to administrative work as the executive assistant. I have really enjoyed both roles, and feel fortunate that I'm often working with my colleagues across departments in the National office and my colleagues from the provincial offices.

What are you most excited to be working on with the CCPA National team this year? This year, I think that the work will be focused on how to adjust as we emerge from the pandemic. I'm excited to see how we can support movements as they navigate all of the issues that have been highlighted throughout the pandemic. It feels like we have a



chance to reimagine many parts of society, and make them better rather than just return to “normal.”

What issues are you most passionate about? I am passionate about environmental issues because I feel that climate change is something that already does, and will continue to affect all of us. So I think it needs to be a top priority. As a cancer survivor, I also try to keep up with the latest developments in cancer policy, care and research, of which there's always plenty.

As someone who is often the first point of contact for our supporters, what is your favourite thing about getting to connect with our community? My favourite thing about hearing from our donors is that it always reminds me how important our work is. I hear very valid concerns from supporters and the ways that they and their families, are personally impacted by certain policies—often, a lack of policies.

Especially early on in the pandemic, people were concerned and really appreciated the CCPA publishing analysis quickly during that time of collective distress.

When you aren't at work, what are some ways that you decompress? My favourite way to decompress is by spending time outside. I love all four seasons, which is convenient because Ottawa tends to get an intense version of each. In the winter, I enjoy getting out for walks in the snow and going skating. In the summer, I also spend time at the cottage, canoeing and swimming.

What are some challenges that are prominent in the region where you live? In the Ottawa area, we're navigating the aftermath of the Ottawa Occupation and what it revealed about the leadership and governance of our city. We have a municipal election coming up, which is a great time to make a positive change. We're also heading towards an election in Ontario, and I think that some of the issues for Ontario voters to consider are similar to other provinces, such as the lack of affordable housing and the cracks in our health care and long-term care systems that have been highlighted by the pandemic.

What gives you the most hope right now? I have a lot of hope in the future generations continuing to be more informed, progressive and organized. With the help of organizations like the CCPA, continuing to support movements with analysis and solutions, I think that there will always be hope for a better world.

WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT

1907

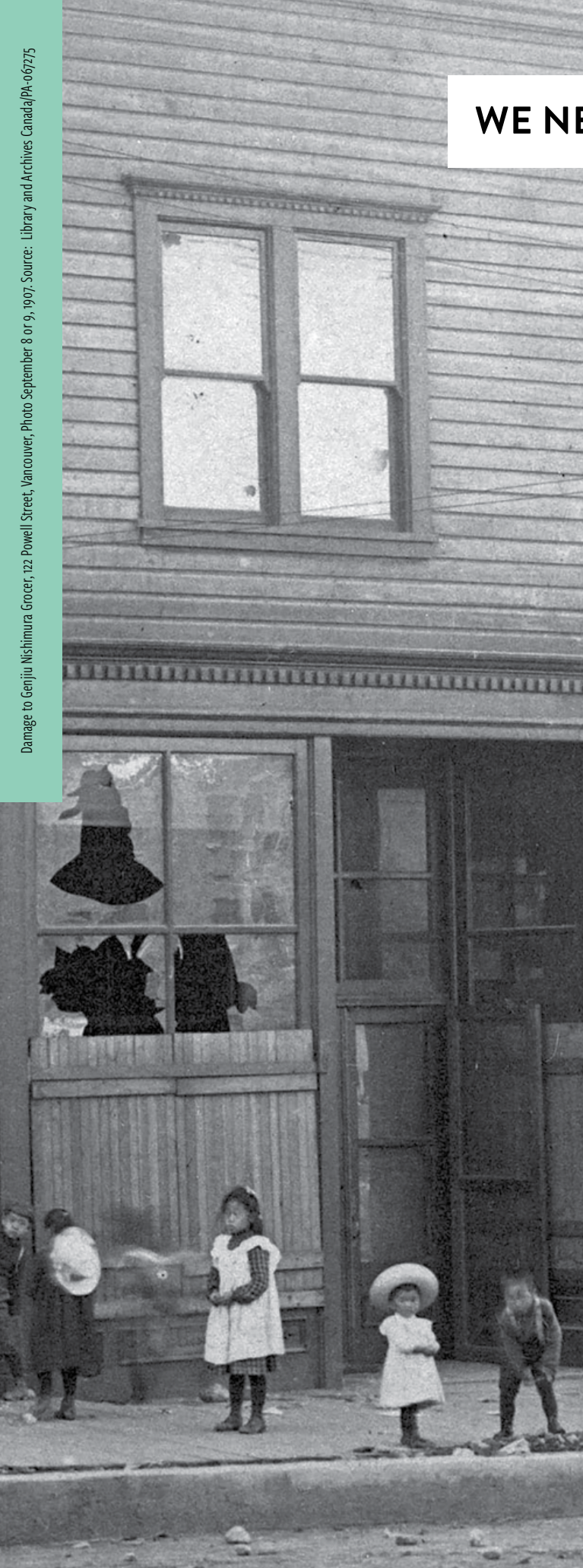
One hundred and fifteen years ago this September, downtown Vancouver was beset by thousands of protesters rallying against Asian immigration to Canada. Over the course of the event, moods shifted and the crowd turned violent. While the reasons for the gathering in Vancouver then and the ongoing “Freedom Convoy” today differ, there are similarities and lessons to be learned. It may seem an odd choice to study a painful chapter of Canada’s history in an already-too painful moment. However, historian Barrington Walker offers insight into its importance. “It’s not about just digging up unpleasant stories about Canada; it’s about challenging a certain notion of our historical innocence.”

WRITTEN BY RÓISÍN WEST & LAYOUT BY KATIE SHEEDY

The riots

The 1907 riots did not occur in a vacuum. They were the result of years of building tension exacerbated by an economic downturn that year. After years of financial boom, the global demand for British Columbia’s resources slowed and unemployment reached record-high levels. “Workers and politicians were looking for someone to blame,” explains historian Julie Gilmour, “And ‘cheap [Asian] labour’ had become a regular target.”

In August 1907, the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council founded the Vancouver Asiatic Exclusion League (AEL), with the city’s mayor, Alexander Bethune and several city councillors as founding members. The Vancouver AEL would join a patchwork of Asiatic Exclusion Leagues along the West Coast, working closely with the Seattle AEL.



The Vancouver riots began on the evening of September 7 outside of a special city hall meeting that Alderman Stewart had requested to deal “with reclusion of [Asians].” Ahead of the meeting, the Vancouver AEL organized a parade to the meeting and a rally outside. Thousands of people turned out, of which only a portion could fit in the standing-room-only audience in chambers. Outside, the overflow supporters lit bonfires and held signs calling for “a White Canada for us.”

During the official meeting, the rally had a “carnival-like atmosphere.” Accounts of what happened next are murky. Official records point to American A.E. Fowler, the secretary of the Anti-Japanese and Korean League of Seattle, inciting violence. After finishing his official remarks inside, Fowler addressed the rally. Following this, the crowd began to march into Chinatown, where the violence and destruction began.

While official history remembers the riots as being a series of violent acts that occurred between September 7 and 9, William Lyon Mackenzie King would report that Japanese residents felt under threat for a period of two weeks following the initial attacks.

The reaction

British and Canadian leaders were upset by the Vancouver riots, not for the overt racism on display but because they demonstrated “an embarrassing breakdown in civility,” an embarrassment for Canadians made “all the keener due to the fact that these events had an international audience and might have serious [international] consequences.” The violence threatened important agreements between Canada, Britain and Japan. The fact that the official response was focused on restoring reputation and maintaining lucrative agreements is made most obvious by the discrepancy in care afforded to the two communities impacted by the riot. While Japan was a top priority, Canada’s relationship with China was considered far less valuable. As a result, when Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier called the governor general on September 9 to discuss how to respond to the violence, “neither [Laurier] nor the governor general mentioned at all the approximately 3,500 Chinese residents of Vancouver who had been victims of the riots.”

William Lyon Mackenzie King was assigned to lead the commissions to investigate the extent of the damage caused by the riot. King wanted to understand what factors had led to the violence. In his July 1908 report, he concluded, “uncontrolled immigration from Japan to B.C. was the cause of the rioting,” noting, “the residents of Vancouver should have experienced some concern” about increased immigration from Japan, China and India.

An additional official cause was identified for the violence. Canadian and British officials named American instigators as playing a pivotal role in inciting violence.

Woan-Jen Wang’s comparative study of Asian-language newspapers with English newspapers found that the riots were covered very differently in Chinese- and Japanese-language newspapers. “Chinese newspapers, unlike local English newspapers, reported the long history of local anti-Asian organizing, refusing to assign [cause solely] to the agitation of Americans and the Asiatic Exclusion League.” Wang notes that the hostility that led up to the 1907 riots did not dissipate with them but led to another small anti-Japanese riot in January 1908. More troublingly, it fuelled a series of anti-Asian legislation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE 1907 RIOTS AND A COMPLETE REFERENCE LIST, PLEASE VISIT [MONITORMAG.CA/CURRENT](https://monitormag.ca/current)

Lessons for today

While the inciting incidents that led to the protests in 1907 and 2022 were different, the two events share key characteristics.

THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

In 1907, the media played two critical roles: stoking anger and fear about immigrants while admonishing the mob violence for the political embarrassment it caused. In the media landscape surrounding the Ottawa Occupation, news has played a similar role. The continued downplaying of the risks of COVID-19 infections by mainstream reporting casts doubt on the need for public health measures. The riots received political attention because of the strategic importance of Japan to Britain at the time, and because Canadian and British officials were embarrassed by the overt lawlessness of the events. With regards to the Freedom Convoy, it was only after the bridges between the U.S. and Canada were occupied and Canadian officials moved to end the blockades that American media outlets took notice of the ongoing protests.

TOXIC POPULISM AND NATIONALISM

Both Patricia Roy and Barrington Walker revealed in their research the centrality of nationalistic imagery to the protest movements of 1907. To Walker, a “toxic populism” was critical to mobilizing supporters in Vancouver, a trend that he now sees re-emerging. The marchers in 1907 carried banners and signs that would not have been out of place at the Freedom Convoy protests this year. Many were strongly identified with the maple leaf and symbols of patriotism. Nationalism, it seems, offers easily repurposed, high-value signifiers like the Canadian flag that have warped and continue to warp into powerful signifiers for white nationalism.

In both 1907 and 2022, economic insecurity has been weaponized to garner support for violent forms of populism. While the 2022 protests did direct anger at elected officials, calls did not aim to increase supports for affected workers and close widening inequality gaps.

AN UNWILLINGNESS TO CONFRONT WHITE SUPREMACY

This final takeaway is a recognition that 115 years have passed since the Vancouver race riots. We have learned and grown as a nation in that time. While it would have been a tall order to suggest that King and his contemporaries confront white supremacy, that’s less the case today. In fact, now it is imperative. That includes acknowledging that, while the Freedom Convoy protests may have included international actors, it was a homegrown movement. We gain nothing from comforting ourselves with tales of foreign influence.

The longer we give space to white supremacy and oxygen to ideas rooted in hatred and fear of others, the longer we permit violence and create unsafe situations for historically marginalized communities. The Occupation of Ottawa shouldn’t make us angry because people laughed at Canada. It should make us angry that racialized, queer and disabled people weren’t safe to leave their homes for a month. It should make us angry that when a certain class of white people get upset in this country, they can lash out without consequence. We had an established white supremacy problem before the first brick went through a window in 1907, and we have one now. Changing immigration policy then didn’t solve it, and eliminating mask mandates now won’t end it. Until we actually confront the root and dismantle systems that enable white supremacy, we are ensuring future violence against the most marginalized members of our communities.

SCOTT DEJONG

The playful undertones of radicalization

A WEEK INTO THE Freedom Convoy, a new symbol for the occupation graced social media: a bouncy castle. The children’s play feature, at first, seems off-kilter for a movement whose arrival in Ottawa began with urinating on the National War Memorial and the occasional Nazi flag sightings at the rallies. The bouncy castle appeared a little more playful than these other symbols, but I argue that play is a critical part of the alt-right’s success in Canada. Whether it’s gaming algorithms, ironically posting arrest warrants or organizing a party on the occupied streets in front of Parliament, play is central to these movements.

There are many ways to explore this movement and the communities within it, but play is a unique entry point. It can be tempting to blame social media platforms and the algorithms—the computer code behind social media platforms—as the driving force behind the spread of radical ideas and communities. However, this ignores how online communities and the users in these spaces *play* with the system and with each other, as a way to build community and spread ideas.

To explore how play functions within right-wing extremist spaces online, I designed a game. Not the kind you might play with your grandparents during the holidays, but a simulation-style research tool meant to explore how information spreads through social media to form a movement and radicalize users. Titled *Lizards and Lies*, the board game is a research project that aims to translate media theory into playable research. It demonstrates how information travels through social media, where communities form around content, to eventually help create larger radical movements.

Using game design and play experiences challenges the most common approaches to studying these spaces in order to ask new questions and reveal new insights. From my observations of these communities, I recognize how integral play is, and, therefore, necessary to analyze. *Lizards and Lies* is a game-based method for starting this work. In gaming out these spaces we can start to understand the playful undertones to modern radicalization.

Not your family game night

When talking about play, I am talking about behaviour: this can include how we negotiate these rule systems, how we interact with others, and how we manipulate our environment. When you boil it down, games are

just a system of rules and objectives that players agree to abide by. Social media are also systems, made up of algorithms and code which set the boundaries and objectives for participation. In many ways, social media can be thought of as a game, with the rules being codes of conduct and objectives including likes, follows, and retweets.

Play and games aren’t necessarily light and fluffy topics—they can be quite serious. In the case of right-wing extremism, playfulness can lead to radical and dangerous outcomes. Take for example QAnon: this conspiracy theory is committed to exposing an imagined global cabal and the purported pedophile rings of the elite (among other things). Deeply connected to the January 6 Capitol riots of 2021, QAnon uses puzzles to engage users and slowly radicalize them around its conspiracies. Communities formed around cryptic “Q-drops,” where the radicalization of users focused on *finding* the clues and piecing them together, rather than having a social media algorithm reveal it for them.¹ For QAnon, play motivates engagement and conspiracy is the game—and the result is communities primed for ideological radicalization.

So what does this have to do with the Freedom Convoy and, more broadly, radicalization? Just like in QAnon, conspiracy theories were part of the Freedom Convoy movement, as were other playful practices. Take the inflatable, rainbow-coloured castle—a powerful visual which brought playground innocence to the movement. Families gathered, children bounced and a community was formed. The symbolism of children’s play lowered people’s guard around the movement and its ideology. In other words, play served as a participatory glue, a community-building act that connected people in what could have felt like a serious or tense space.

But how do we study play? One approach is to recreate the of the play in order to observe and record the behaviours.

Gaming radicalization

Lizards and Lies models the phenomenon of “participatory glue” through a playable game. Its design aims to replicate the conditions within which right-wing radicalization occurs: including the networks of our media system, both the people and systems which form the messy data web of our online world. For the game,

I replicated the main actors, human and non-human, that play central roles in right-wing online spaces. The roles that the game included were Fact-Checkers, Conspiracy Theorists, Meme Makers (content creators), Edgelords (provocateurs), Digital Literacy Educators and Content Recommendation Algorithms.

From playing *Lizards and Lies*, one thing was clear: our social media systems, and the movements within them, form an ecosystem. Each of the characters in the game influences one another. We can't lay the blame for right-wing radicalization solely on one character.

The game was a helpful tool for seeing just how dynamic and interconnected people and technology are in social media spaces. It urges us to consider how individuals contribute to radicalization within these spaces. This is not to say that technology isn't at fault. But blaming a single component, like algorithms, will never succeed in addressing the issue of radicalization.

Playing the algorithm

Lizards and Lies was invaluable for better understanding the role of the algorithm in this larger context. When playing the game, one player acts as the content recommendation algorithms, a position which attempts to recreate the role that content recommendation systems play in social media spaces. In her testimony to the Senate commerce committee, Meta whistleblower Frances Haugen revealed that Facebook's newsfeed, for a time, prioritized angry and other emotional reactions over likes. But when playing *Lizards and Lies*, the capacity for the algorithm to intentionally shape a player's feed was quite limited. As much as we might want to say that algorithms deliberately inspire hatred, algorithms are much more *reactive* than proactive.² So how do algorithms promote ideology, intentionally or otherwise? And what forces determine what a user sees?

Blaming a single component, like algorithms, will never succeed in addressing the issue of radicalization.

In our game play, one thing became clear. An algorithm's goal is to provide and bolster content. The type of content doesn't matter and the ideology behind it is not a concern. The algorithm focuses on results: if X community will engage with Y content, it will post Y in X's feed. These decisions are based on the users—us. We choose what to post, share, click on and engage with. When playing as an algorithm, the logical line of play was to always put content where users supporting it already existed. It wasn't trying to “radicalize” a random base of users, but let those already in place do the heavy lifting of creating, sharing, and engaging with content.

Games and play as a lasting approach

How do games and play give us insights on misleading content and radicalization in Canada? They ask us to be flexible in our understanding of the people and systems involved. Games help test how deeply interconnected the user bases and community practices that slowly push people to radical ideologies are. They help us interpret these processes and point to the role of people in spreading content.

When we talk about radicalization, the first step in the process is

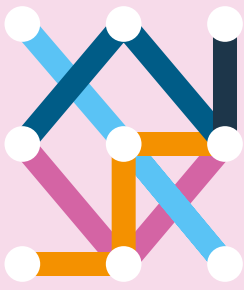
getting people to engage with their communities. The Freedom Convoy did this through playful visuals, like the bouncy castle, easily agreeable concepts like “freedom” and tapping into widespread pandemic fatigue. Relatable visuals and languages are some of the ways people are playing with one another and building support for their message.

These movements are hard to understand. They are dynamic and contain visible and invisible aspects. By using games, we can open up insights into radicalization behaviours and actions of different actors within these groups. By taking a lens of play, we can interrogate them from a new angle. By connecting play to radicalization, we can see how the now-removed rainbow husk of a bouncy castle helped disarm some Canadians to the ideas held by a group of occupiers that included far-right organizers and recognized hate groups.

If we want to understand the why's of these movements, we need to comprehend the mindsets, behaviours and ideologies that drive engagement. Play and games offer an alternative way into these spaces. They refract the issue to expose new directions of thought. While I continue to ask, “How are Canadians playing with information?” I encourage you to reflect on yourself to ask, “How am I playing with information?” **M**

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2. MERRILL, J., & OREMUS, W. (2021, OCTOBER 26). FIVE POINTS FOR ANGER, ONE FOR A 'LIKE': HOW FACEBOOK'S FORMULA FOSTERED RAGE AND MISINFORMATION. *WASHINGTON POST*. [HTTPS://WWW.WASHINGTONPOST.COM/TECHNOLOGY/2021/10/26/FACEBOOK-ANGRY-EMOJI-ALGORITHM/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2021/10/26/facebook-angry-emoji-algorithm/)



Index

Drivers of Inequality/ Toxic populism

2: the percentage of total wealth held by the bottom 50% of the global population. On average, the poorest half owns US\$4,100 while the top 10% own US\$771,300. The poorest 50% of the world population represents 2.5 billion adults, while the top 10% represents 517 million adults.¹

76: the percentage of total wealth held by the richest 10% of the global population.²

5.8: the percentage of total wealth held by the bottom 50% of the Canadian population. The poorest half earns an average of \$20,440 while the richest 10% earns an average of \$266,950.³

57.7: the percentage of total wealth held by the top 10% of the Canadian population.⁴

13: the ratio between the incomes of the top 10%

and the bottom 50% of the Canadian population.⁵

2: the number of times the world's 10 richest men have increased their wealth during the pandemic.⁶

189: the percentage by which the average income of the top 0.01% of the Canadian population increased between 1982 and 2018. For the top 1% as a whole, average market incomes doubled during this period.⁷

8.4: the percentage by which the average wealth of each adult within the top 1% of the Canadian population increased annually from 2010 to 2019, after adjusting for inflation. Meanwhile, the average wealth of the other 99% of Canadians increased by 3% every year. The bottom 50% of the population saw a 1.7% annual increase in average wealth.⁸

191: the number of times the earnings of Canada's 100 highest-paid CEOs was greater than the average worker's wage in Canada in 2020. These top CEOs from the S&P/TSX Composite were paid an average of \$10.9 million, logging 2020 as their second best year ever for compensation.⁹

15: the number of new billionaires minted in Canada in the first 20 months of the pandemic alone.¹⁰

\$111 billion: the amount by which the fortunes of Canada's 59 billionaires increased between March 2020 and January 2022, an amount roughly equal to that spent by the Canadian government on worker support programs CERB and CRB (\$109 billion).¹¹

\$6.25 trillion: the amount that billionaire wealth has surged internationally since the pandemic began. Government interventions helped raise stock prices, and in the absence of progressive taxation policy, billionaire wealth rose more during the pandemic than it has in the last 14 years.¹²

\$500 million: the amount of funding invested in the Toronto-based right-wing video streaming service, Rumble, in its 2021 investment round.¹³

159.9 million: the number of visits that Rumble received in February 2022, a 3.09% increase over January 2022, and a notable increase over the 81 million visits it received in April 2021, ahead of its funding round.¹⁴

14: percentage of Rumble traffic that came from people clicking on links posted on Facebook. The next most popular social media site to drive traffic to Rumble was Twitter, at 6.4%. Youtube accounted for only 4.5%, while Rebel

News, the right-wing media channel founded by Ezra Levant, only drove .5% of Rumble's traffic, despite having a channel on the site where they post daily.¹⁵

71: the number of terrorist incidents in Canada between 1960 and 2015 that right-wing extremists promoting hate speech have been linked to.¹⁶

1,164: the number of COVID-19 related racist incidents reported through the Fight COVID Racism's online system, created by the Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter (CCNCTO). In their report on the rise of pandemic-related racism, CCNCTO, Project 1907 and Eliminate Hate reported a 47% increase in the number of reports received in 2021 over 2020.¹⁷

3: the number of common viewpoints that researchers Bessma Momani and Ryan Deschamps identified in their analysis of right-wing extremist social media platforms. While the researchers recognized "considerable variance among the individuals regarding their collection of ideological positions," they shared "perspectives on leftist violence (particularly Antifa), anti-immigration sentiment, and media corruption."¹⁸

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WE KEEP US SAFE



The Ottawa Occupation, which sparked a larger international “Freedom Convoy” movement, began when trucks rolled into the city’s core on January 28, 2022. For 26 days, residents and businesses in Ottawa’s downtown, Centretown and Vanier neighbourhoods experienced violence, threats, harassment and noise pollution. One in five Ottawa residents reported being significantly impacted by the occupation. Businesses throughout the impacted area had to close due to safety concerns for upwards of three weeks. In total, one out of every two Ottawa residents reported being impacted in some way by the occupation.

On February 2, 2022, then-Police Chief Peter Sloly told the media, “the more this demonstration continues, the more the risk to public safety increases...there may not be a policing solution to this demonstration.” By that point, the Ottawa Police Service had received support and officers from police forces across Ontario, as well as the Ontario Provincial Police and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Despite a level of policing that cost an estimated \$1M per day, the increased presence of police did not keep residents safe. Instead, it was the action of community members that created safety during this unprecedented time.

OCCUPATION TIMELINE

- JAN 14** • Organizers Tamara Lich and B.J. Dichter launch a GoFundMe fundraiser for “Freedom Convoy 2022.”
- JAN 23** • Truckers from B.C. begin to drive East to Ottawa, as the first members of the Freedom Convoy. Over the following week, the convoy drives across Canada, garnering media attention.
- JAN 28** • Hundreds of trucks roll into downtown Ottawa, blocking off streets near Parliament Hill.
- JAN 29** • About 3,000 trucks and 15,000+ protesters fill the streets of downtown Ottawa. Protesters dance on the National War Memorial, hang flags and anti-vaccine signs on the Terry Fox statue and display symbols including swastikas and Confederate flags.
- FEB 4** • A class-action lawsuit is filed against the protest organizers. GoFundMe shuts down the Freedom Convoy campaign, which had raised more than \$10 million.
- FEB 6** • Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson declares a state of emergency.
- FEB 11** • Ontario Premier Doug Ford declares a state of emergency in Ontario.
- FEB 14** • Prime Minister Justin Trudeau invokes the *Emergencies Act* for the first time in Canadian history.
- FEB 15** • Ottawa police Chief Peter Sloly resigns and Steve Bell steps in as the interim chief.
- FEB 18** • Police engage in a massive operation to clear the streets of downtown Ottawa. Cement barriers are erected and checkpoints are set up throughout the city.
- FEB 20** • Ottawa authorities remove much of the protesters and vehicles downtown.
- FEB 21** • Ottawa police reduces the size of the “secured area” in downtown Ottawa, announcing that all checkpoints around ByWard Market have been removed.
- FEB 22** • The last illegal blockades are removed.

HERE’S HOW OUR COMMUNITY STOOD UP TO THE OCCUPATION:

CENTRETOWN HELPERS DISCORD

This online community functioned as a series of message boards organized by topic. At its peak, it hosted **600** residents. Through the Discord, multiple projects were organized including wage relief and Community Cooks.

SAFETY WALKS OTTAWA

Started on February 1, Safety Walks Ottawa vetted **50** volunteers to accompany residents on their daily outings during the occupation. Volunteers were available to walk to grocery stores, medical appointments and take people to and from work in the red zone throughout the occupation, at all hours.

CENTRETOWN WORKER RELIEF FUND

The fund raised and distributed over **\$26,000** to workers affected by business closures.

OTTAWA COMMUNITY COOKS

The cooking project, created by *Monitor* Editor Ro West, fed residents impacted by the convoy, including those who could not safely leave their homes and workers who had lost wages. A small team prepared and delivered over **170** meals to residents throughout the occupation and will continue to provide free, hot meals every Sunday until the pandemic ends. Find weekly menus on Instagram at @OttawaCommunityCooks.

OTTAWA CONVOY REPORTS

This Instagram-based community resource shared information related to the Occupation in real time. The account recorded **50+** incidents of racism, **60+** incidents of harassment of retail and hospitality workers, and 60+ video reports from the “red zone.”

SUPPORT LINE

Another Discord project, this phone line was set up to connect residents with the Safety Walks and Community Cooks programs. The organizers are considering how to sustain this project now that the occupation has ended.

[FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT MONITORMAG.CA/CURRENT](https://www.monitormag.ca/current)

STEPHANIE FUNG, ANNA LIU, KARINE NG, AND CHRIS RAMSAROOP

Uprooting the racism in our ranks

FROM OUR EARLIEST childhood memories, each of us can recall times when we endured racial taunts, harassment and, in some instances, overt racial violence. Whether it was from seemingly benign children’s rhymes or the proverbial “Go back to where you come from,” our lives have been, and continue to be, etched with the idea that we are perpetually foreign.

As we grew older, we saw that the overt racism we faced went beyond the surface. We came head-to-head with multiple layers of systemic and institutional racism, which reinforced the idea that we did not belong. At our dinner tables, our parents whispered anger and resentment for being told their English was not good enough to be hired, or for being denied promotions or subjected to racial taunts in the workplace. Worse still, our parents who became sick or injured saw their lives spiral further into poverty. We saw first hand how the so-called Canadian dream was, in fact, a series of nightmares for our communities.

Racism and the pandemic

Not much has changed since our childhoods—in fact, it seems to have become worse. Recently, Statistics Canada released data on police-reported hate crimes in Canada. The findings show that “Between 2019 and 2020, the number of police-reported crimes motivated by hatred of a race or ethnicity increased 80%.” Additionally, crowdsourced data collected from over 43,000 Canadians revealed that, since the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada, 30% of Chinese, 27% of Korean and 19% of Southeast Asian participants felt there was an increase in the frequency of harassment or attacks based on race, ethnicity or skin colour as a result of COVID-19.

The surge in anti-Asian racism continued upwards in 2021, as revealed by new findings published in March 2022 by the Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter and Project 1907. Over the course of 2021, there was a 47% increase in racist incidents that were reported, compared to the preceding year. In particular, incidents involving South Asian and Southeast Asian people increased dramatically, by 318% and 121%, respectively. Women were involved in two-thirds of all cases with nearly 75% of reported incidents involving male and white offenders/perpetrators.

As a consequence, racialized people considered their neighbourhoods to be less safe during the pandemic.

Black, Indigenous and racialized people also experienced lower levels of confidence in the police and higher levels of discrimination.

Hate crimes only scratch the surface of the multiple forms of racism that racialized communities have endured during the pandemic. Our experiences were overlooked by many with general statements like “We’re all in this together,” when the exact opposite occurred. A study conducted by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives reveals that over the period of July 2020 to June 2021, 28% of Indigenous households and 31% of racialized households experienced economic insecurity on average, compared to 16% of white households. The report also states that “Racialized workers bore a disproportionate burden during the pandemic in two ways: they were more concentrated in industries that were most likely to suffer job losses from the pandemic and they were more concentrated in frontline occupations at high risk of infection.” As such, the pandemic merely illuminated and further exacerbated existing societal and systemic discrimination faced by racialized communities—especially racialized women, gender diverse and non-binary people.

ACLA’s role in fighting racism

As activists, we don’t simply sit down and give up; we fight back against racism and organize towards collective liberation. The Asian Canadian Labour Alliance (ACLA) was founded in 2000, inspired by the work of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) and the birth of the Asian Pacific American Labour Alliance (APALA). Built on a long history of Asian organizing in Canada’s labour movement, ACLA’s role is multifaceted organizing in the house of labour and in the community to build power and space amongst Asian working-class communities in solidarity with other communities. ACLA has two chapters: one in British Columbia and another in Ontario, with Asian activists across Canada contributing to building a narrative of inclusiveness. During the pandemic, ACLA activists organized to counter negative stereotyping and perceptions of Asian working-class communities. Through webinars, community actions and organizing, ACLA fought back against the mythologies that Asian communities are docile, silent, apolitical disease spreaders.

After the massacre of six Asian women in Atlanta in March 2021, ACLA worked with community partners to organize solidarity rallies attended by thousands in Toronto and Vancouver to send a strong message against racism and white supremacy. Knowing in-person community meetings were impossible, ACLA organized a series of online events to counter racist ideology. Virtual organizing was critical during the pandemic to break the isolation and anxiety that many people felt. Those who attended our events spoke freely of the fear they faced being Asian during the pandemic.

ACLA's organizing was also premised on building solidarity with other communities in struggle. We wanted to disrupt the model minority myth by examining anti-Asian racism in the context of anti-Black racism and the struggles of Indigenous communities. We are conscious that in times of crisis, it is easy to look internally and turn towards the same systems of oppression. The violence inflicted against us cannot be resolved by targeting and criminalizing other racialized communities. Our efforts must not be based on competition amongst one another, but instead we must challenge existing power frameworks that divide working-class communities. Our organizing is premised on dismantling systems of oppression rather than empowering them.

Racism did not begin nor will it end with this pandemic.

As many mainstream commentators attempt to historicize current forms of injustices, we want to connect it to the multiple deep-seated forms of racism that have particularly impacted Asian Canadians, who are the scapegoats of this pandemic and continue to be seen as the perpetual foreign other. From its inception, the Canadian settler state has been built on violence against Indigenous, Black and racialized communities. The question arises: how do we counter

the existing mainstream narrative of Canada to rupture the myth and under-telling of the real history of violence and exclusion that has left out many of our voices?

Whose histories?

As marginalized settlers, knowing our own histories is necessary to navigate the journey towards justice and liberation. History is often presented to us as an official and immutable account—one that is rarely written by our own ancestors. That history will not give us power. Knowing our own truth is powerful in that it grounds us historically and orients us in the right direction to further the struggle, while honouring and building upon past endeavours.⁸

The exclusion of racial minorities riddles the history of Canada's labour movement. Those who fought to obtain positions within labour not only struggled for anti-racism initiatives but for improvements for all workers. A prime example is the case of South Asian activists in British Columbia during the early to mid-20th century, who were connected to the Ghadar movement.⁹ Despite facing discrimination and barriers to participate in the labour movement, their alliance with the B.C. left was enriching, adding an international outlook that was also anti-imperial and anti-capitalist. Combined with strong political organizing and an ethos of community care, they successfully mobilized and contributed greatly to the improvement of sawmill and farm workers. Many of the latter group were women. It can be argued that a living legacy

Racism did not
begin nor will
it end with
this pandemic.

has since opened the door for other marginalized settlers to participate in B.C.'s labour movement—one that must now confront racism as part of its mandate.

Beyond the representation rainbow and EDI (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion)¹⁰

Authentic diversity requires those in positions of power to not only reflect diverse characteristics on a superficial level, but that they actually *represent* marginalized communities by being in community and relationship with them. Meaningful equity demands that the leadership reflect its base: be it membership, workforce or society at large. True inclusion welcomes marginalized folks to show up as their full selves with the ability to express their cultural and spiritual practices. Real justice means those in power also espouse and enact anti-oppressive beliefs and not simply be tokens upholding white supremacy values and culture.

Liberation for any settlers on largely stolen and unsundered lands will always be premised on the liberation of Indigenous peoples. Even though our liberation is bound together, it would be disingenuous to elide or make light of the differences, nuanced or stark, between and within Indigenous nations, Black peoples, and settlers of colour.¹¹

Honest EDI work is fundamentally political. It behooves us to engage collectively in political processes in order to redistribute power and resources. The evaluation of the efficacy of EDI work can be simple: Did it result in actual policy changes? Did it allow more racialized people to show up in their full identities? If not, how broadly and deeply engaged are those who stand to benefit from such changes? If the engagement increased and sustained collective agency, as well as transparency, accountability, and participation in institutional processes, then EDI work will have achieved something worthwhile.

Otherwise, grassroots members who defer to experts (i.e. professional consultants) to do the work will never see it done, for this work is almost always paid for by institutions, whose impulse is to conserve the neoliberal interest to keep individuals isolated with limited power and agency to effect systemic change. Even long-established, systemically entrenched EDI tools like employment equity plans fail when they are implemented in this same neoliberal interest and as an end instead of a tool. These initiatives and tools alone do not make a workplace anti-racist.

Role of unions, the Freedom Convoy and extremism

From a labour perspective, unions play a crucial role in educating the rank-and-file to create a more progressive culture. After all, one can experience discrimination from the boss as much as from one's co-workers. Unions can also bargain for anti-racism to be codified in collective agreements and translated into policies and procedures that in turn, can have real impacts in practices. Advocacy (e.g. lobbying at the governmental level), mobilization (e.g. campaigning in conjunction with labour partners) and organizing (e.g. building and maintaining relationships between the rank-and-file) are tools to help effect social and political change.

One area we want to focus on is the rise of right-wing extremism in the labour movement. The Freedom Convoy confirmed existing suspicions many of us had held about members of our own house of labour. Leaked financial records revealed many elected officials, staff and rank-and-file members as contributors to the convoy. Public social media posts also illustrate the xenophobic and racist beliefs held by some union members with power.

However, we cannot simply look at these actions as the beliefs of a few individuals. The entire labour movement must confront the role of white supremacy embedded in the institution of the labour movement. We have a central role in combatting the rise of the far right and stamping it out once and for all. It is necessary to confront imperialism, fascism, and white supremacy head on. We need an open dialogue in the house of labour that requires more than press releases or statements from elected officials. It requires resources dedicated to tough conversations with members about the role that white supremacy has played in dividing workers right from the inception of the labour movement.

Extremism is playing off the fears of everyday working-class people both regarding economic uncertainty and a fabricated sense of loss of identity and freedoms. Much reflection is needed to examine our own spaces to see how right-wing extremism has entrenched itself in the various structures of the labour movement. We are disheartened that these narrow views have overshadowed the critical discussions about racial justice that captured

national and international focus, stemming from the rise in anti-Asian racism, the Black Lives Matter movement and the horrors of residential schools. This consciousness-raising amongst the general public about the role of Canada as a state, and our need to take responsibility for state past actions resulting in today's exclusionary policies, have been pushed aside. Instead, we are having reactionary conversations regarding individual freedoms and white fragility rather than societal responsibilities.

Fighting for racial justice might feel like an emotional roller-coaster. We win and we lose, often feeling like we moved one step forward, but took two steps back. However, we see many signs of hope, led by workers impacted most by the pandemic. Women, Indigenous and racialized workers are standing up and fighting back. Workers at Amazon, Starbucks, campus workers, gig workers and precarious workers in multiracial workplaces are organizing, countering the growth of racism by working collectively to improve their lives and working conditions. These struggles are a beacon of light during some very tough and difficult times.

As we continue to organize, we realize this struggle is not just within our lifetime. It continues with what our elders have instilled upon us so we can build on the struggle and in turn share the same lessons we have learned with future generations. It is essential that our children and those coming after us are equipped with the tools—both historical memory of what occurred in the past and the struggles that are happening today—so that we are not caught in a vicious cycle of repeating the mistakes of the past. If we are to confront fascism, white supremacy and the rise of the far-right, then we have to learn what the elders have taught us and modify and apply the lessons from the past to current and future struggles. **M**

To learn more about the Asian Canadian Labour Alliance, please visit www.aclaontario.ca or Facebook @AsianCanadianLabourAlliance.

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ERIN GEE

Hate on display: How two years online helped shape a full-scale occupation

When pandemic bubbles burst

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC has both given and taken away so much from all of us. For some, the pandemic has literally taken away jobs and loved ones. But for others—depending on your view—it has given the opportunity to tighten social circles, deepen relationships and identify the people whom we really want to spend time with.

The downside of this, of course, is that it also makes our worlds smaller, both in person and online.

For the past two years, I've been able to pick and choose the people, discussions and values I surround myself with—the ones that give me energy and joy when there has been so little to go around. These people and discussions don't exist in a vacuum, but every conversation was entered in good faith, debates were had, perspectives clarified and, ultimately, we were able to part ways—or end a FaceTime—feeling as though we had been intellectually stimulated in some way or another.

The downside of two years of this sort of social engagement is that we can end up forgetting what it is to exist outside of that bubble, to engage with those who may not be coming to a discussion in good faith, regardless of their political or personal beliefs. On the *Bad + Bitchy Podcast* we talk about people, generally on the right and far-right of the political spectrum, who don't engage in good faith conversations online and on TV—but still, we've experienced little of that during the pandemic.

At least, until recently.

On a recent trip to the United States, I found myself in a heated

exchange with a friend whose political views are *different* from mine on the subject of Joe Rogan and cancel culture. (We won't get into my views here, dear reader, so I'll let you fill in that blank.) I can debate and have a tension-filled conversation about many topics—I have a podcast where I hone my arguments regularly—and I knew where I could make points and ask questions. However, that was never going to be the case. Instead, online culture has bled into interpersonal interactions and I was told I wasn't a “free thinker” (I asked what the definition of that was, with no response). I was then aggressively questioned about what reality I live in when I said that Joe Rogan, with his Spotify deal worth at least \$200 million, wasn't, in fact, cancelled.

Bubbling up: Hate coalesces in Ottawa

This is one of the negative effects of the pandemic: too much time for people to spend alone in their homes being fed unchecked extreme political views, pushing people further into their political corners and developing herd mentality.

We saw the manifestation of this during the occupation: the Venn diagram of white supremacists, anti-vaxxers, accelerationists and anti-COVID-19 mandate protesters who found each other online and took to the streets of downtown Ottawa to have their voices heard.

With more people spending time at home and, by consequence, online during the pandemic, white supremacist groups were able to leverage this sudden increase

in isolation (both physical and social) and loneliness to benefit themselves. In the early days of the pandemic and during subsequent lockdowns, people were stuck in their homes with little else to do but be online. It was only natural: we wanted the news, we wanted answers, the world felt scary and we experienced a loss of control. So we found solace and security where we could.

Unfortunately, in our isolated states, many of us needed and wanted to feel safe as the world outside our doors spiralled in unfamiliar ways. So we turned toward things that made us feel secure: like-minded people online. The problem, of course, is that the confirmation bias in these settings and digital algorithms are such that they continue feeding consumers more intensifying and radicalizing content. So, if someone right-leaning went online to find information about the pandemic, they could be fed progressively more radical content until they were, say, ingesting ivermectin or filming themselves harassing and assaulting people for following public health guidance—and the next thing you know, they're watching videos on the Great Replacement, a white supremacist conspiracy theory.

Social media companies and other online spaces like to pretend that there are no real-world consequences to their platforms. The reality is that without them, the disparate individuals and groups who participated in the Ottawa Occupation and many other events before it, would likely never have found each other,

leaving them and their extremist views on the fringes, instead of camped out with bouncy castles down the street from my old apartment.

These online spaces have exacerbated herd mentality. Humans have always liked being around people who are similar to them. However, before the proliferation of the internet and social media, “people like us” was typically limited to the matching criteria of gender, race and class. But increasingly, we prioritize being surrounded by people who share the same political views, which explains how Randy Hillier, an Ontario Member of Provincial Parliament who’s earned a six-figure salary and pension for nearly 15 years, cavorting with and supporting individuals who make half that, at best.

In the leadup to the election of Donald Trump, and especially since, online herd mentality has led to toxic behaviours, such as the desire to “own the Libs” with quippy one-liners and bad faith arguments that cherry-pick and distort facts. Over the course of the pandemic, this acrimonious behaviour has transitioned offline, manifesting most violently as a marked increase in anti-Asian hate crime, with Vancouver being the new North American capital for these crimes.

Coupled with this increasingly important need to surround ourselves with like-minded people, this “own the Libs” mentality has drastically and negatively impacted our ability to engage in healthy conflict, as was the case on my recent trip. In addition to being aggressively questioned, another friend party to the incident quipped, “I didn’t know this would trigger you.” Trying to engage in a discussion where your thoughts are simultaneously being ignored and requested, while also being yelled over isn’t “triggering.” It’s antagonizing.

People are capable of well-intentioned discussions. However, they need to be given the space to explain themselves and be open to either being wrong or content with disagreement. Conflict is healthy, but unfortunately we are now quick to blame, take offence when none is meant and close ourselves off to the ideas

of others (despite being “free thinkers”). This is not only due to herd mentality, but also the increasingly fractured media ecosystem where one side is given a certain set of “facts” different from the other and arguably divorced from reality. If we cannot agree on whether the sky is blue—or if we are still living through a pandemic—we can say goodbye to healthy conflict and debate, both of which are integral to the furthering of democracy.

However, it’s worth pointing out that there are some topics where debate is undeserving as the subject matter too abhorrent to entertain, even as an intellectual exercise, namely the subjects of Nazis and white supremacy.

The surprise reveal of the past two years spent at home perfecting our sourdough starters, learning to make cocktails and knitting is that many people in our lives hold radical fringe views. Whether it’s posting COVID-19 conspiracy theories or racist rhetoric (e.g. anti-Asian sentiments, anti-Black sentiments during the summer of 2020), we’ve learned to either exorcise these people (and views) from our lives or tacitly agree to ignore. However, what the Ottawa Occupation showed us is that we all have limits, which for many of us were a combination of either aligning with a Nazi-supported movement, or not caring that they were aligned with a Nazi-supported movement.

Seeing friends and acquaintances support the occupation resulted in many Ottawans evaluating and ending relationships that had maybe outgrown their relevance or that they had previously ignored. The occupation of their neighbourhoods and support (tacit or outright) of Nazis, blatant white supremacists, and secessionists was too much. We now know who among our family, friends, colleagues, and neighbours supported the occupiers. This is a scary thought for any racialized person living in Ottawa, having to constantly question whether your hair stylist, massage therapist, or date supported the occupation and may openly or quietly believe that their whiteness trumps your humanity.

It’s these concerns that lead to racialized people having anxiety and other mental health issues. For white people who experienced psychological torture and violence during the occupation, they may continue to experience adverse mental health effects, but there is clear distinction between the experiences of white and non-white individuals when it comes to white supremacy, particularly as racialized people in my life were doxxed and had to leave their houses during the occupation. The fear and anxiety that white people felt over those four weeks is a sliver of what their racialized neighbours faced then and continue to face today.

The question is, where do we go from here? The Pandora’s box of white supremacy in Canada has been opened. How do we get the lid back on, and whose job is it to make sure it’s closed? **M**

The surprise reveal of two years spent at home...is that many people in our lives hold radical fringe views.

SHANE BURLEY

Breaker breaker

Lessons from the communities that blocked truck convoys

AFTER SEVERAL YEARS of far-right insurgencies in the United States—the Capitol riot on Jan. 6, 2021, and Trump’s return to public life—few expected Canada to be the location of the next great explosion of right-wing energy. And yet, this winter, people around the world watched as a series of protests and occupations—self-titled the “Freedom Convoy”—brought out long-haul truck drivers and others to ostensibly challenge the vaccine and COVID-19 mandates coming from the Canadian government. Despite being vaccinated at a rate exceeding 90%, some cross-border truck drivers were incensed at the vaccine requirements that the Trudeau administration had issued. This became a catch-all moment for anti-establishment right-wing activists to band together against Canada’s political consensus.

The protests were planned by figures well known on the Canadian far-right. They led to frightening incidents, like a giant spike in reported hate crimes and swastikas and Confederate flags appearing with some prominence. As trucks descended on Ottawa, and eventually other communities across Canada, counter-demonstrators also came together, outraged by the full-scale occupation of their communities taking place. While the Canadian government declaring a state of emergency has quelled many of these protests for the time being, the movement they started has spread around the world. Right-wing activists first took up the mantle in France, New Zealand and the United States.

Activists who want to protect their communities from far-right convoys can look to Canadian communities, who had a recent crash course in how to push back.

Occupying Ottawa

As the trucks headed into downtown Ottawa at the end of January, local organizer Dan Sawyer saw that these protesters were laying siege to people’s neighbourhoods. Thousands had joined the anti-vaccine protesters and the diesel fumes were overwhelming people’s homes, making them nearly unlivable. At the same time, the occupiers were doing things like jamming the 911 emergency lines with calls, rendering the services unusable.

“The combination of the vehicles and the fact that they were so dug in at their encampment downtown made it seem really overwhelming,” Sawyer said, noting that the ability of the far-right demonstrators to interfere was heightened by the trucks clogging up their

roads. The occupiers were themselves well-organized, creating a pathway to funnel in fuel and resources on a 24-hour timeline, essentially using a type of mutual aid to keep their protests going.

Community organizers looking to defend their city from a right-wing incursion were unprepared for a coordinated gathering of this size. But they soon launched mutual aid efforts of their own, helping people in the city who were unable to get normal resources. This included building on networks that had already existed and were exercised during the pandemic.

Sawyer’s group, the Punch Up Collective, began supporting these efforts, as well as the planning for a large demonstration against the occupation. There was a small rally on February 5, but this was just a lead up to the much larger march that happened on February 12, led by a series of community groups and public sector unions that coalesced into the new group Community Solidarity Ottawa (CSO).

“There was a really huge interest in doing something public, showing public opposition,” said Sam Hersh, an organizer with the municipal action group Horizon Ottawa, which joined the CSO coalition. “There was such a palpable air of anger and frustration in the city. There were people engaging in things like direct action that never would have happened.”

Many in town were scared to leave their homes, particularly given the reports of violence against marginalized people. “Strategically, the most important thing was to engage as many people as possible, so we chose a march route that would avoid the downtown occupation,” said James Hutt, an organizer with the Canadian Association of University Teachers who helped organize the mass march on February 12.

Together, CSO trained 50 marshals and prepared people for the mass demonstration, which drew a crowd of 4,000 participants, united by many of the same workers who were being impacted by the aggressive occupation. Unions were a key constituency, particularly given their resources. Instead of keeping messaging focused on vaccine mandates, they aimed to shift the conversation to real solutions for working-class Canadians, such as paid sick leave, a living minimum wage and career protection for truckers.

The momentum from the large demonstration helped the groups to mobilize a community blockade the next day. Participants organized autonomously to prevent more right-wing supporters from entering the

city and fortifying the occupation. “We had planned our blockade as a small affinity group comfortable with taking more direct action and the risks that comes with it,” Hutt said. “But to our surprise, residents were so fed up with the occupation and had been primed by the march, that affluent liberals with no organizing experience decided to do the same. We then decided to merge blockades with the one along the busier and more central road into town, setting up an additional blockade on the rear-end as well, effectively immobilizing the vehicles.”

Co-ordinating across three separate neighbourhoods, activists created barriers for supporters to actually enter the occupation area, artificially initiating a traffic jam that lasted hours. A caravan of right-wing convoy supporters calling themselves the “Blue Collar Convoy” was coming to bring resources to the central trucker convoy, so organizers needed to break that chain. They held the trucks back and only allowed the right-wing interlocutors to go if they gave up their signage, including any “hateful insignia” such as Confederate flags and fuel.

“The crowd wanted concessions from them,” Hersh said, noting that they wouldn’t allow the truckers to leave otherwise. Despite the convoy sending people in to provoke fights, local anti-racist activists had a team of de-escalators on the scene to help prevent violence. “It got to the point that there were a thousand people blocking this convoy,” Hersh added. “This was one of the most effective strategies and was an intervention that would have grown had the police not started arresting the convoy attendees.”

Organizers set up “red, yellow, and green” areas to designate which level of risk was likely to exist in each space, so protesters could make an informed decision on how they wanted to participate. “At the blockade, when we heard that fascists threatened to come attack

us, we held assemblies to inform people of the risk and to check with those they came with about their comfort levels,” Hutt explained.

While many in the city wanted police to simply remove the convoy, organizers with a more abolitionist perspective offered up counter-narratives, pointing to the alleged complicity the police showed with the right-wing demonstrators. Many police were seen taking photos with protesters and described them as peaceful and friendly.

This ended up being one of the clearest strategic lessons: You will have to protect your own community. Many Ottawans expected that the police would be the ones to keep them safe from the encroaching far-right, but when they didn’t, community activists had to come together to fill the void. After “the first 10 days it became really clear... the cops weren’t coming to save us,” Sawyer said. “The cops put on the best display for why they need to be defunded that we’ve ever seen.”

Expanding to the rest of Canada

As the Freedom Convoy movement started to expand out of Ottawa, it hit smaller cities like Halifax. When convoy enthusiasts first rallied in Halifax on February 5, they were met by counter-protesters immediately. A bigger right-wing rally was planned for February 12, and local activists wanted to have a more co-ordinated response, rather than “wing it.” They began reaching out beyond their networks to local political organizations and pulled together promotional materials for a quickly organized rally.

“I tried really hard to de-emphasize issues of vaccination/COVID-19 restrictions that were being used, in my mind, as cynical ‘wedge’ issues, and to emphasize opposing the convoy as a political vehicle of the far-right,” said Brad Fougere, a Halifax resident who typically organizes with the radical labour union the Industrial Workers of the World. He and his fellow organizers faced debates from many corners

about whether it would be better to simply ignore the far-right convoy supporters and deprive them of publicity. This ultimately had a negative effect on turnout.

“It really highlighted for me how unprepared we were locally,” Fougere said, adding that the hundred people they amassed still managed to show the convoy there was opposition, even if it wasn’t sizable enough to outnumber them. This is one of the key lessons they are taking away from the experience—and one they are offering to organizers in other cities now having to deal with the threat of a convoy occupation.

“Learn from what we did wrong: Start making plans now. Don’t wait and react,” Fougere said. “Push ‘anti-fascist’ organizations to do the work—wearing the label isn’t enough. Have up-to-the-minute, easily available updates during any events, in case people might be walking into a dangerous or heated situation. If possible, make plans to ensure that far-right propagandists are kept from getting a platform.”

In Winnipeg, the trucker protests showed up later and a response was started by the “pop-up” group Defend Winnipeg, which organized mutual aid and counter-demonstrations. When the convoy came in they had a similar effect on the city, despite being fewer in numbers. They used things like semi-trucks and tractors to block roads and make them appear larger than they were numerically. The counter-demonstration on February 12—the same day as those in Ottawa—brought together hundreds in a show of opposition, though they chose to keep a little distance from the truck occupation rather than directly confront them.

“There were chants and there were a couple of speeches, but there was also a lot of crowd autonomy,” said James Walt, a local police abolitionist organizer who was at the demonstration. “It was a really important event, so people could show up in a space that was close but not necessarily clashing with it.”

Like in Ottawa, Winnipeg protesters found that if they had been prepared in advance, they would have been in a better position. “These things really have to be anticipated and organized ahead of time,” Walt said, pointing out that you need labour, religious groups, feminist groups, 2SLGBTQQA+ organizations and others to come together in a common front against the far-right. “Just because they are gone now, we can’t just step back and assume that this kind of thing won’t happen again.” They also offered an abolitionist perspective, since many people simply wanted more police to intervene in the protests. This was despite the fact that the police had been far more hands-off with the far-right protesters compared to the left-wing and Indigenous counter-demonstrators (two of whom were arrested for what protesters allege was briefly standing in front of a truck).

Other cities around Canada have followed suit. In Kingston, Ont., the convoy was reportedly “thwarted” by protesters and health-care workers who, after converging on city hall, blockaded the road, arm in arm, to stop the convoy from getting in. In Vancouver, the convoy was met immediately by counter-demonstrators who wanted to let protestors know they were “not welcome” and that Vancouver residents “support our health-care workers.” This included road blockades to stop the incoming convoy and demonstrations at the regional hospital.

As these convoys build up steam in the U.S., the experiences of those over the border in Canada show that community preparedness is important before a crisis explodes—both in responding to the far-right and to a wide range of other issues.

In Ottawa, the CSO coalition is now continuing their work, having since organized a march to demand continued COVID-19 protections, accountability from government officials who they say allowed the

occupation, and opposition to white supremacy and all forms of oppression. “[This has] showed people the real importance of direct action,” Hersh said. “Not only reacting when this sort of thing is happening, but also the longer-term thing of building an anti-fascist movement.”

The lessons from the blockades that prevented the far-right from entering Canadian cities are particularly useful because, once they arrive, it’s difficult to get them to leave. Strategically, organizers also saw that planning routes around the specific layout of the city and figuring out which days of the occupation had the lowest numbers gave them an edge when it came to effectively blocking efforts to resupply the occupiers. Such efforts can choke off far-right caravans and undermine their longevity.

“Map out which roads they’ll take and where the choke points are. It only takes a couple dozen people and a few bicycles to render their vehicles useless. And if they’re deterred for [six] hours or a day, it will undermine their entire [operation],” Hutt said, who also notes that having safety plans are critical given the far-right’s penchant for violence. By building up more long-term infrastructure, both for mutual aid and for defence, communities have the resources to respond quickly and with precision when something so seemingly sudden occurs. “If they say they are coming to your city and don’t plan on leaving, take them at their word,” Sawyer warned. As these convoys potentially grow, it will be on existing groups in each city to figure out how to keep residents safe and to show displeasure for how anti-vaccine groups have tried to hijack working-class angst. **M**

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ASAD ISMI

Brazil: Bolsonaro's crimes against humanity

“ABSOLUTELY, JAIR BOLSONARO’S presidential term has been a catastrophe for Brazil,” Helder Ferreira do Vale tells me. He is an associate professor who teaches international studies at Xi’an Jiaotong-Liverpool University in China and is an expert in Brazilian politics. “Undoubtedly, Bolsonaro has been a catastrophe for Brazil,” agrees Marcos Napolitano, professor of history at the University of São Paulo. “Bolsonaro has been the worst Brazilian president of all time, who combines incompetence and authoritarian values... This government’s policies have severely damaged Brazil, especially in the areas of education, human rights, culture and the environment.”

Since taking office in January 2019 after what many people in Brazil regard as a fraudulent election, Bolsonaro’s radically neo-fascist regime has facilitated the burning of the Amazon rainforest; caused the deaths of more than 606,000 Brazilians during the COVID-19 pandemic; constantly attacked women, Indigenous people, Black and 2SLGBTQIA+ residents; militarized the government (more than half of Bolsonaro’s ministers have a military background) and freed the police to carry out extrajudicial killings in marginalized communities. Bolsonaro’s shocking record is probably the most egregious example of radicalization leading to large-scale violence.

Brazil’s COVID-19 rate of death is second only to that of the United States. Bolsonaro is not taking any major steps to combat the pandemic, telling Brazilians to “stop whining,” equating the virus with the flu, ludicrously connecting it to AIDS and spreading misinformation about COVID-19 on social media. The 606,000 deaths are, therefore, Bolsonaro’s responsibility, as Brazilian senators have confirmed. In October 2021, the Brazilian Senate voted to charge Bolsonaro with “crimes against humanity” for his handling of the pandemic. Senator Renan Calheiros called for this charge against Bolsonaro to be submitted to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Along with crimes against humanity, the Senate has asked for eight more charges be brought against Bolsonaro in Brazilian courts, “including incitement to crime, falsification of documents and the violation of social rights.” Senator Calheiros stated that the “chaos of Jair Bolsonaro’s government will enter history as the lowest level of human destitution.”

Also seeking to indict Bolsonaro for crimes against humanity at the ICC are Brazilian lawyers and a human rights group that includes six former government ministers who have called on the ICC to investigate Bolsonaro for “encouraging genocide against Brazil’s Indigenous People” (numbering close to a million). According to *The Guardian*, “Brazil’s Human Rights Advocacy Collective (CADHu) and the Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns Commission for Human Rights delivered an ‘informative note’ [or brief] to Fatou Bensouda, prosecutor at the international tribunal in the Hague [in November 2019]. It requested a ‘preliminary investigation of incitement to genocide and widespread systematic attacks against Indigenous Peoples’ by Bolsonaro.”

“We are facing a scenario of incitement of crimes against humanity,” warned Eloísa Machado, CADHu member and a professor of constitutional law at São Paulo’s Getúlio Vargas Foundation. The CADHu brief to the ICC points out that Bolsonaro’s attacks on Indigenous life because it hampers his plans “to promote infrastructure projects, mining enterprises, logging activities and agribusiness ventures in forested regions.” Due to this, “the living conditions and lifestyles of the Indigenous Peoples are being destroyed by river pollution and invasion of their lands by wildcat miners, loggers and land-grabbers.” The brief notes “the recent 29% increase in annual deforestation—the highest rate in a decade.”

“These applications represent a destruction, a genocide of Indigenous Peoples. They represent the socio-environmental conflict that is now established,” said Dinamam Tuxá in February 2022. Tuxá is the executive coordinator of the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB), the country’s largest network of Indigenous organizations. Tuxá was sounding the alarm about the effects of Bolsonaro’s pro-mining policies, encouraged by which “570 mining companies and associations currently have 2,478 active applications filed for mineral research within 261 Indigenous lands. They aim to exploit a total area of 10.1 million hectares, almost the size of England.”

That the ICC is being asked to indict Bolsonaro for crimes against humanity twice by two prominent Brazilian groups highlights the disaster his tenure has been. However, the president’s environmental crimes do not only endanger the lives of Brazilians but that of

all of humanity, plants and animals. The Amazon rainforest, which he is intent on razing, covers an area larger than the U.S. and produces 20% of the world's oxygen—which is why it is called “the world's lungs.” The Amazon also contains 20% of the world's freshwater, one-third of the Earth's plant and animal species, 400 Indigenous nations, and until recently, acted as a crucial carbon sink, thereby reducing global warming.

Under the Workers' Party (PT) progressive government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2004–12), Amazon deforestation was reduced by 80%. In contrast, Bolsonaro has gutted the official agencies in charge of checking deforestation and protecting native rights, resulting in an environmental catastrophe. Deforestation reached its highest level since 2012, in November 2021, an increase of 57% over 2020. In the 12 months leading up to July 2021, more than 10,000 square kilometres were lost to deforestation, an area almost seven times larger than Greater London. Due to this out-of-control burning, the Amazon rainforest has been converted from carbon sink to carbon producer, emitting three times more carbon dioxide than it is able to absorb, thereby dangerously speeding up global warming. The situation is so dire that scientists warn “the rainforest is approaching an irreversible tipping point after which it would degrade into a dry savannah.”

This unprecedented environmental disaster created by Bolsonaro endangers countless lives around the world and is likely to kill more people than even his COVID-19 mishandling. As Ferreira do Vale puts it, “by turning his back on environmental issues, Bolsonaro incentivizes environmental crimes.” For criminals, do Vale gives the example of Bolsonaro's environment minister, Ricardo Salles, who had to resign in June 2021 “with the opening of investigations by the Brazilian federal police in which he was indicted for favouring

smuggling of Amazon timber for export.”

In the area of human rights, according to do Vale, “Bolsonaro's violent rhetoric against minorities [especially racialized people and 2SLGBTQIA+] during the election campaign escalated once he began his presidential term. His campaign agenda was formulated around issues that opposed the defense of human rights as he vehemently campaigned against gun control, abortion, affirmative actions and same-sex marriage...Bolsonaro is systematically working to dismantle the legal and institutional instruments to protect human rights in Brazil.”

Do Vale points to Bolsonaro's policy against human rights, the ominous Presidential Decree No 9.831, which allows “the President to dismiss the 11 members of the National Preventive Mechanism Against Torture (NPM), which was established in 2013 as a result of the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention Against Torture (OPCAT). The NPM's main objective was to monitor the detention of individuals in prisons and police stations to prevent the use of torture against the detainees.”

Along with torture, Bolsonaro has encouraged extrajudicial killings by pledging to increase immunity for police. Such murders were already rife in Brazil, disproportionately targeting racialized people and the poor. The “horrific and savage consequences” of Bolsonaro's approach were obvious in May 2021, when 200 heavily-armed police raided Jacarezinho, one of Rio de Janeiro's largest favelas (slums)—populated largely by Black people—and left 29 residents dead.

“The police are one of the main perpetrators of crimes in Brazil” explains do Vale. “The Brazilian police have a strong military origin and historically have protected the interest of local oligarchies. In this context, the police have a lot of discretion to commit acts of violence against non-state actors.”

Bolsonaro's ascent to power was not entirely homegrown. He had considerable help from the U.S. government, which consequently shares some of the blame for his disastrous policies. “There is no doubt that the U.S. played a role in subverting democracy in Brazil,” Alexander Main told me. Main is director of international policy at the Washington-based Centre for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR). Main points to evidence that Brazilian prosecutors, with support from the U.S. Department of Justice, “colluded with a Brazilian judge (Sérgio Moro) to design a strategy, with clear political objectives, to ensure that the popular former president Lula da Silva would be jailed and barred from running in the 2018 Brazilian presidential election. The banning of Lula's candidacy, which had been leading in the polls, effectively enabled the electoral victory of far-right candidate Jair Bolsonaro.” Main emphasizes that this undemocratic development in Brazil has had “terrible consequences. The Bolsonaro government has encouraged illegal clearing of the Amazon for farming and mining and has engaged in frequent attacks on the rights of the Indigenous, Afro-Brazilians and LGBTQI persons.”

Significantly, Main adds that “a number of U.S. corporations and financial institutions have played a direct role in the increasingly rapid deforestation of the Amazon and other protected ecosystems in Brazil. U.S. companies like Cargill and Walmart have sourced a variety of goods—palm oil, beef, soy, pulp and paper—produced in deforested areas of the Amazon. The U.S. investment corporation BlackRock is a top investor in companies with high levels of “deforestation risk.” U.S. pension investor TIAA, the world's biggest manager of teachers' savings, invests in agricultural ventures that involve heavy deforestation and also, allegedly, illegal land-grabbing in the Cerrado ecosystem in northwest Brazil.” **M**



The good news page

COMPILED
BY ELAINE HUGHES

First Amazon warehouse unionizes on Staten Island

Following a year-long organizing effort, workers at Amazon's JFK8 warehouse on Staten Island voted in favour of forming the Amazon Labour Union, the first Amazon union in the United States. The news came while warehouse workers in Bessemer, Ala. waited for results in a too-close-to-call redo election, held after the National Labour Relations

Board ruled that Amazon had unlawfully interfered in the first election. When speaking to *Democracy Now*, ALU's interim president Christian Smalls had this message for workers: "Do not quit your jobs anymore—organize them. [If you quit], you're jumping from one fire into the next, and I think we need to stop doing that, because nothing gets changed... We just unionized Amazon. And if we can do that, you can unionize anywhere." Find the ALU on Twitter at @amazon-labor and on Facebook at @AmazonLaborUnion. / [Democracy Now](#)

Transforming palm leaves into tableware

Bollant Industries, a company in the southern Indian city of Hyderabad, produces eco-friendly alternatives to single-use plastic products. Combining fallen areca palm leaves with used paper, Bollant

produces compostable tableware. The company was founded by Srikanth Bolla, with both the aim of reducing India's single-use plastic consumption and providing meaningful employment for other disabled workers. Bolla, who has been blind since birth, now employs roughly 400 people, a quarter of whom are disabled. / [CNN](#)

MIT team develops plant-based composite

A research team at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology has engineered a composite consisting primarily of cellulose nanocrystals (CNCs). Cellulose is the main building block of plant life and CNCs are a derivative of cellulose. As one MIT researcher explains, "We basically deconstructed wood, and reconstructed it. We took the best components of wood, which are cellulose nanocrystals, and reconstructed them to achieve a new composite material." The new CNC composite is reported to be stronger and tougher than bone and harder than typical aluminum alloys. Scientists hope to replace some petroleum-based plastic with naturally-derived cellulose, which would be better for the planet. / [Composites World](#), [Cellulose](#)

California relocates solar panels to save water, farmland

Building on a 2021 University of California feasibility study, the California Department of Water Resources and partners have launched Project Nexus,

with the aim of installing solar panel canopies over sections of the state's irrigation canal system. The project is intended to break ground in late 2022 with a completion date of 2024. If successful in reducing evaporation by providing midday shade and wind protection, the project could be expanded. This would also prevent 80,000 acres of farmland or natural habitat from being converted for solar farms. The 2021 feasibility study found "the financial benefits from shading [California's 6,350-km canal network] outweigh the added costs of the cable-support structures required to span the canals," and that solar panels installed over canals generate electricity more efficiently because of the water's cooling effect and their proximity to users, lowering transmission costs. / [The Conversation](#), [Electrek](#)

Giant solar panel flowers help replace coal for South Korea

Floating in the shape of plum blossoms on the surface of the Hapcheon Dam, 92,000 solar panels in South Korea have begun generating 41.5 megawatts of energy for 60,000 people. In countries with limited land resources, floating solar projects can help reach climate goals. With 21 gigawatts generated across the country, solar is South Korea's leading renewable energy source. The nation will need at least another 375 gigawatts in renewable projects to reach net zero. / [Bloomberg](#)



Jason Anthony, an Amazon labour organizer, celebrates outside the National Labor Relations Board offices in Brooklyn, on April 1, 2022. Amazon workers at a New York warehouse voted to join an upstart labour union, an historic victory that gives organized labour its first foothold in the company's U.S. operations.

PHOTOGRAPHER: STEPHANIE KEITH/BLOOMBERG VIA GETTY IMAGES

Writing links to the past

TERRY WATADA is a poet, novelist, short story writer, historian, playwright, columnist, essayist and music composer. He has published five poetry collections, three novels, a short story collection, two mangas, two histories on the Buddhist Church in Canada and two children's biographies.

His published titles include *The Game of 100 Ghosts* (Mawenzi House, Toronto 2014), *The Three Pleasures* (Anvil Press, Vancouver 2017), *The Four Sufferings* (Mawenzi House, Toronto 2020), and his third novel, *Mysterious Dreams of the Dead* (Anvil Press, Vancouver 2020).

Terry Watada was awarded both the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal and the National Association of Japanese Canadians' National Merit Award in 2013, and the Dr. Gordon Hirabayashi Human Rights Award in 2014.

The Monitor: You retired in 2012 and then began writing poetry and fiction. In the ten years since you've retired, you have published three novels. Your fourth novel, *Hiroshima Bomb Money*, has just been edited. You're working on a new play for the Lighthouse Festival Theatre in Port Dover. And you are compiling your sixth poetry collection around your award-winning piece, *Masks*. If I could start with one question for you, I think it would be: how? And a follow up question: is it still called retirement if you are publishing this much?

Terry Watada: Well, retirement from being an educator, I guess. But that's not true either. I strive to educate through my work. You're right. It's not retirement. I just have a different career, a second one. What did F. Scott Fitzgerald say? There are no second acts. So maybe it's all part of the first act.

I have a literary agent for *Hiroshima Bomb Money*, which is new. The other novels I did on my own, trying to get published, so it's being shopped around right now to various publishers. And we'll see how that goes. It's interesting timing because of what Putin is doing, threatening nuclear war, because, of course, my novel looks at the effects of nuclear war. In fact, it looks at the effects of war in general on three countries: Japan, China and Canada. So it seems the timing is right.

M: This issue of the *Monitor* examines the rise of right-wing extremism in Canada. When I was examining how the occupation of

The Issei: The first generation of Japanese immigrants. When they arrived in Canada, the Issei originally settled around Vancouver and Steveston, with some Japanese communities growing through the Okanagan Valley. Prior to internment, 95% of all Japanese Canadians lived in British Columbia, where the Issei worked as fishers, labourers and agricultural workers.

The Nisei: The second generation of Japanese Canadians, born predominantly in the 1920s and 1930s. Unlike their parents, the Nisei spoke English and enjoyed Canadian culture and pastimes. Despite the cultural assimilation that came with growing up in Canada, the Nisei faced the same "wall of white prejudice" as their parents, and "in the eyes of their white critics they would always be Japanese."

The Sansei: The third generation of Japanese Canadians, born in the post war era.

Ottawa played out—particularly how politicians and residents responded to the violence, the flying of Nazi and Gadsden flags and the terrorizing of entire communities—I saw a lot of similarities between this event and the 1907 race riots in Vancouver. Specifically, the responses often focused on Canada's reputation being tarnished, but not specifically being upset with the overt racism on display. And we know that 35 years after that initial race riots in Vancouver, there were prevailing racist attitudes towards Japanese Canadians that allowed for the creation and operation of internment camps. As someone who has warned about the fragility of our democracy, I'm wondering if you have any thoughts about the recent occupation and ongoing Freedom Convoy protests that are happening in Canada?

TW: Back in 1907, the riots were inspired by Reverend G.H. Wilson, whose grandson, Halford Wilson, was a councilman for Vancouver. He really had a virulent hatred of Asians—Japanese Canadians in particular. And so the riot initially started with the reverend standing up and saying that he'd envisioned a white Canada. He didn't want to have any Japanese or Chinese or any other foreigners in this country. So it sort of gives this sheen of religious Christian fervour that gives it credibility. And people went along with that. So when you bring it to the present state where the convoy happened and the occupation took place, it seems there's a parallel there where the undercurrent seems to be. We're doing it for the just cause of freedom, as it were. They called it freedom, you know? It just seems posterous to me.

M: I want to focus on your experience with learning about and

then capturing oral histories of internment. You've said that your family's experience was shrouded in "a conspiracy of silence" but it certainly feels like that description could apply to this entire chapter of Canadian history. Aside from black-and-white photos in the National Archives and the City of Vancouver Archives, there isn't a lot of information or understanding about what happened during this period. Can you share a bit about how you came to make sense of this history?

TW: As I've said, in 1970, I saw those photographs for the first time at a conference. Before then, I hadn't realized that the internment had even happened. And I went to my parents and asked them questions. Of course they spurned me and turned me away and said, "You don't need to know that stuff." But I kept at it because I started to realize that Japanese Canadians didn't get the vote until 1949. I was born two years later.

So I could have been a non-citizen citizen at one point. That frightened

me. I thought about the significance of that. It drove me to find out more stories and then I started hearing stories from everyone. It's just that those stories are not generally known, as you said. But if you go to the Powell Street Festival in Vancouver, you'll hear people talking about it, or at least in certain moments.

And that inspired me because these were human beings that were put through this terrible experience. There is a stereotype now and it's generally thought that Japanese Canadians were very co-operative [during internment], that they just accepted everything, they left and they wanted to be forgotten about. But in hearing the stories, especially about the protests, I realized that these were people with feelings. They weren't just people that readily accepted what had happened and obeyed the government, like a stereotype demands.

That's how I got more and more involved in collecting stories and listening to stories. There were also—well, they're still going on today—the internment camp bus tours, which were first organized in the 1980s. I went on a couple of them. It was emotional because the victims were there, going back. I don't know if they were trying to recapture the past, but they were there and many of them started crying because of the memories flooding back to them. And they spontaneously started talking, telling tales of that internment experience. So I learned a great deal from that. And I took it from there. I started compiling and then writing the stories.

M: You've mentioned previously that your writing for *The Three Pleasures* began with the story of the Nisei Mass Evacuation Group. Can you share some of that story and why it was an important place for you to start?

TW: Yes. At the time, it was all chaos. My own father was kidnapped. I call it kidnapping. The RCMP took him away and put

him in a road gang in the eastern side of B.C. it turned out, which is something, because I didn't know that until recently. I knew he was taken away, but I didn't know exactly where, and they didn't tell him where he was going. They didn't tell my mother or my brother. They just took him away.

The Nisei Mass Evacuation Group said, why are you breaking up families? Especially when the formal announcement of the internment came about, this group of Nisei decided to negotiate with the government. So they tried with the B.C. Security Commission and said, let us go with our families. Don't put them into dire straits by separating us. But the government wouldn't listen. The Nisei kept trying to negotiate.

Out of that came another group called the *gambariya*, a resistance group who actually wanted to fight, wanted to protest. And they did stage a protest in Vancouver and they were all taken to a place called Angler—actually, first to Petawawa, which had a concentration camp where a lot of German and Italian prisoners of war were. And so the Petawawa camp had this whole section of Japanese Canadians as well.

Very little is known [about that camp]. One thing that I found out was that there was a doctor there in Petawawa who was encouraging second-generation Japanese Canadians to cooperate. And the *gambariya* didn't like that because they had to be together to stage protests. So they visited him one night in his cabin, but he wouldn't back down. They told him, you have to stop this. We have to be together to show a united front. Because he wouldn't cooperate, they started beating him, which caused a lot of noise. Of course, the guards immediately thought that an escape was going on. So, they opened fire on the Japanese cabins. The men in those cabins saw what was going on because the search lights went on when they started shooting and the men rolled onto the floor and out of the way, but

TOP: Young patients at Hastings Park

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE NIKKEI NATIONAL MUSEUM, 1996.155.1.21
IRENE ANDERSON SMITH COLLECTION

BOTTOM: Building A, the Children's Dining Room in the Former Livestock Building at Hastings Park in Vancouver

IMAGE COURTESY OF THE NIKKEI NATIONAL MUSEUM, 1994.69.3.16



bullets hit their beds and pots and pans. I put [that story] in a novel, because I think those stories have to be told.

M: On February 24, 1942, the government led by Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King issued the order that would lead to the internment of 90% of all Japanese Canadians (21,000 people). Despite this measure having sweeping implications for an entire population, it is a largely forgotten chapter in Canadian history. In previous interviews, you've highlighted that Canadian high schools typically devote a single hour to learning about internment, which, given the complexity and far-reaching implications of the policy, seems profoundly inadequate. The commonly understood story seems to have been reduced to one where internment temporarily moved a community to a different location. As this moment in time feels further and further away for young people, how would you recommend situating this history to maintain its relevance and to impress the urgency of its lessons?

TW: I think if there's an issue like the demonstrations in Ottawa and across the country, when those come up, people should point out that this has happened before.

First of all, in order to bring it up and link it to what is going on in the present day, that keeps the issue of internment alive. And I think there's also been an explosion of literature about the internment. I'm not speaking about myself in particular, but several authors who have brought the issue forward.

If scholars can tap into that, this is how to keep it alive. As for the school boards, they'll do what they do, you know? Unless there's pressure put on them by groups who want to add more to the curriculum about Japanese Canadian history, [it won't happen].

M: I think I mentioned to you in our earlier conversations that there is a single book in the Ottawa Public Library that covers the 1907 riots or the internment. When I saw the catalogue I thought, "Oh, we have a problem."

TW: Yeah. Well, I understand. Canadians don't want to bring this issue up because it's painful. It's shameful. It's a total embarrassment to them. But how else can we learn? How can we learn and to prevent it in the future without knowing what happened in the past? Things like the Ottawa Convoy and what underlies it are disturbing and have to be dealt with.

M: To that point, Professor Barrington Walker has argued that understanding the racist violence in Canada's past is "not about digging up unpleasant stories about Canada, it's about challenging a certain notion of historical innocence." I think this has been a very disillusioning 12 months for a lot of Canadians who had a certain notion about what their country was and what it wasn't. What can we gain from looking back at our history including the shameful and violent chapters?

TW: What's prevalent for me is the depth of the racism that happened here. I mean, we look at what happened to Indigenous children. It's completely unacceptable. I don't have the words to express it. But if we know about it, we can prevent it from happening again.

And, we have to deal with the depth of the racism in this country. We cannot fool ourselves into thinking that we were in a very egalitarian country and that everything was rosy and that our history was wonderful. If we do that, then future injustice will take place. I think that there are a lot of lessons from the past 150 years that really do inform why we are where we are right now.

M: What comes next for you?

TW: I'm building my reputation. With the new novel, I would like to be able to address groups, do more interviews, to be a spokesperson for issues of racism, and to continue creating. I find it not only exciting and satisfying, but necessary to my being, and if I could stay relevant, that would be good.

I have no grand plans for the next novel, the next poetry book, the next play or whatever. But I'd like to continue and I hope I can. **M**

timeline

DECEMBER 1941

A new law, P.C. 9760, requires all Japanese Canadians to register with the Registrar of Enemy Aliens.

JANUARY 1942

A new law, P.C. 365, designates an area of British Columbia 100 miles inland from the coast as "protected area."

JANUARY 1942

Japanese Canadian fishing boats are seized.

FEBRUARY 1942

All male "enemy aliens" 18–45 are forced to leave the protected area before April 1. Most are sent to road camps throughout B.C.

FEBRUARY 1942

The Minister of Justice orders all Japanese Canadians to leave the protected area. A curfew is imposed.

MARCH 1942

Under a new law, P.C. 1665, the families leaving the coastal area leave their property and belongings with the government as the Custodian of Enemy Alien Property.

OCTOBER 1942

By now, 22,000 people, 75% of whom are Canadian citizens, have been forced from their homes and relocated to camps. Families are separated.

JANUARY 1943

An order-in-council grants the Custodian of Enemy Alien Property the right to sell the property of interned citizens without their consent.

1944

769 Japanese Canadian farms are underpriced and sold to the Director of the Veterans' Land Act to benefit soldiers returning from war.

MARCH 1945

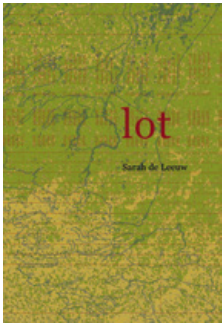
Japanese Canadians receive an ultimatum to move east or be exiled to Japan. They are not allowed to return to B.C. until 1949.

1943–46

The government holds 255 auctions, selling over 90,000 personal belongings of the Japanese Canadians they interned.

REVIEW BY E.R. ZAREVICH

Untangling our sense of place



LOT
SARAH DE LEEUW

2022, Caitlin Press

WHEN IT COMES to *Lot*, throw the adage of judging a book by its cover out the window. From the sprawling map that enwraps it, the reader instantly knows that this is an epic poem that will take you on a journey. It's a journey to be savoured. Bring the book close to your nose and you can smell the rich, rustic scent of the maples. By reading Sarah de Leeuw's *Lot*, you have welcomed the natural world into your personal sphere. Be prepared to question your place in it. Readers must also steel themselves to be challenged with both past and present politics and the difficulty of engaging the generational trauma left behind by colonialism. *Lot*'s content is both secular and spiritual. You will think deeply. You will feel deeper.

Published in 2022 by Caitlin Press, *Lot* is the award-winning poet's loose sequel to *Skeena*, also published by Caitlin Press, in 2015. The two collections are perfect companions, and ideal reading material for the adventurous and historically conscious poetry enthusiast. *Skeena* leads readers on a trip down British Columbia's second-longest river, while *Lot* tours the province's islands and introduces its people and the

racial-social conflicts that still divide them. Though we are living in a new, cautiously optimistic era of Canada, committed to a campaign of Truth and Reconciliation towards Indigenous communities, de Leeuw writes with fierce vigilance, in contrast to the gentle efforts of politicians to lay bandages on the still-bleeding wounds inflicted by white supremacy. In *Lot*, the author returns to the place of her childhood, juxtaposing the continued violence and discrimination towards its Indigenous peoples with declarations of government-led attempts at healing and resolution.

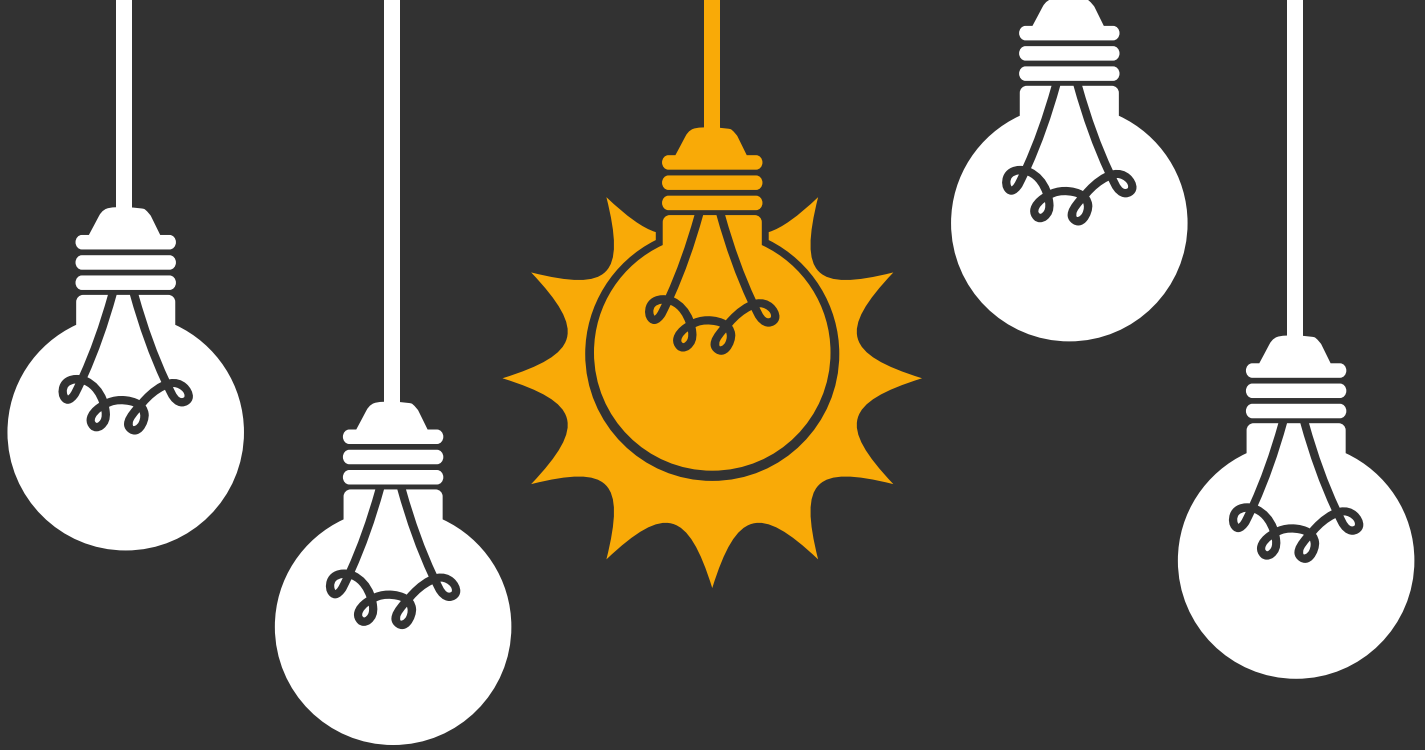
The poem's narration hits readers immediately with some uncomfortable yet necessary truths—firstly, that Queen Charlotte, the foreign wife and consort of King George III of the British Empire, in whose name British Columbia was colonized, might have been descended from racialized people. Yet she co-ruled the empire by her husband's side. Second, that Indigenous nations in Canada, on their own soil, lived and still live very much under the thumb of white English authority. The connection is made to make readers question, "Where is the logic?" The irony strikes hardest in this passage about the white-run Queen Charlotte Agency in British Columbia and its questionable priorities and pompous righteousness.

The poem has a consistent presentation. All of de Leeuw's lines come in pairs, or couplets. Meant to stand as metaphorical substitutes for the two islands of Haida Gwaii—originally named the Queen Charlotte Islands—each couplet is imposing and striking. Readers are made to pause frequently, to deliberate. Lines sit side-by-side like two reigning monarchs, steeped in raw power, their ability to astonish

readers overwhelming when their force is administered just right. It's almost ironic, considering *Lot*'s stance against the tyranny of royal rule, yet accomplishment does come from teams. And what de Leeuw accomplishes is a composition that combines structural style and its own form of oppositional regality to make a statement that is both politically and aesthetically powerful and fluid.

Readers can be forgiven for perhaps finding the format of the work a bit exhaustively repetitive at times, though this is clearly done with predestined and co-ordinated purpose. In a Gertrude Stein-esque fashion, the author employs repetition to make an impact, almost like rhythmic chanting or incantation. Every repeated mention of a place, name, phrase, temperature, product or sensation is meaningful. This ongoing echoing of phrases and ideas can also be interpreted as a representation of the repetition of human thoughts or the repetitive cycles of actions across eras. The same atrocities are committed over and over again, but so are acts of kindness, familial routines, the eternal evolutions of nature and the passing on of stories and traditions.

And *Lot* is full of stories and traditions. De Leeuw makes it a priority to include everything she can in her collection. The readers accompany her on "solos," the outdoor coming-of-age expeditions that mark maturity in her culture, and across the landscapes of her home, which have a vibrant life and culture of their own. De Leeuw's descriptions of her region's ever-changing and always startling land, sea, and sky make up the bulk of the poem's magic. British Columbia as a whole, both its past and its present, is *her* lot, at her disposal to mold into art for the masses. **M**



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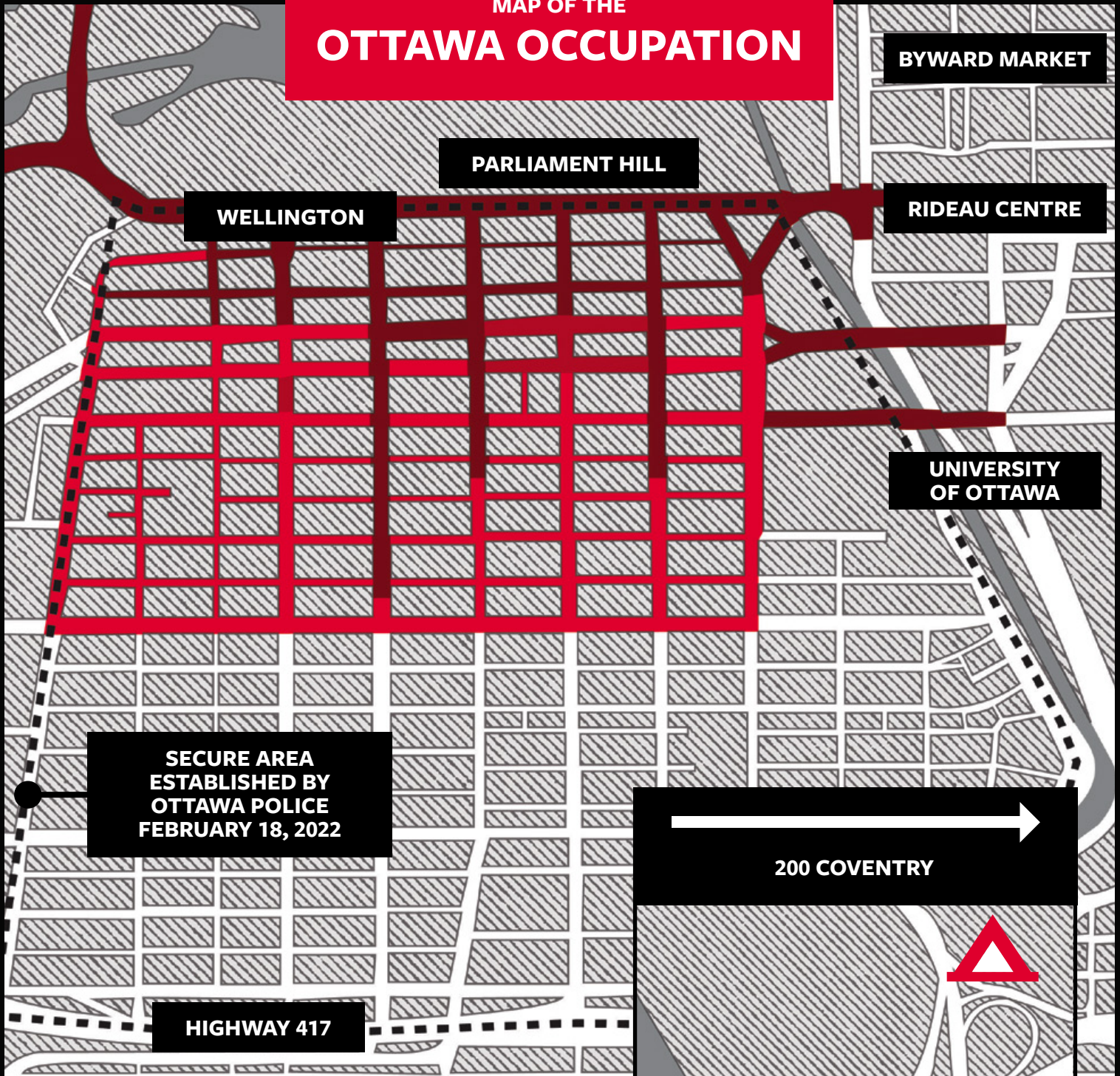
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MAP OF THE OTTAWA OCCUPATION



**SECURE AREA
ESTABLISHED BY
OTTAWA POLICE
FEBRUARY 18, 2022**

200 COVENTRY

HIGHWAY 417

HIGHWAY 417

COVENTRY CAMP

Located east of downtown in the Vanier neighbourhood, the Coventry camp was established by the end of the first week of the occupation. It quickly became a fortified encampment and home of the infamous saunas. It was not removed until February 20.