



## “G20 Land” and the Real Canada

By Megan Kinch

The streetscape of Toronto is overlaid in our minds with stories from the G20 protests. In one such story, memorialized on Youtube, a man refuses to be searched, asserting his rights as a citizen of Canada. “This ain’t Canada now” say the police in the grainy video. “This is G20 land.”

Such interactions were typical during a week, when, in an atmosphere that approached de-facto martial law, over 1000 people were held in inhumane conditions in the Eastern Avenue detention centre. No one knows how many people were detained, dumped from police vans without money or cell phone in remote parts of Scarborough or Etobicoke, searched illegally, kettled by police, sexually assaulted, or beaten.

The police continue to trot out the ‘few bad apples’ line, with only two of their number facing investigation. However, Zexi Wang, a student union leader during the protests, said violations of civil liberties were routine: “In all of the demonstrations and actions that I went to over the G20 weekend, people were snatched by the police, beaten and harassed, sometimes for just walking by the scene of a demonstration. My friends and I were beaten with batons and shot at with rubber bullets.”

Systemic repression doesn’t occur only at summit protests, said Jessica Denyer

of the Community Solidarity Network. “It’s important not to exceptionalize what happened during the G20 summit as just some type of “G20 land” where anything went in terms of police repression. Tactics of police violence used during the G20 are used everyday in poor and racialized communities across Toronto-- from ID checks and intimidation to assault.”

On June 27th of last year, during solidarity protests on Eastern Avenue, under imminent threat of arrest, I interviewed an indigenous woman called Ray. “This is real life, this is the real Canada.” she told me. “This happens everyday but now you can see it. For us Native people, this is what we know...how ironic that this day in June 2010 it’s happening to you now, as non-native people. We’ve got to stand up for each other. Because whatever they do to Native people they will eventually do to everybody.”

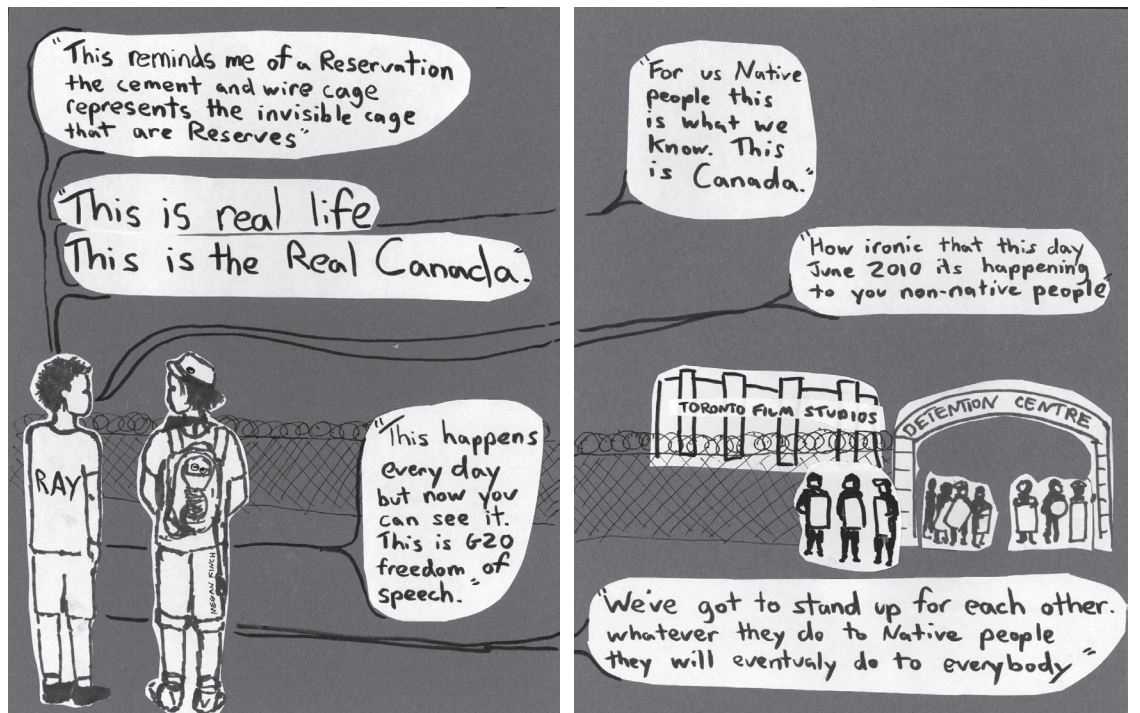
Today, people are gathering at Queens Park, the very site of the brutal clearance by police

of the ‘free speech zone’ one year ago. For Marcell Rodden, his arrest at the G20 did not dissuade him from further activism: “We have to exploit every opportunity of freedom to challenge capitalist authority.” he told The Spoke. ‘G20 land’ is Canada, but people will continue to struggle against capitalist austerity towards a better world.

Syed Hussan, a migrant justice organizer, said “ Since the G20, organizations

such as No One Is Illegal and OCAP have seen a surge in new members, relationships between social movements that usually only organize sectorally have greatly increased. The anger, and the fierce hope that burns in the hearts of those that struggle for a just world could not possibly be dampened by such a thing as a few days of police repression. For many this fire has actually grown hotter.”

BELOW: An illustration of an interview by Megan Kinch for the Toronto Media Coop during jail solidarity outside the eastern avenue detention centre, while many of her friends were imprisoned inside.” Read Megan’s full story at <http://toronto.mediacoop.ca/node/3895> Illustration also by Megan Kinch



## ONGOING RESISTANCE TO THE G20 AGENDA

By Alex Hundert

While the tens of thousands of people who took to the streets during last year’s mobilisation against the G20 were there for many different reasons—migrant justice, Indigenous sovereignty, environmental justice, worker’s rights, queer liberation, anti-capitalism, civil liberties and more—the so called leaders of the world’s 20 wealthiest nations met behind the closed doors of a fortified downtown Toronto with one thing at the top of their agenda: austerity.

The “austerity agenda” is a consensus amongst G20 states that, in order to keep the current capitalist system afloat, over the next ten to twenty years, public spending on things like social services, education and health care, will be sacrificed for financial sector bailouts, so that banks and large corporations can remain profitable and viable. The austerity agenda will ensure that the costs of a failing capitalist system will be felt by poor communities.

In Toronto, momentum from last year’s mobilisation against the G20 is being put into coordinated neighbourhood based campaigns against the austerity agenda that is being implemented in this city by the Ford Mayoral regime and nationally by the Harper Government. The “Raise

the Rates” campaign is meant to build “a provincial movement to raise social assistance rates to where people can live with health and dignity,” according to the website of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP).

A joint statement that reminds people of the connection between last year’s anti-G20 mobilisation and the ongoing struggle against the austerity agenda was released yesterday by a group of community-based organisations.

The statement, June 2011: Our Streets are Still on Fire, says “We supported the week of protests against the G20 in June 2010 because we refused to be silenced. We refused to be pushed to the margins as the so-called leaders of the world made decisions on our behalf. We insisted that the world would hear our stories through our voices. And just as in the years before the G20 came to Toronto, we remain committed to fight back, to mobilize, and to organize.

“Today, we demand freedom for all those still facing charges from June 2010 and we commit to fighting the age of austerity that the G20 leaders have imposed on us. We know that the cuts, and the attacks on our communities will increase over the next few years. We plan to meet these challenges head on because we know that through organized collective resistance the power of the people will prevail.”



May Day march organized by No One Is Illegal Toronto. 2011 photo: Paul Tucker

## LIVING AMONG US: Activists Speak out on Police Infiltration By Tim Groves

On June 26, 2010, while the G20 summit was under way amid mass protests on the streets of downtown Toronto, a startling revelation was made that would reverberate through activist communities for months to come. Two undercover police officers had joined protest groups and been living among activists as part of a large-scale investigation that began more than a year earlier, in April 2009. While only two officers have been officially acknowledged, documents recently released to Briarpatch support suspicions among activists that infiltration was in fact much more extensive.

“One of my former friends disappeared, and it became very obvious to us that she was a police officer,” says Joshua Gilbert, a house painter involved with anarchist organizing in Guelph, Ontario. He describes her as a “motherly type character” who was more interested in being an emotional support than in political organizing. “We became friends with her for a year and a half, and a lot of us became close. I cried on her shoulder and had lots of close conversations with her before realizing that her job was to manipulate people into giving information, and to

create social profiles on us.”

“It was really upsetting and infuriating, and I remember feeling isolated and not able to trust people,” recalls Gilbert. “That is part of the point of infiltration ... creating this sort of fear and paralysis.” The community also suspected another man in Guelph who attempted to entrap people by stating his intention to engage in various illegal activities and asked him to leave the community— but he was able to join activist groups in other cities.

Organizers speculate that infiltration was not limited to militant protest groups or those using direct action tactics, but that undercover police were also placed in a variety of groups that were clearly not involved in any criminal activity. This includes a group of legal observers, a media centre for independent journalists and a team of street medics who volunteered to provide first aid to those on the streets.

Activists often speak of infiltrators in hushed whispers. Blandine Juchs believes that more dialogue about infiltration is needed, including discussions about how to organize effectively despite their pres-

ence. She has witnessed activists become so preoccupied with protecting themselves from infiltration that it becomes an impediment to achieving broader goals.

After 20 years of organizing with groups in Canada and the United States, Macdonald Scott, a Toronto activist and legal worker, has seen countless groups struggling with the impacts of infiltration. He worries that it is all too easy for activists to draw the wrong conclusions.

“We are not good at being cops or trying to investigate each other like we are cops; what we are good at is ... creativity. We are good at diversity when we are doing well. We are good at engaging people and involving people. We should focus on those things rather than focusing on creating internal police forces, or internal secret services to sniff out the cops,” says Scott. “We should be focusing on being democratic and using the strength of being democratic to create a revolution.”

Read the full article at: <http://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/living-among-us>



LEFT: Jan Longboat, an elder from Six Nations confronts Gary McHale who is trying to put what critics say is an anti-native monument outside the reclamation site. photo: Deb O'Rourke. MIDDLE: Munk OUT of UofT Banner drop at UofT President Naylor's guest lecture in Convocation Hall in April 2011. RIGHT: Revolution in the Arab world have promoted many to attend solidarity protests in Toronto, like this one at Dundas square on January 29th photo: Paul Kellog

## The Other Gays Speak Back By Frida Press

A picture of nine well-dressed gay men holding Canadian and British flags boldly declared the title “Dawn of a New Gay” on the front cover of the of Toronto's new magazine “The Grid” on June 9th. Unfortunately, the cover article in question couldn't be farther from a ‘new’ or ‘dawning’ analysis. The experiences of the majority of people is altogether glossed over and forgotten in this article, where a wealthy white gay man sat down to tell us how lucky we are as gays in Toronto and how “a new generation of twentysomething urban gays—my generation—has the freedom to live exactly the way we want. We have our university degrees, homes and careers.”

It goes without saying that the people Paul Aguirre-Livingston refers to, gay men in their twenties, do not all have university degrees, do not have homes, and do not have careers. Tyson Suzanne Purdy Smith, a 25 year old queer poly trans-man explained why the article doesn't speak for his experience, and specifically pointed out how his sexual orientation affected his access to education:

“I am Metis although I pass most often with white male privilege and yet I have not experienced the utopic gay life Aguirre-Livingston describes in his article. I don't have a university degree, though I went to university. In the first semester I received death threats because I was queer. One night

some drunk guys started pounding on my door trying to break it down. I was stranded in my room with no phone to call security. For some hours I sat at the window ledge thinking how if they succeeded in breaking down the door I would jump out the window. It was only three stories- not enough to kill me, but not something I wanted to do.”

Tyson went on to describe how the university would not refund his residence fees because “they said I didn't have a valid reasons for moving out.” Subsequent economic struggle and housing insecurity led directly to his dropping out of university. This kind of story does not appear in the Grid's ‘post-mo’ conception at all, but is still a reality for many gays and queers in their 20s.

Aguirre-Livingston's willfully narrow worldview excludes even some of the people who were photographed for the article. Elie, who is a 24 year old Lebanese gay man who grew up in Dubai, U.A.E. and moved to Canada in 2003, says he was “mortified” by being associated with the article and felt misrepresented.

Elie explained how his life did not fit into the ‘new gay’ narrative in the story illustrated by his photo. “My parents aren't as tolerant as Aguirre-Livingston's are and reacted extremely negatively when my homosexuality was brought to light. Not only did I receive

a three hour beating and was told by own mother that she'd forget she ever gave birth to me had I ‘chosen’ to be gay... Had my parents not been able to afford sending me abroad to study, I'd still be stuck in Dubai where homosexuality is punishable by death.”

The reality is, most of us are outside of this ‘new gay’ life. Some of us are living lives like this 26 year old, straight-acting Jamaican-Canadian man: “I will never tell my family or friends that I am attracted to men because they will never accept it and they will hate me. I will marry a woman because if I don't they will suspect. If they found out they would disown me and likely try to kill me.”

Lives like this are erased in Aguirre-Livingston's conception of the ‘new gay’. But the lower class and the labour force are not heterosexual. The queers of the lower class experience discrimination and hardships that those of the upper-class do not. They are people of colour, of immigrant background, of disability, of poverty, with language barriers and heavy discrimination on them every day.

At the end of the day it is convenient for corporate media sources for us to be a consumerist blur of gay and hipster. Thankfully, the response to this article has been encouraging, as many organizing groups for arts and anti-oppression have come forth against it.



Elie : “I was mortified that people thought that I, as well as the other guys on the cover, agreed with the article's content let alone were interviewed for it... I was disgusted at the writer's arrogance and thought the piece reeked of privilege and ignorance.”

This response and my interviews with queer Torontonians in their twenties make clear that not only is there a struggle for young queer people in Toronto to be had, but that we are actively engaged.