

# desperately seeking subversives

Want to help out with  
this zine? Writers,  
researchers, artists, activists,  
translators, social media  
exhibitionists..... please  
get in touch!

filth.thezine@gmail.com



putting queers on the frontlines

featuring:

Shameless Magazine

Radical Queer Semaine

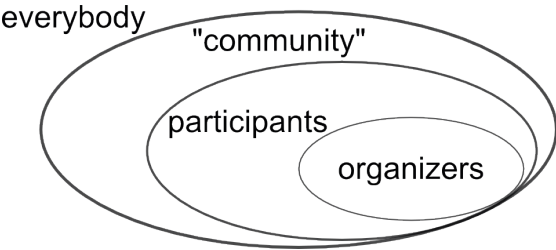
The People Project

MYCAH

Prisoner Correspondence Project

A number of years ago, in fact a whole bunch of years ago because i'm so old all of a sudden or maybe it just feels that way, shortly after ending my one and only, albeit protracted, experiment with heterosexuality and simultaneously, coincidentally? climbing out of the bong i'd been living in for the last five or so years, i wrote this queer insurrectionist, fictional story that had lots of "good intentions" but also quite a bit of "accidental racism." I share this story for two reasons: to get it clear from the get-go that i don't consider myself an expert on queerness, organizing, activism or writing for that matter, just another nerd who loves talking about these things, and also to talk about what queer activism can look like. Back then, i was big into demos, actions, the ideas of subterfuge and espionage. While i still think those are interesting and potentially useful, i've also come to appreciate the hundred-thousand other tactics people use to make their lives better and improve the lives of those around them, spatially and chronologically speaking.

While this zine may eventually include Bash Back! style activities, i'm much more excited by intersectional, grassroots efforts at campaign work, direct-service, community building and sustainability. In fact, what i'm really in love with is leadership building. Ever since this game-changing presentation by Dean Spade several years ago, i've been in love with this very simple, powerful model of nested circles. He talked about the goal of an organization, of activists in general, being to move people deeper into the circle.



This zine, then, is to help people channel some hurt feelings and frustration into exciting projects that are queer-driven, gay-positive or even just a bit on the faggy side. By sharing different opportunities out there and some of the different tactics we/you/somebody-you-know can use, maybe together we can bring more people on into homobase.

filth.thezine@gmail.com  
culapp.wordpress.com/filth/

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occupied Mississauga Territory

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## **THE PEARL**

### **Miracle Thieves, 251 Crawford**

The Philippines: Art.Food.Music.Social.Shop.Explore and Experience with Us!

OPENING: Thursday, **April 26th** (6-9pm)

MUSIC & SOCIAL: Saturday, **April 28th** (7pm-12am)

KAPWA 3 PRESENTATION / FUNDRAISER: Friday **April 27** and **April 28**

PLUSH TOY PLAYSHOP w/Its Your Life: Sunday **April 29th** (1-4)

Please Register! [info@miraclethieves.com](mailto:info@miraclethieves.com)

### **Sheroes#9 Dolly**

Thursday **26 April** -- 22:00 - 02:00

**The Beaver, 1192 Queen West**

A living, breathing monthly collaborative live performance series

### **Community Walk and Celebration for Peace, Respect and Friendship**

<http://april28coalition.wordpress.com/>

At 2 PM on Saturday, **April 28, 2012** the Six Nations [Haudenosaunee] people of the Grand River territory and their allies will be holding a walk and rally for "Peace, Respect and Friendship." The main focus of the event is to remind the Canadian people and the Canadian government that Six Nations land rights and treaties need to be respected.

Whether native or non-native, all of us residing within Canada are treaty people.

We have both a moral and a legal imperative to uphold the nation-to-nation agreements made on our behalf by the British Crown and Canadian government with indigenous peoples. It was treaties such as the Two-Row Wampum which gave us as non-indigenous people the right to settle in what is now called Canada, and as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms affirms, these treaties are still in force and they must be honored and upheld.

### **art making for Sex Workers Against Borders**

Join us on **April 28** at 2 pm for a sexy art day. We will be gathering at **298A**

**Gerrard St East** to make banners, signs and art for the May 1 action.

Info on the May first action here: <http://tinyurl.com/SWAB28>

For more info contact Lux at [lipsmacking@maggiestoronto.ca](mailto:lipsmacking@maggiestoronto.ca)

### **Book Launch – Latin Americans Thought of It**

Saturday **28 Apr** -- 14:00 – 16:00

**Toronto Women's Bookstore, 73 Harbord St**

This fifth book in Annick's successful We Thought of It series describes the traditions and innovations that are the result of thousands of years of civilization in Latin America, across two continents and nearly 20 countries. Many of these have become part of the daily lives of people all around the world. For ages 9 – 12.

### **Sex Workers Against Borders**

Tuesday **1 May** -- 15:30 – 16:30

**east corner of Nathan Phillips Square**

Calling all current, former or aspiring sex workers, hoe's, whores, and hustlers (migrant and nonmigrant)!!!! Join us as we march for the rights of sex workers! On

May 1st we will celebrate our work and our lives, while raising awareness about racist anti sex work legislation that targets migrant sex workers and Women.

Trafficking is not sex work and smuggling is a right!!!

### **Big Primpin'**

Friday **4 May** -- 22:00

**Wrong Bar 1279 Queen Street W** (west of Dufferin)

### **Alien-Nation**

Saturday **5 May** -- 20:00 – 23:00

**THE RIVOLI (332 Queen W, Queen & Spadina)**

\$10 - \$15 sliding scale

Alien-Nation is a celebration of creative resistance in struggle - through art and music to build more resilient communities. By focusing on workers' struggles and systemic discrimination and injustices, we raise our voices in solidarity with undocumented and precariously documented migrants for justice.

Performing are three amazing spoken word artists and one feature band who have consistently celebrated the resistance of migrant workers.

[www.mayworks.ca](http://www.mayworks.ca)

### **opening: Submission**

Tuesday **15 May** -- 19:00 – 22:00

**Buddies In Bad Times Theatre, 12 Alexander St**

Presented in Buddies' darkroom, the exhibition must be viewed by flashlight.

### **queer day at Bike Pirates (1292 Bloor St W)**

Wednesday **16 May** -- 18:00 – 21:00

This new workshop-format event will take place every Third Wednesday of the month. Our Mission for this event is: To provide a safe inclusive space for those with a common interest in cycling, and to share skills through workshops and events. Our Vision for this event is: To promote cycling among the LGBTQ community and to promote a sense of community among cyclists.

### **The Twelve Year Tour**

Thursday **24 May** -- 19:00 – 21:00

**Beit Zatoun House, 612 Markham St.**

For almost twelve long years, Mohammad Mahjoub, a torture survivor, has been detained without charge in Canada. He was held for lengthy periods in solitary confinement and later under house arrest. All on the basis of secret information which the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) has admitted was likely obtained under torture. Now, for the first time in twelve years, Mr. Mahjoub is permitted to travel outside Toronto.

Mr. Mahjoub is one of five Muslim men who have been struggling for justice in Canada against so-called security certificates. Security certificates allow the government to indefinitely detain or deport people on the basis of their profile. He will tell his story in a six-city speaking tour, as the Justice for Mahjoub Network gears up for a day of protest to mark the 12th anniversary of his arrest on June 26th.



## Youth short video contest against homophobia

Calling all youth across Canada, aged 12 – 19! Gather your friends and create a 30-60 second public service announcement video that challenges homophobia and bullying and promotes safe and diverse communities!

Use your digital camera, smart phone or any other device to create your message and submit it to us before June 11, 2012.

For more details visit the 2012 Contest Rules at [outinschools.com](http://outinschools.com). To submit your video email **[contest@outinschools.com](mailto:contest@outinschools.com)**

## Exposure Festival Call for Volunteers

Exposure is currently seeking dynamic, enthusiastic people who are interested in the arts, Edmonton's cultural life, queer issues, politics, social and political activism, and event planning. If any of this lies within your interests, please consider joining our group. We are committed to diversity and in particular aim for a mix of professionals, artists and community members.

Interested individuals should send a paragraph outlining their background, their reasons for wanting to be involved, and their skills to [volunteer@exposurefestival.ca](mailto:volunteer@exposurefestival.ca) by Friday April 20th, 2012.

For more information on Exposure Festival, including our festival blog and information on previous Exposure Festivals, please visit the Exposure website at **[www.exposurefestival.ca](http://www.exposurefestival.ca)**.

## Fight Boredom Zine Residency 2012

For two weeks, you will find yourself living at the Tulip Farm in beautiful Montréal, Québec. This is not a farm, but in fact an adorable two-bedroom apartment in the heart of St-Henri. You will be provided with a pullout couch, bedding, a small guide to gettin' around and livin' on the cheap in the city, plus a whole lotta zine supplies (I have basic craft supplies like paper, scissors and glue, as well as numerous typewriters). You're encouraged to bring anything you feel you may need. Funding has been confirmed and will amount to \$500 per participant, to be put toward travel costs, zine supplies and the final launch party. Receipts must be saved, and any remaining funds will be

donated to the Ste-Émilie Skillshare.

Please note: The Tulip Farm and the Ste-Émilie Skillshare are both located in second-floor apartments and are, regrettably, not wheelchair accessible. There is a friendly cat named Sebastian who lives at the Tulip Farm, so you will ideally not have allergies. There are nearby train tracks, and while we love the sound (and imagined adventures!) of trains passing by, you may not. The Tulip Farm is only a two-minute walk from the metro, which means the rest of the city is basically at your fingertips. Please read the Ste-Émilie Skillshare's mandate at **[steemilieskillshare.org](http://steemilieskillshare.org)** and Fight Boredom Distro's submission guidelines at **[fight-boredom.com](http://fight-boredom.com)**, where you can also find submissions guidelines for the residency. Deadline is May 1st, 2012.

## AIDS Vigil Call for Performers - The 519

Performing in the Vigil honors, remembers and celebrates the lives of people who have died of AIDS, and supports a call for action now to end AIDS. Participation is voluntary. All volunteer performers must attend a live audition.

Performances in all languages are welcome, including music, poetry, dance and original readings. Auditions are encouraged to reflect the diversity of people and cultures affected by HIV/AIDS, and to focus on remembrance, celebration, love or any other theme related to living with AIDS and remembering our losses.

2012 Auditions are being conducted this month. Artists are encouraged to call for an appointment.

Rehearsal for selected performers – Thursday June 7 2012 – two weeks before the Vigil.

For more information and an audition date and time leave a message at:  
**416-392-6878**  
**x 4012**





# Shameless Magazine

My first interview for this project came from the lovely and inspiring Sheila Sampath. Inspiring for the intricacy and nuance of her thought but also having for the work ethic required to direct a magazine, run a small-business, play in the band Betty Burke and gods know what all else. I'm guessing sleep knitting.

We met at the office of her business, The Public. It is an "activist design studio," so basically the jackpot for any artsy-types looking to make a difference while also earning a living. I could go on and on about this alone, since different models of social entrepreneurship/syndicalism really excite me, but luckily there's another example more pertinent to this zine. The magazine that Sheila runs is called Shameless, and it is a rare example these days of a completely independent, political magazine with no foundation or governmental funding and no paid staff. Working for free (not to mention paying to work for free: "We don't have money for childcare [during meetings or while working], we don't have money for TTC tokens, we don't have money for food." Volunteer labor is expensive not just in labor hours but just to participate as well), is not an ideal situation, Sheila points out. While the lower overhead has allowed them their uncompromising voice as a radically-left magazine for trans youth and young women, donations and subscriptions would help make sure that more people and a more diverse group of people could be involved in the process (not just obsessive masochists/big-big hearted activists).

The best way i can describe Shameless is as an amalgam of your sassy big sister, that party time neighbor and the radical history teacher you maybe never had. Being a big advocate of self-representation and leadership development, I was initially unnerved by their all-adult staff, until i came to realize the real beauty of this mentorship. This was not a magazine claiming to speak for young people or as them but rather to them. All i had growing up were Ranger Rick and Zillions. If either of those magazines had featured brilliant, gay men talking about safe sex, anti-racism or riot grrrl, my childhood could have been much different. Not that Shameless is an exclusively queer publication, but every page is filled with love and kindness and thoughtful explanations of the systems that control and shape our worlds. I hope that anyone with kids, regardless of their gender, considers getting them a subscription.

My favorite article from the newest Labour issue is written by a former child sex worker. As always, it is refreshing to hear someone with

experience in the industry instead of an academic expert talking about sex work, but the voices of youth are so rarely part of this discussion. Phoenix, the author, explains a bit about sex work activism and the movement for "decriminalization" of sex work, versus different models of outlawing or "legalizing" sex work. She then goes on to talk about how youth in particular are targeted and hurt by the existing legal system and the very non-profits that are supposedly there to help them. It comes with a couple of super helpful lists about "Things that could help a youth sex worker stay safe" and ways to be an ally to youth sex workers. For any young person who does trade sex for money or whatever else, there is an invitation to work on an upcoming resource zine that is by and for youth sex workers. You're invited to email [lipsmackin@maggiestoronto.ca](mailto:lipsmackin@maggiestoronto.ca) to participate.

## **Ways to get involved:**

**advisory board** - This is a body that helps generate content and provide guidance to the magazine. There is a currently active community advisory board for people that work closely with youth as well as an in-development youth advisory board.

**writing** - Anybody is welcome to pitch a story idea to the magazine. They're specifically looking for correspondents from other parts of the country to talk about what's going on in their neighborhoods and towns. All ideas get a response, and those writers selected for the magazine or blog will be supported by one of the staff editors. This is a better offer than you'll find almost anywhere else!

**illustrating** - They are always on the lookout for some stylish contributor interested in sharing their design talents with the magazine. As with the writing submissions, all emails will be reviewed and carefully considered. Even if you don't have something finished you might like to contribute, write to them and see if they have a need for anything in particular.

**anything else?** - You have an idea? You inspired by the magazine, something you read in it, some shiver up your spine that makes you feel like fighting? Drop the magazine a line and let them hear about it. Sheila has guaranteed that all emails receive a response and that any ideas for participating are welcome. Host a Shameless-themed party, a read-aloud club or a writing group to encourage yourself and friends. PS: if you do any of these things, please let me know cuz i'll put it in the calendar!

**Email [sheila@shamelessmag.com](mailto:sheila@shamelessmag.com) to get in touch**  
**[www.shamelessmag.com](http://www.shamelessmag.com)**

# Radical Queer Semaine

Radical Queer Semaine (RQS) is a ten-day festival that happens every year, just towards the end of winter in Montreal. Born in 2009 out of the sordid dissolution of another event, Queereaction, on the 40th anniversary of the Stonewall riot in NY, RQS is a temporary autonomous zone (TAZ) for anyone interested in discussing gender, sexuality and their various political fronts. Each year they move into a central location and transform that space into an queer clubhouse, hosting workshops on decolonization, how to pee standing up, post-porn, HIV criminalization and intersex solidarity, to name a few, and that's just during the days. After dark, these two weeks are filled with nights of performance, film screenings and dance floor activism. Goddamn.

Pulling something like this off obviously takes a lot of work, patience and committed personalities. When you're talking about Montreal activism, that also means a few more challenges including consensus decision making and navigating people's different languages. I had a chance to talk with the affable Frank Suerich-Gulick, one of the organizers of RQS, for some time about juggling Anglophone needs and Francophone rights.

"In Montreal, there are a lot of people who are Anglophones, who come from out of province and who don't speak any French, whereas a lot of Francophones will have at least basic English. So if you are running a workshop and have the capacity to run it in either language, you will usually have more people who don't understand any French than people who don't understand any English. Which for one workshop can be fine, but after a while it gets frustrating that supposedly bilingual events always happen in English." One tactic RQS has taken is to conduct their internal meetings in French, leveling the playing-field a bit. Which helps balance the needs of a partly monolingual-Anglo audience with the political and practical importance of actual organizing in French, allowing them to control just how bilingual the final event turns out.

English imperialism is still a big problem, after all, and not just out east. It is one of the big weapons used against Indigenous languages and peoples, a blunt means of asserting dominance over governance and trade. Not that French is that much better in this respect, being equally responsible as a tool of genocide not just here but all over the globe. It almost seems like a cold war, and you just want for both parties to collapse (of course this zine is written in English, spoken by the armies occupying

my ancestral Irish homeland, so i bare a centuries-old grudge against this brutish, bureaucrat's language). There are places, though, where discussions around language are able to open the debate. The growing popularity of simultaneous ASL translation at events, for one. Stella, a sex worker organization in Montreal, publishing safety booklets in English, French and Inuktitut is another. English itself points out, being more gender-neutral than many languages, that some linguistic communities even have work to do in their own backyards to deprogram patriarchy out of their very words. Which is just to say that i hope we don't miss obvious opportunities posed by parallel struggles for language, culture and survival. Allophones to the front!

Though maybe all we need is body language? Seems to be a big part of how RQS dialogues with the larger community. This year, i count five dance parties, five different opportunities to hear what queer sounds like and feel it rush on down through your bones. That's right, i'm including the sex party, along side the live hiphop show, a couple DJ nights and a cabaret spectacle. When talking with Frank, i had prattled off about all the reasons i love these parties, including

- 1) welcoming to people less politicized or comfortable in workshops
- 2) lets party organizers show off their activism
- 3) showcases all the different talents that queers have
- 4) mental/booty health
- 5) best excuse we get to dress up and feel good about ourselves,

but then he gave me another give reason: mega parties are the biggest source of revenue for RQS. Renting a space for two weeks, paying for food and transportation, supporting all the infrastructure for a massive, centralized event like this cost some money. While they always receive small stipends from a few different university groups, this is their big source of income. Which makes me love them more, because there are few things i respect more than grassroots, community-responsive funding. With federal and local governments proving more everyday how hostile they are to arts and community organizing, we are going to depend more and more on ourselves and the connections we make to keep our movements afloat.

## ***Ways to get involved:***

**join the collective** - Email RQS, and they'll let you know when they start having organization meetings again (probably towards the end of fall). Especially looking for folks that are good at PR or publicity and people that

are anal retentive about organizing.

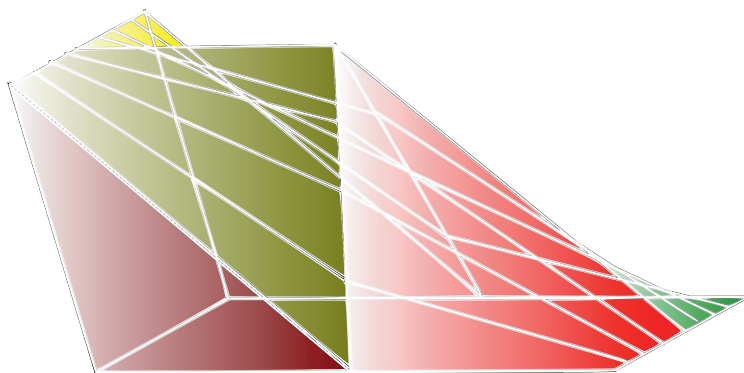
**propose an event** - Want to host a night of film, a dress up party, a clothing swap, a BYOChicken buffet? Was there some activity you really wanted to see happen but found it missing from this year's line-up? Let them have it.

**host a workshop** - Have something you're dying to talk about in public? Some ideas you want to brainstorm with a few possible accomplices? Maybe you could be part of next year's schedule.

**In closing, in a fit of jealousy**, i asked Frank what were some tips he might have for organizing a similar event in other cities: "Start small with a weekend, an afternoon of workshops on Saturday and say a performance night in the evening followed by a dance party. And the next day, well personally i think food is a nice component. But yeah, i would start small, try to figure something out where you need as little money as possible. Have a good team, and ideally a team of people who have connections with slightly different groups so that they can get the word out."

*So, Toronto, what do you think? Any interest in organizing something for this summer, say towards the end of June? **Email filth.thezine@gmail.com by May 15th** if you want to support this happening.*

**radicalqueeremaine.com**



## The People Project

**Filth:** How did the People Project get started?

**Naty:** The People Project started up almost five years ago, was definitely born out of visions, dreams and a lot of dialogue between myself, Naty Tremblay, and Kim Crosby, talking about wanting to create programs, initiatives, projects for queer and trans young people and for the LGBTQ community in a larger sense. We're bringing together arts, radical thinking, knowledge, politics, opportunities for people to engage in community, and so we started developing shorter- and longer-term projects for LGBTQ youth.

That created a very natural segue to realize that there are not enough opportunities for queer and trans young people beyond queer-specific spaces, so we started doing more equity-based trainings and workshops within communities and spaces that were doing youth-service work in order to try and create more space that was a little bit safer and more accountable to LGBT youth.

Through that entire process, [we were] always going back to our community and the relationships that we had and have continued to build with our community: SOY, the 519 and the youths that we run programs and projects with. That's why so many of the youth from three years ago that were in projects are still tightly connected to the work that we do."

**Filth:** What is the history behind the term "Spectrum"?

**Kim:** Spectrum was a term that I heard first used by Andrew Abbott. He is a young person who is in the Triangle Program. He gave me the term "Spectrum" to use, because he suggested that the acronym is long and, for some people, cumbersome. It is a way of including both the terms that are listed in the acronym but also the ones that aren't listed, recognizing that queer and trans identities look very different culturally all over the world, and also based on time and a whole bunch of other social markers that don't often get included in the very Euro, Western framing of gender and sexuality.

In terms of advocating for more groups to use this term, I think that language is difficult. English is a colonizing language, and I think we have to be conscious of what that means. I also do fundamentally advocate for the creation of new language that better speaks to what happens in our communities and not to allow language to be something that is handled in



a top-down kind of way.

I think people should use it if they resonate with it, and I also think that, you know, they shouldn't use it. But I do think there is value in the same way that "woman of colour" was a term that was chosen for political reasons to organize behind. I think that there can be value in choosing terms, as a community, to organize behind.

**Filth:** What roles do art and art making play in addressing "social and political barriers affecting Spectrum youth and beyond"?

**Naty:** We use art in three really big ways to "address social and political barriers affecting Spectrum youth". One, expressive arts. We integrate expressive arts in every program that we do, because it's a space for young people to work through challenges in our lives, for us to work through hurt and trauma without necessarily always having language to describe it. Being able to visualize it, embody it, release it, deconstruct it can be super healing.

On top of that, the import of us getting our stories out there. Telling our stories and putting them out in as many places as possible: huge! It's self-affirming to be given a venue and a space to just articulate who we are and how we self-identify. And then to reclaim space, because mainstream media isn't doing it for us in any way, shape or form, and they're not going to in the near future. So trying to claim more public space with diverse images of queer and trans young people is huge.

And then, third, art is a way to celebrate ourselves. Creating events and programs that showcase a bunch of different art made by young people, talking about themselves in community is so important. That kind of affirmation builds confidence and self-love as individuals and in groups, strengthens family bonds, all this stuff. So art to us is radical and fundamentally necessary in the programs that we run for young people and beyond.

**Filth:** As an arts group, how do you engage with ideas around cultural appropriation and self-representation?

**Kim:** Cultural appropriation has to do with power and privilege, and I think that we really try to seat our analysis in that. When the dominant class of people—white, male, able-bodied, wealthy—appropriate or use other types of culture, and the people who created it don't get the money or the praise for it, that that's really where the problem with cultural

appropriation comes in. And also the ways that people of colour are often shamed for their own cultural practices, and they're considered to be savage or backward. Then when white folks do it, it's "new age," "radical" or it's "cool."

We do a session around what it means to be inspired by other cultures and what the difference between that and cultural appropriation is. I think that, as an artist, you absolutely will be inspired by a variety of different things, but we really emphasize how important it is for our participants to be experts of their own experiences, for them to speak for themselves really loudly and take up space in those ways. We have so much of our own lived experience that we need to hear about, even before we get to the places where we're talking about another culture.

I also think that it becomes a little more tricky when you get into communities of colour. You know, as a black woman, I identify with being of African descent, but my ability to describe where that comes from is very different, because of slavery. So when I identify with Africa or Blackness, then it's in a very different way than someone who might know their family history is able to do. So I think we have to leave room for that, for the reconstruction of our stories, for the creation of new experiences and new identities, and for the fusion of different cultural experiences as part of the diaspora when we talk about cultural appropriation and representation.

**Filth:** How important is it to your work that the work be self- and community-directed?

**Naty:** First and foremost, we centre the work that we do in our lived experiences and the lived experiences of those who are allied with us in community and the youth who we develop programs around. We can start from our own lived experiences, and that's the best place to start when doing political organizing, and that definitely informed our initial inclinations to run programs for queer and trans youth.

We try and create community councils, spaces where we can share curriculum with a wider audience of people who are invested in queer pedagogy, invested in queer liberation, queer arts, all of these things, and that's how our curriculum, I would argue, is as strong as it is. Because we get ideas, perspectives, critique on every element. We also try to create spaces in programs for queer artists to facilitate, to integrate their ideas and knowledge all along the way and to develop programs that are participatory. There is some fixed curriculum and then so much more space

in every single session that is just about allowing participants to guide what we're talking about, because their interests lie there.

We believe deeply in transformative justice and community accountability and when we're open and transparent about those things, that those are things that we value and centre in our organizing, then we're better able to do that, better able to practice preventative measures that allow things to be accessible, healing, transformative, etc. Acknowledging that is an organic process and is shifting and changing all the time.

**Filth:** Are there different types of membership available, as in participant, volunteer, staff, board member, supporter, extended family member?

**Naty:** The work that we do in community is about building family. Definitely, in terms of programs and projects, roles that exist there are participants, young people, but we also try to, through the program, deconstruct the notion of participant. Facilitators and participants can be exchanging roles all the time, especially when you're intentionally creating participatory learning opportunities. In those spaces we bring in communities artists as experts, as educators and as art makers. The requirements are really just that they're doing whatever they can to express themselves artfully, and that of course can be broad. We work with staff, volunteers, contract staff, full- and part-time staff, depending on what kind of projects we are working on. We like to think that the different boards, councils and committees that we sit on in community are also a part of our community, and we draw a lot of insight and information and mentorship from the relationships that we have in those spaces.

There's definitely tons of supporters within our network, the family of the people project from across the LGBT community. Elders are hella important to us, and that's folks from the LGBT community but also black and brown communities, from First Nation communities, and that's informing our curriculum, our research, the projects and advocacy campaigns that we work in. Definitely love having volunteers and interns, because that's just another opportunity to nuance the roles of participant, facilitator, research, all of those things. I think that people can step into those different roles depending on where their skills shine, and we try really hard to create those spaces in the programs and projects and events that we throw.

Most importantly, we try to make places for people to feel like they're welcome and they belong. I think that's one of the most beautiful

things that we hear from people who have participated in projects and events that we've organized, that they feel a feeling of belonging, that they feel like they've been loved, they've been held, they've been seen, and that they have developed familial relationships, they have a chosen family. That's resounding in its evidence because we still have relationships with people that we met five years ago and who were in projects and programs and who are still really invested in the work, personally and professionally. So yeah, we're working towards extending our family as much as possible.

I want to also throw in that we believe fundamentally that love as a political principal is necessary and radical within queer communities and queer communities of colour, and that is a driving force for much of the programming that we develop. Hence why you can create the trust and support for people to feel belonging and cared for.

**Filth:** Are there specific projects coming up for which you are looking for volunteers or participants?

**Kim:** We will be launching OutWords sometime next year, so that's definitely something to look out for. Our youth are programs are always something that we really encourage really broad and wide participation in. This year we're doing quite a few events. We're doing an exhibition around gender, this time exploring more femmacentric gender. Last year we explored more masculinecentric gender. We also are hosting a few different community dialogues in different ways over the next little bit, and we are going to be bringing in a couple people from outside of the city, including the Revival, which is a touring, queer, black poetry group and also Nina Fillmore, who's coming in to talk about gender, sexuality and queer porn.

We welcome volunteers anytime. People who would like to be able to support us in terms of our administration, even though that's maybe not the most fun thing for a lot of people. Anyone who ever wants to help with grants or filling of helping us get our website up and plug-in information. We try to share as much information, so anyone who's down to do social media stuff, that's always awesome. Also, people who want to physically be down to support the work. We do a lot of support for the groups that we work with, including ILL NANA or Colour Me Drag. At all of their events, we volunteer in one capacity or another. That's one of the ways we give back, so anytime we can have more bodies to support in that process and also to get engaged. Our communities are incredible, we're so blessed to be a part

of them.

**Nat:** I'm going to throw in also *research*. There's infinite research that can be done about the LGBT community historically, around the world, amazing organizing that's happening around the world, just across the border and certainly across our city. And *social networking and online research* is huge at connecting and learning more about what we're doing. Also, people who have *creative ideas for curriculum* that's looking at deconstructing the roots of homophobia, the arts, all these things, we're always excited to have more people help in that process.

**thepeopleproject.ca**

**thepeopleprojectto.tumblr.com**

Plus, check them out at their new offices above the recently collectivized Glad Day Bookshop, Canada's oldest LGBT bookstore. The address is 598A Yonge Street, stay tuned for a move-in date!

## Montréal Youth Coalition Against Homophobia

Walk into any gay village or neighbourhood, and you will probably have seen them all. At least in Montreal and Toronto, the formula is pretty consistent. There's one street just off the downtown that is full of boring bars, clubs, clothing shops, saunas and sex boutiques. The last two are obvious essential services, sex being something queers do best. The different ways we have come up with negotiating sex and having it safely, not to mention our creativity when it comes to finding different ways of getting each other off, these are some of our greatest contributions to the rest of the world. Having at least a century and possible millennia of having to hide who and how we love, it would seem, has turned us into reluctant experts. And so we internalize this hyper-sexuality, making it the center piece of neighbourhoods that could otherwise reflect the cultural diversity, creativity, caring and everything else that we bring to the table.

Luckily in Toronto, we have the the 519 Church Street Community Centre. Located towards the northern tip of the village, it serves as a very accessible drop-in space and infodesk for queers seeking access to resources like counselling, immigration assistance, childcare and self-defence classes. While there might not be a comparable venue in Montreal, CJMLH/MYCAH (la Coalition jeunesse montréalaise de lutte à l'homophobie/ Montréal Youth Coalition Against Homophobia) is working on it. After years in the planning, MYCAH is poised to open a youth-focused community centre in le Village as soon as this summer. Along with sister-projects P10 and Jeunesse Lambda (possibly Ethnoculture as well), they hope to provide a “safer space” for young people to participate in the village life away from overzealous police, over-confident gay men and over-priced everything else.

At the same time, says Bruno Laprade, they are trying to work with business owners and patrons in the village so sensitize them to the needs and realities of queer youth. Between 25 and 40 percent of homeless youth are queer and/or trans, according to Alex Abramovich, meaning that any measures taken against people who spend time on the streets is largely going to hurt queer youth. The “not in my neighbourhood” mentality often involves business associations pushing for crackdowns on street-workers and panhandlers. According to Bruno, the typical response to poor kids



hanging out is even prevalent in the village, where “people who own shops want police on every corner.” Keeping the “gay village” responsible to the “gay community” is important work, not only to the integrity of queer politics but also because of its potential for coalition building. Anti-gentrification, anti-police brutality and poverty activists should likewise see this an opportunity.

MYCAH's past work includes a zine and corresponding DVD for queer and queerious students at the province's universities and CEGEPs (post-secondary school between grade 11 and university). Called Plan Q, it includes sections on the fight against discrimination, sexual diversity, sexuality (the how-to on masturbation is not to be missed) and the essential strategy chapter. This chapter includes a very nuanced breakdown of the “safer space” concept. It clearly distances the notion from statist security notions that complete safety is possible or desirable, while at the same time stressing the importance of creating spaces and cultures that are inclusive and accessible. This is especially relevant for communities with experiences of trauma and exclusion. Available in .pdf format (French-only) at [www.sexualitesetudiants.info](http://www.sexualitesetudiants.info).

Please check out the next issue of Filth for part 2 of my interview with Bruno about his work at P10!

### To get involved:

This is for your *handy homos* out there. With MYCAH in the middle of their big move, they are mostly looking for people to help set up the new space. Know how to hammer a nail? Compare swatches? Organize a room to within an inch of its life? Drop them at [president@coalitionjeunesse.org](mailto:president@coalitionjeunesse.org)



## Prisoner Correspondence Project

**Filth:** How did PCP get started?

**PCP:** Neither of the two initial organizers of the Prisoner Correspondence Project continue to be involved with it at this time, so giving a history of its origins is a little patchy! What we think we know is that the Pris Co Pro got started in 2007 as an ambitious, self-driven internship component to the HIV/AIDS course at Concordia University. The original aim of the project was to make links between prisons, HIV, and queerness, in the form of a direct-correspondence initiative between GLBTQ people in and out of prisons. Inside members / penpals were initially solicited through a short call-out that ran in an American prisoner support newsletter, which was published just once. Since then, we are still hearing from people who heard about us through that call-out, since publications circulate for so long on the inside! This call-out is also part of the reason that so many of our inside members are incarcerated in the USA, although of course massive incarceration rates in the states also contribute to this dynamic. We have grown from a project with 75 – 100 inside members (and a corresponding number of outside members) to a project with around 350 inside members and their outside penpals!

Along with the expansion of the project, our vision has shifted a number of times. Sometimes we focus on local collaborations and outreach, other times on Canada-wide discussions of prison abolition in a reform context, and at other moments we focus on resource development and publication on the inside. But our first priority, at all times, remains responding to our inside members, facilitating their penpal correspondences, and sending them resources from our resource library.

**Filth:** How does the collective function?

**PCP:** There are usually around 7 - 10 active outside collective members in the PCP. We hold collective meetings every two weeks. A lot of our time is spent checking mail, coordinating the penpal program, sending in resources, and generally responding to our inside members. We call this “boxchecking”, and we try to have at least four of our members spending at least 3 hours a week on it. Other than that, collective members take on whatever responsibilities they feel able to commit to -- whether that means developing new resources, writing articles for our newsletter, keeping in touch with our longer-term committed inside members.

Right now, we're working to implement an "Inside Advisory Committee" that we believe should be a crucial part of a project such as ours. It will consist of 7 - 10 incarcerated / inside members of the PCP, with whom we will work to help steer the project with regards to what programming and resources we put our energies towards. Functioning as a type of board of directors, the inside advisory committee members' input will help ground the activities of the project in the lived realities of prison and help forefront the voices of our incarcerated members.

**Filth:** Do you see your work as direct service, campaign-oriented, something else?

**PCP:** Our work is direct-service from an abolitionist perspective. We set up penpal correspondences and provide resource materials relevant to gay, trans, and queer people in prison as a form of direct support. A lot of our material provides information regarding health while in prison, legal services, and gay and trans-relevant resources and literature. We believe that these materials help people to survive their prison sentences. At the same time, we write a newsletter and provide other resources that are expressly abolitionist in nature, and we work with other direct-service and abolitionist groups in the hopes of, together, tearing down those walls one brick at a time. On the outside, you could say that our campaign is to bring the voices and opinions of incarcerated gay, trans and queer people into mainstream (or not so mainstream) gay, trans and queer events.

**Filth:** What are some of your favorite PCP projects?

**PCP:** One of our earliest projects was titled "Imprisoned Pride", in which we asked our inside members to write to us telling us what "pride" meant to them. We read their submissions out loud one year in Montreal during Pervers/Cite, radical queer Montreal's response to Pride Week. Following that event, we created a zine of the submissions, also called Imprisoned Pride. It still lives on as a thoughtful, critical, and inspiring collections of stories.

Similarly, another one of our projects from the early days that continues to be powerful is our zine "You Improve to Survive." In this project, we asked our inside members to write to us about their experiences of intimacy and sex in prison. The tips, recommendations, and struggles within still inform and inspire us all the time.

This year, we submitted a lot of our inside members' art work to the art exhibit Xpose that took place for Radical Queer Semaine (a week of radical queer events in late February - early March). We always have much

more art and poetry submitted to us than can fit in the newsletter that we put out twice a year, and it was great to be able to show all of the work. Not only did we get to show the work, but the Radical Queer Semaine collective managed to secure a popular, large gallery space on Ste Catherine, and Xpose was really well-attended for two weeks! It was so awesome to curate the pieces, and really exciting to be able to show our members' work on the outside to such a large crowd.

**Filth:** How can people get involved in the collective or support your work?

**PCP:** We are always looking for new penpals!! If you think you have the time to correspond with someone once a month, and if you're interested in making links with queer/gays in prison and breaking the isolation that the prison industrial complex has so expertly constructed, email us! at

**info@prisoner Correspondence Project.com.**

If you are in the Montreal area with a few hours to spare, we love to have people come and help us fill resource requests and respond to letters, at QPIRG-Concordia. If you are able to translate into French, we always have material that could use translation, and if you are technologically inclined, we're always looking for people to help us with our website.

At this point, we also have many more people writing to us from the inside than our small collective can manage. We're trying to help other groups get started in other cities, because this work is incredible and could certainly use more people doing it. If you feel interested in taking on the coordination of even a few penpal correspondences, please get in touch with us! We would be happy to help you set things up, and would give plenty of support along the way.

We have recently begun a letter-writing night, the first Monday of each month at the Cagibi in Montreal. If you want a friendly space to write the letter you've been stalling on, come hang out with us!

Also, we will soon be publishing the first of 4 resources that we've been working in collaboration with our inside members, called Fucking Without Fear. These resources will be a guide to safer sex in prisons, as presented by gay/queer/trans people in prison, and health professionals on the outside. They are intended to be a non-medicalizing, sex positive resource for queer/gay/trans people in prison. The first resource deals with men in men's prisons. **If you know of anyone or any group that would like a copy, let us know!**

**prisoner Correspondence Project.com**